

# Getting your Backup

John Henshall looks at some ways to avoid tears after the shoot

**W**hen Keith Thompson shot the first wedding digitally in the summer of 2000 (*Chip Shop* August 2000) he had one major concern.

It was the security of the images on the memory cards used in the camera.

But when Keith drove away from that wedding he really had things covered.

We already had the insurance of three identical digital versions of all the images shot that day – one set on the camera cards, another on my laptop computer hard drive and the third burned onto CD.

Keith's view about this self-insurance? Lower stress levels. "I can sleep again!"

Unhappily this is not the situation for all photographers.

Over the years I have had a number of calls from distressed photographers whose CompactFlash cards have failed to read after the shoot. This is potentially a major disaster. It is impossible to re-shoot a wedding. Fortunately, I have had good success resuscitating the 'failed' cards, whisking photographers from near suicide to cloud nine within one phone call.

Although it isn't possible to prevent every failure, it is possible to minimise the risks considerably.

If you go on a lengthy assignment there is another potential problem.

If you shoot raw files on a high resolution DSLR you will need a lot of expensive fast CompactFlash cards. A one week trip at only 4GB per day would eat up seven 4GB cards – and you would need to take more in case the shooting exceeded your estimate. Say ten 4GB cards. That's a lot of expensive cards.

The best bet, to release cards for re-use, is to copy the images elsewhere, allowing the cards to be re-formatted.

Such manufacturers as Epson, Delkin and Jobo are among those who supply portable photo storage devices. Some have colour displays, making it possible to review images without a camera or computer. Others have monochrome screens which indicate when cards are being copied but do not allow images to be reviewed.



I took one such device – the 40GB capacity **Jobo Giga One** – on a recent trip to China. It worked perfectly. For me the big advantage is that it cost less than

£100 including VAT and incorporates a 40GB hard drive. Great value.

The device is very simple to use. Switch it on, insert the card – CF, SD, MMC, MS, SM or XD – and press the Copy button. The screen then animates the files 'flying' across from the inserted card to the unit's hard drive. Progress is indicated as percentage copied and the remaining space on the device is also indicated.

The Jobo Giga One measures only 115 x 78 x 25mm and weighs 254g.

In China, I copied my CF cards over to this device each day. It performed faultlessly. Fortunately I didn't need to delete any of the images from the cards. To me 'backup' means I have at least two copies. Had I needed to re-use any cards I would be living dangerously.

The Giga One is simple and effective. The only problem is that you can't have a reassuring check that your images have been copied correctly, unless you also carry a laptop.

New from Jobo since my China trip in





June is the **Jobo GigaVu Pro Evolution**.

Without doubt, this is the epitome of portable photo storage devices currently available. It has just about every facility you could think of – plus many more you couldn't think of – but weighs only 420g.

An awesome bright 3.7 inch high resolution 640 x 480 pixel colour LCD screen with extended colour gamut is bound to impress you and your clients.

This device will display all image formats, including raw. The 40GB version is priced at £379, 80GB £499 and 120GB £599.

The case is well rounded and rubberised. You get the impression that it will bounce if dropped – but I don't advise trying it. A neat lid clips over the screen and controls.

The GigaVu Pro Evolution is built with professional photographers in mind. It can display R, G, B and luminance histograms, highlight clipping warning and even dust detection.

My only concern is that all these

portable devices contain hard disc drives. The only thing certain about a hard disc drive is that, one day, it will fail. The problem is that no one knows when day that will be. It could be today.

Another solution is to use a device which backs up to DVDs. Forget CDs – their capacity is just too puny.

When I looked at all these solutions together, I realised that a Jobo GigaVu Pro Evolution 120GB at £599 isn't far short of the price of a laptop.

So I have gone for the combination you see at the top of this page.

The **Apple MacBook** is the new 2GHz Intel Core Duo model. This is one up from the bottom of the range 1.8GHz model, because it comes with a built-in SuperDrive DVD writer. It comes as standard with a 60GB hard drive and 512MB RAM and has a list price of £899 including VAT. I upgraded the hard drive to 100GB and the RAM to 1GB.

The MacBook does not have a built-in card slot, hence the Lexar FireWire CF

reader on the left. SanDisk also makes a FireWire CF reader which is smaller.

In front of the MacBook is the Jobo Giga One, connected by a USB 2.0 cable.

In use, I back up cards in the field to the Giga One as soon as possible after shooting. Back at the hotel or other base I connect the Giga One to the MacBook and copy the images across to the laptop. Until I reformat the card for re-use, this gives me two backups – both on hard disc drives.

The MacBook also has a DVD writer and this can produce a further backup, if required. The contents of 1 x 4GB or 2 x 2GB CF cards fit neatly onto a DVD. A circular padded pouch from Ikea will hold twenty DVDs without jewel cases.

The MacBook also allows me to run Adobe Photoshop, so I can work on raw files in the field. I find this a huge advantage. It measures 323 x 225 x 27mm and weighs 2.375kg.

And the footprint is not much larger than a sheet of A4 paper.