

# Military Spec Protection

John Henshall discovers that Kata bags for professional photographers are now available in the UK.

**W**hen I attended the Photo Marketing Association show in Orlando a couple of years ago I saw some rather different camera bags from an Israeli company called Kata.

These bags are now available in the UK and there is no doubt that they are built for the most rigorous professional use. Made of military specification materials, the Kata bags immediately give confidence that they will protect our delicate digital equipment.

The bag I am currently using is the Kata R-103 backpack, which is just within the current airport carry on limit. Designed by people who make bullet-proof vests, you get the distinct impression that this bag will protect both your equipment and you.

Your equipment sits amidst the heaviest duty scratch-proof padding I have seen in a bag. At first I thought it strange that the interior is yellow but this makes it much easier to spot small components, such as today's tiny memory cards, which can easily get lost at the bottom of bags.

The bags use TST – Thermo Shield Technology – in a thermoformed rib shape construction. This is backed by closed-cell padding material which gives outstanding protection against impacts, shock and vibration whilst being very light in weight. The material is 'Super Nylon', a military standard double cord, waterproof, abrasion-resistant fabric. All this gives very good protection from dust, rain, heat and moisture.

Protecting you is a really great ergonomic fit, which makes the bag a delight to carry, and a camera strap system designed to take the weight of the camera off the back of your neck by attaching to the shoulder harness.

A special converter strap converts the clip-on straps into a standard camera strap, for when you want to use the camera without the backpack.

The only slight problem I find with

this is the inconvenience of having to unclip the camera to take the backpack off to access the contents. But the principle is a good one.

Nikon once supplied a photographers' vest which had built-in straps to take the weight off the photographer's neck.

A tripod is carried using a removable tripod holder, in which two of the



tripod's legs stand. The tripod holder can either be fitted to the side of the bag or, for better balance, to the centre of the rear (front?) of the bag.

For really bad weather, a separate 'double element' cover is supplied with the bag. One side of this waterproof cover is black, for use in downpours, the other is reflective silver, for use in the blazing sun.

The silver side can be used as a handy reflector – and I guess the black side can be used to stop light being reflected.

At the back of the bag – that's the part nearest your body – is a separate well padded compartment with side access for your laptop.

Separate zips permit instant access to the central compartment containing the camera with a long lens attached.

Even the zips themselves are worth mentioning. They are the heaviest duty I have seen and are very quiet in operation – a useful feature when you have to be quiet, such as during a church service.

There is something very personal about camera bags. You either love them or hate them.

I went along to London Camera Exchange in Reading where Andy Critchfield and Ian Hopgood were kind enough to take me through some of the Kata range which they carry in stock. 'Sherpa' Ian was also good enough to model the HB-207 backpack for me.

All the photos at LCE were taken using the Leica D-Lux 3 digital compact camera which I cover elsewhere in this issue.

The OC-82 and larger OC-84 holdalls are reminiscent of attaché cases. Besides camera gear, the OC-82 has a compartment which will take a fifteen inch laptop. The OC-84 will take a seventeen inch laptop, in a removable bag. They will also hold an incredible amount of gear in their configurable interiors.

A separate trolley adds wheels. The two holdalls can be stacked on the trolley to move the whole lot around. Very neat and an enormous amount of kit storage for the biggest location job – or just for housing your equipment safely in the studio.

London Camera Exchange in Reading (+44 118 9592149) stock the R-103 for £164. The OC-82 is £174, the OC-84 is £209 and the HB-207 is £219. All prices include VAT.

Kata may be found online at [www.kata-bags.com](http://www.kata-bags.com) – where you can also select your personal body armour.

The John Henshall's Chip Shop archive is online at [www.epi-centre.com](http://www.epi-centre.com)





With its carrying handle, the Kata OC-82 Holdall is just like a small attaché case.



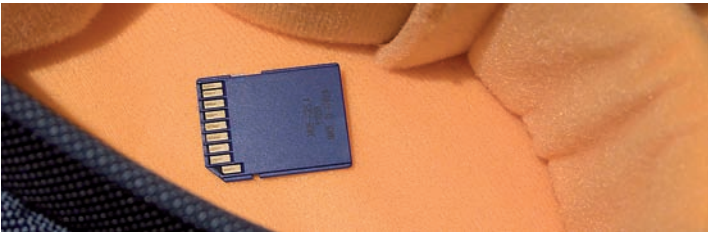
The internal dimensions of 34cm L x 25 D x 16 H allow it to accept a full pro kit.



The top compartment will take up to a fifteen inch laptop in well-padded luxury.



The OC-84 is a larger version which is stackable with OC-82 on a separate trolley.



The heavy-duty yellow scratch-free interior makes it easy to find small objects.



The zips are the heaviest duty I have seen and are very quiet in operation.

BELOW LEFT: Exterior of my R-103 backpack. BELOW CENTRE: The central compartment may be accessed separately. BELOW RIGHT: Interior configuration of the R-103



The HB-207 is a larger backpack which will carry 2 to 3 DSLRs and up to 8 lenses. Here we see it being modelled by 'Sherpa' Ian Hopgood of LCE Reading.



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