

Eat Dust

John Henshall finds some more ways to get rid of the bits we don't want



Well it seems that dust really is the bane of the digital photographer's life. Whilst I am relieved to learn that I am not the only photographer who spends a huge amount of time spotting skies and faces using Adobe Photoshop's Healing Brush, I am horrified at the amount of our lives that this is wasting.

Of course there always was dust inside SLR cameras but the action of pulling a new piece of film out of a cassette for each exposure meant that it was rarely a problem.

Since writing about the problems of dust on DSLR sensors in July I have discovered some further weapons to use in our war on dust.

There are no hard and fast rules about sensor cleaning. This is an area

where different methods seem to work better than others at different times.

Sometimes a mere puff of a blower is enough to dislodge a piece of dust and send it reeling from the lens chamber.

At other times a triboelectrically charged brush may do the job better.

Sticky dust may need a wet wipe.

Really obstinate particles may need picking off individually.

Just Ltd of Newbury, Berkshire (www.cameraclean.co.uk telephone +44 (0)1635 581662) has tried to cover all eventualities by producing a comprehensive **Professional Digital Camera Cleaning Kit**.

The kit contains seven products, all housed in a neat custom-designed compact case.

The first item is a rocket-shaped **Bulb Blower**. This blower can be used instead

of compressed air without any risk of damage from propellant.

An **Antistatic Cleaning Cloth** is useful for cleaning camera bodies and lens mounts. If the dust is cleared away from the outside, there's less chance of it getting inside during lens changing.

The small brush in the plastic case at the front is a **Kinetronics StaticWisk Cleaning Brush**. This has soft natural hairs and is useful for cleaning lenses, film, scanners, glass and technical equipment.

The long thin device in the tube is a **Speck Grabber** which is designed to remove difficult individual particles from the sensor without the danger of causing further contamination. The tip has slightly adhesive qualities which pick up the speck of dust without leaving any deposit.



This tool is particularly useful for picking up individual bits such as those at the edges of full-frame sensors. These are notoriously difficult to remove completely by other methods.

I find a magnifying headset useful for identifying the positions of the offending particles accurately.

The bottle of **Eclipse Optic Cleaning Solution** is the highest purity lens cleaner available. It dries almost instantly leaving no residue.

When used with **Pec*Pad** non-abrasive wipes just the dirty portion of a lens may be cleaned. They are soft, pure, strong and lint-free. They will not fall apart in use and will not cause scratches.

However, they are not recommended for wiping camera sensors.

That's precisely what **Sensor Swabs** are clean-room manufactured for.

First take a shot of a plain light-coloured wall or the sky out of focus and using a small lens aperture ($f/16$ or higher). View the shot on your computer at 100%, using Levels to increase the contrast.

Any dust will now be revealed. If it's bad, it's time to clean the sensor but if there are just few small specks I suggest you leave it alone. Believe me, you'll never get it absolutely clean.

Sensor Swabs are available in three different sizes (17, 20 and 24mm) to suit your sensor's width.

In use, two to four drops of Eclipse are squeezed onto the flat paddle-shaped end of the Sensor Swab, which is then wiped across the sensor's cover filter just once in each direction before being discarded. Never be tempted to re-use a Sensor Swab.



The **Professional Digital Camera Cleaning Kit** costs £69.95 including VAT.

In an attempt to avoid the problem of dust, many DSLR users now use the widest range zoom lenses possible. This avoids having to change lenses.

Some use multiple bodies, each with different lenses, to minimise the dust problem as much as possible.

These techniques virtually reduce DSLRs to fixed-lens cameras, eliminating one of the major advantages of DSLRs: the facility to change lenses at will.

Also from Just Ltd is **CameraBivvy** – a pop-up (on the Lastolite folding reflector principle) portable 'clean room' tent. It provides a controlled and enclosed environment in which to change lenses or clean the sensor in otherwise hostile environments, such as on beaches, dusty streets and factories, or in wet or snowy conditions. Folded, it is just 16cm across.

Priced at £24.95 including VAT, **CameraBivvy** is a further example of the many ingenious techniques for solving the annoying problem of DSLR dust.