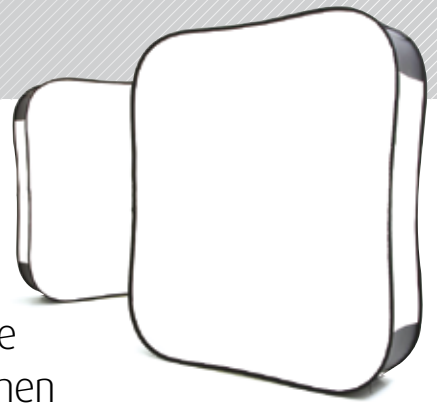


Making light work

Lastolite's innovative accessories have proved to be the perfect portable accompaniment for Mark Cleghorn when he finds himself having to control his lighting on location



LASTOLITE'S NAME is synonymous with the magical pop-up reflector that has been amazing and amusing location clients across the UK and beyond for more than 20 years. Today its product range is more diverse and even the humble pop-out reflector has evolved into the sleek TriGrip, ensuring that Lastolite's name remains firmly attached to products that are both uniquely ingenious and photographically inspiring.

Top wedding photographer Mark Cleghorn is a long-time Lastolite user who also field-tests prototype products for the company. Cleghorn is especially enthusiastic about the new HiLite, which answers a common location-photography problem by making high-key and creative background lighting possible even in the tightest of spaces and with a minimum of equipment.

The HiLite, which is so new that it is still the subject of a pending patent application, is a low-fuss solution for the high-key backgrounds that have become so fashionable but which often involve backward-facing lights that are common trip hazards. Lastolite's HiLite features a translucent fabric cover on the camera-facing side of what is effectively a massive, low-profile softbox. In this case, however, instead

of the source being positioned behind the panel it is placed to the side and the light is scattered within the softbox before emerging as soft illumination from the camera-facing surface.

Although two lights (one to each side of the HiLite) would seem to be ideal, Cleghorn insists that excellent results can be obtained using nothing more than a single flash head. "We have only just started to play with it but already we're getting some really good results," he enthuses.

"It is a true high-key effect and we've run it with just one light quite successfully. We've even used it for some fashion shoots. And because you can add gels onto the lights you can also colour the background in hardly any space at all. I did that recently when we did some shots for a local radio station and it worked really well."

Cleghorn's subject lighting uses the classical forty-five degree technique and is normally provided by a Speedlite or Quantum Q-Flash fired into Lastolite's Ezybox Hotshoe softbox. Based on the studio-quality Ezybox, the Hotshoe version is specifically designed for

hotshoe flashguns thanks to an integral hotshoe bracket that aims the head directly into the softbox cavity. "It's great when you're working on location – although I'd like it to be a bit bigger because with the Q-Flash there's such a huge amount of power that you could use it even more extensively without ever having to take a full lighting kit." Cleghorn does admit, however, that the beauty of the Ezybox Hotshoe's 38cm-square design is the ease with which it can be perched on a lightweight stand that might not be sturdy enough to accept a larger softbox.

Cleghorn switched from Nikon to Canon when Kodak discontinued its DCS Pro 14n digital camera and is now a proud Canon EOS 5D user. Even so, and despite increasing flash-exposure sophistication, he always uses manual control. "We are old-fashioned," he explains, "so we like to control the exposure manually so you don't get that small amount of variation that you can get when the camera controls the exposure."

Although he shoots exclusively in raw mode for maximum control, Cleghorn recognises that there may be times when other location photographers are forced to use JPEGs for maximum speed. For those occasions he offers a final tip regarding Lastolite's Ezybalance, which is a pop-up fabric panel with a neutral eighteen-percent grey surface on one side. "It's the perfect product for one-click colour calibration when you're working on location and you want to get the colours right but you can't use raw data," he advises.

To find out more about Lastolite's reflectors, diffusers, backgrounds and exposure accessories visit www.lastolite.com. Distributed in the UK by www.johnsons-photopia.co.uk, tel 01782 753304

