

PHOTOGRAPHY TECHtip



MIKE CLELLAND

The right type of “light”

By Jonny Copp

The clouds lift off the face like a receding veil. And the face, well, it's not as pretty as you had originally imagined. In fact, it's downright scary. And now, as you're packing the final necessities into the route packs — after all that you and your partner have gone through to get to the base of this alpine wall — he sends you a suspicious look as you zip open your camera bag. Exposed are the *essential* lenses and camera bodies that may have to replace a few energy bars or a fuel canister.

“Relax man! I'm only going to take ... ah, the um ...”

Whether you're climbing a big wall, or blitzing an alpine ridge, choosing the optimum photographic equipment to suit your objective is always a challenge. But paring down the equipment doesn't always mean compromising the quality of your images.

Here are three equipment setups to choose from for various objectives:

The wall system. (Climbs where a ghetto blaster might make the cut.)

- A small-but-effective point-and-shoot camera for leading (this also acts as your back up, should your other body fail)
- A solid 35mm SLR with auto-focus capability (handy if you're belaying and shooting at the same time)
- A fast (e.g., *f/2.8* aperture), wide-angle zoom lens such as a 17mm-35mm (or comparable)
- A telephoto zoom lens (e.g., a 35mm-105mm)
- A circular polarizer (used to limit reflections and control contrast) that fits both lenses

“Paring down the equipment doesn't always mean compromising the quality of your images.”

The middle path. (For those routes where weight is an issue, but you aren't pushing the edge of your endurance and strength.)

- A solid 35mm SLR
- A fixed 20mm lens for sharp, wide-angle images
- A fast (e.g., *f/2.8* aperture) 28mm-70mm zoom lens

Featherweight. (When you can't justify starving in order to take your favorite lenses.)

- A fixed-focal-length point-and-shoot (remember that fixed lenses usually produce sharper images) with a wide-angle lens (28mm or wider), or a five-mega pixel (or better) digital point-and-shoot with a large memory card

Batteries. Always carry extra, and warm them up before use when it's freezing. And for the digital photographer: use your viewfinder instead of the LCD screen to save energy, and refrain from “chimping” (reviewing all the images you just shot on the LCD screen) until you're back down at basecamp.

Tripod. A micro-sized tripod can weigh less than an energy bar, and helps enable those hard-to-capture, low-light images.

Jonny Copp specializes in putting himself and his partners at risk by tackling imposing routes, while simultaneously looking for the perfect shot. He's still on the search, armed and dangerous.