

# REVENGE OF THE LEFTOVERS

Rory Laubscher revisits an early off-camera flash experiment

**T**o me, photography and sentimentality often walk hand in hand. I love the feeling of nostalgia I experience when looking through old photographs.

Memories are powerful things and I honestly feel that we, as photographers, don't capture as many of our lives' 'ordinary events' as we should because we underestimate how valuable that photographic memento might become over time.

This issue's article is a trip down memory lane for me — a behind-the-scenes look at an image which was created for the fun of it, but which over the past few years has become increasingly more valuable to me.

Before moving to Auckland in 2011 I was living in Whangarei and an active member of the Whangarei Camera Club. One of the highlights on the club's calendar is an annual weekend away to Tiritiri Matangi Island, a bird sanctuary roughly 30 minutes by boat off Auckland's east coast.

The image I'm sharing with you here was taken during our 2009 trip. The island is a bird-watcher's paradise, so most people on the trip were there to photograph the birds. Having learnt the year prior that I just didn't have the patience for bird photography and having recently become addicted to off-camera lighting, I went with the idea of furthering my flash photography.



I packed a bag full of triggers, gels, lights and batteries, hoping to spread the addiction. On the Saturday afternoon a few of us found ourselves in the DOC accommodation with flashes, gels and one soon to be less-than-cold fridge.



A flash is placed on the receptor's hot shoe, and will trigger the flash when it picks up the light emitted by another flash in the set-up



## Take One

The idea was initially to see what effects we could get by placing a blue-gelled flash and a fisheye lens inside the fridge. A Canon 580EX Flash was placed in the fridge, camera-left and triggered with Elinchrom Skyports, which I was using at that stage to trigger my studio lights.

Our first attempt was a good start, but as it often is with an idea, you roll with what you get and refine things from there.

### Problems:

1. The camera needed to come forward to accentuate the effect of the fisheye.
2. We needed to make sure the flash was positioned in a way to avoid casting shadows on the subjects. In this case we simply moved it to the right of the camera.
3. The background really needed something to make it pop — enter a second flash with a yellow gel, placed on a stand behind the subjects, aimed at the far wall, triggered with a hot shoe photo receptor.

## Take Two

Attempt number two fixed some problems but highlighted a few others that should probably have been expected.

### Problems:

1. The legs of the light stand needed to be hidden — solution: add more people or adjust position of the light stand.
2. The lighting in the kitchen needed to be worked on — we added a third flash, gelled yellow, triggered with another hot shoe photo receptor. Admittedly, I had reservations that there would not be enough light hitting the photo receptor to trigger it, but I was proved wrong.

## Take Three

When in doubt — overcorrect!

### Problems:

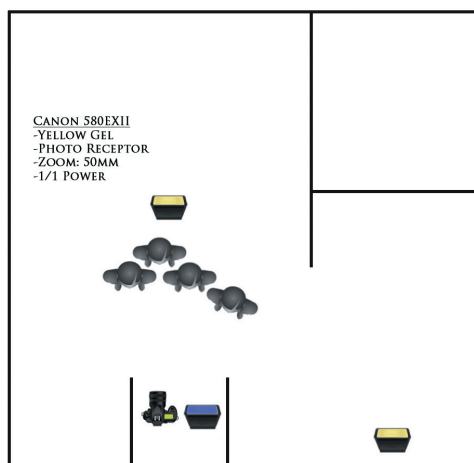
Now there were way too many people in frame and consequently the blue light wasn't hitting everyone (by this time our antics were drawing a little interest, which is always good for the guys who have never seen/worked with off-camera flash). Regardless, things were getting better and the number of problems was dwindling with each shot.

## The final shot

Definitely still in need of improvement but we quit there to be kind to the fridge (and the bottles of wine which were meant to be chilling — quite a lot of food ended up outside of the fridge while we were shooting).

The final image was taken through Photoshop to tweak the colours a little and clone out the remnants of the light stand and clock.

Below is a quick set-up diagram:



CANON 580EXII  
-YELLOW GEL  
-PHOTO RECEPTOR  
-ZOOM: 50MM  
-1/1 POWER

CANON SD  
15MM FISHEYE LENS  
MANUAL EXPOSURE  
-F6.3  
-1/200

CANON 580EXII  
-BLUE GEL  
-SKYPORT TRIGGER  
-ZOOM: 50MM  
-1/8 POWER

CANON 300EZ  
-YELLOW GEL  
-PHOTO RECEPTOR  
-1/1 POWER

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the sentimental value of this image to me grows with each passing year. It reminds me of good friends that I don't see as often since moving to Auckland. It was also during this weekend that I decided to move ahead and start teaching off-camera flash and I look at this image in the same way that a parent would look at photos of their children as newborns.



Looking back after almost three years I am also forced to remind myself of how much I've progressed since taking this image — for the life of me, I can't remember what made me choose the camera settings I did back then!

My understanding of light and colour, the equipment I use, my approach to creating an image and so many other things that I often forget — all of these are constantly evolving with me.

My hope with this article is not so much to teach you about the image but to remind you to constantly find the fun in your photography and evolve your understanding and abilities.

And never, never forget that the photographs you take today may become the most precious of your memories in years hence. **D**