

HOBBIES

Daylight or darkness, flash is critical for great photos

BY RICK SAMMON
AP WEEKLY FEATURES

Occasionally, someone asks me, "What's your most important accessory?" I say that my flash, which I use for daylight fill-in flash, and my light diffusers-reflectors are of utmost importance.

I use others, however, that are not advertised as official photography accessories. Here are a few I think you might find useful.

Flashlight with headband.

My wife gave me this device for my nighttime scuba dives. It slips over my head and is held in place with adjustable straps. This flashlight, which leaves both hands free, has proven invaluable in my topside photography, too. I used it to make important camera adjustments while I was on a night photo safari in Botswana. (It also came in handy while I was packing my gear early one morning in a hotel room in Fiji, while my wife wanted to sleep.)

Shower cap. I've never taken

a towel from a hotel room, but I do take the plastic shower caps that are provided in the bathrooms. They make great rain covers for my camera.

Duct tape. I take good care of my gear, but sometimes it gets knocked around, as when I was riding over a "washboard" road in Kenya. Somehow, the battery compartment door on my flash came unhinged. Duct tape to the rescue. If I hadn't had it, I wouldn't have been able to use my flash.

Rubber bands. They can be used to hold battery compartment doors in place or even cracked gear together temporarily.

Waterproof marker. If you shoot a lot of film and want to keep track of which rolls you shot where and when, marking each roll with a waterproof marker will do the trick.

Sock. I sometimes stuff a lens in a sock when I'm traveling and need to pack several accessories in one compartment in my camera bag.

With new airline carry-on restrictions, I've had to consolidate my gear and pack lenses on top of lenses, flashes, meters, and so on.

Swiss army knife. You never know when one of these will come in handy - to cut duct tape, tighten a screw on a camera or tripod, to cut open a box of shipped film or gear and, perhaps, even to open a cool drink.

Paper clip. If you are a digital photographer who likes to burn CDs on your laptop when traveling (as I do), a paper clip

can save the day when a CD gets stuck in the CD drive. CD drives have a tiny, round hole next to the CD slot. Insert a paper clip into the hole and the CD will pop out.

If you have an unusual accessory that helps you as a photographer, I'd love to hear from you. Write me at RickSammon@aol.com.

Rick Sammon is the host of the *Digital Photography Workshop* on the Do It Yourself cable network.

Is 'Agent Under Fire' the best James Bond video game ever?

BY WILLIAM SCHIFFMANN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

Bond - James Bond - is back, in perhaps his best video game adventure ever.

That's saying plenty, given the universal applause for the excellent *GoldenEye 007* for the now-defunct Nintendo 64. But *007: Agent Under Fire*, from Electronic Arts for the PlayStation 2,

might be even better.

In this latest Bond epic, the famous spy, licensed killer and martini aficionado gets to sneak around, drive the fabulous BMW Z8 and handle a rail-mounted chain gun.

EA learned a lesson from the less-than-enthusiastic reaction to its previous Bond game, the third-person *Tomorrow Never Dies*. *Agent Under Fire* is a first-

person shooter.

"Shooter" is the operative word here. While in some places you're better off trying to evade detection, in most cases you just open up with whatever you have handy. Weaponry includes a silenced pistol, Frisbee 12-gauge shotgun, assault weapons galore, grenades and even shoulder-fired rockets.

Bond also has a pocketful of

the famous Q-designed gadgets, including a Q-laser for burning through locks, Q-spears that use X-rays to reveal hidden doors, and a Q-claw, a grappling device for climbing.

The game also is loaded with the gorgeous women who always surround Bond.

While not the longest title ever at 12 missions, the game is loaded with replay value, since it has

three difficulty levels and also awards points for how well you get through each mission.

You can finish missions without finesse and move on. But any you finish very quickly, score 100-percent accuracy on shooting and meet other criteria: You get medals - bronze, silver or gold. Gold medals help unlock special weapons and other goodies.

Graphics get a B-plus. They are excellent in almost every way, with plenty of color, great detail and explosions galore.

Give Bond a B-plus. This epic breaks no new PS2 ground, but takes advantage of processing muscle to produce a fine adventure title with plenty of gunplay to balance the skulking, all zipping along at a speedy 60 FPS. Rated T, for ages 13 and older.

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2001 SEASON

Skiers and snowboarders can expect an exciting winter on Michigan's slopes

After each past winter has seen with lots of snowfall and cold temperatures, many Michigan's ski areas expanded and made improvements during the summer to ensure a successful winter season. Snowboarders, skiers and snowmobilers. Steve Tomlin, president of the Michigan Ski Industry Association and director of skiing at Shanty Creek in Bellaire, says that last year's season was the best in the history of the Michigan Ski Industry Association. "We had a great season," he says. "It was a real success story. It was a real success story. It was a real success story."

Alpine Valley of White Lake, (248) 677-1100, purchased more snow in a seasonal effort to improve the quality of the snow. The resort is also expanding its ski area and adding new trails. The resort is also expanding its ski area and adding new trails. The resort is also expanding its ski area and adding new trails.

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will begin its second winter season under new ownership. The new owners are looking forward to a fabulous winter season equipped with double lifts, four new and a new Palmer Ski Lift. The resort is also expanding its ski area and adding new trails. The resort is also expanding its ski area and adding new trails.

Mr. Bohannon of La Le Boie is the Upper Peninsula's Keweenaw Peninsula, (480-307-3111). He says that last year's season was the best in the history of the Michigan Ski Industry Association. "We had a great season," he says. "It was a real success story. It was a real success story. It was a real success story."

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