

Scott Kelby's

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GONZO HOLIDAY GEAR GUIDE



Welcome to my “11th Annual Gonzo Holiday Gear Guide,” featuring another magical collection of awesome gear that’s simply too gonzo to live without for another minute but, at the same time, will give you perfect gift ideas for the gonzo photographer on your Holiday Gift list.

It’s hard to believe it’s been 11 years since I started this tradition here in the magazine. Why, when I started it, Jimmy Carter was still President; we listened to music on our 8-track tape players; and every home had a VCR that could record up to 60 minutes on one tape (don’t think about any of that too long, because I’m not sure that timeline is 100% accurate).

Anyway, no one is more surprised than me that this is still “a thing” after 11 years, but let’s not dwell on that; instead, let’s tear into this bad boy and see what’s on this year’s list.

Before we get to the list, just remember: The holidays are about giving, and who is giving you what and how much so you can post pictures of it on social media. So don’t be shy: Act like a millennial, even if you’re actually old enough to still be a fan of Roosevelt.



The Rules

These are my annually, self-imposed guidelines for which products make it into the guide—it's just two rules actually. To be listed here, they have to be: (a) products that I use myself, and that I absolutely love, and now can't live without (well, I could live without them, but I just wouldn't want to); and (b) if a product makes the guide, it has to be one I'd recommend to a close friend without hesitation, especially if my friend was a famous rapper (kidding).

Also, to make things easy, we added direct links to all the products I picked so you don't have to wonder if you're getting the exact right one. (Note: Depending on the product, clicking on the product name below will take you to the manufacturer's website; if the product is available at B&H Photo or Amazon, then clicking on the price will take you to those websites.)

As is my sacred Gonzo tradition for more than a 10th of a century, I'm breaking things into three distinct categories:

Stocking Stuffers: But you can use these as actual holiday gifts if you're not that crazy about the person.

Great Value Gear: Stuff that's a really good deal for the money, and even though it's not a lot of money, they'll still totally dig it.

Cha-ching: Stuff you buy for the surgeon/Wall Street banker/rap mogul on your Holiday gift list. This is the stuff that makes them burst into spontaneous tears of joy. Well, at least I would.

Stocking Stuffers

Pro Master Clamper Jr.

This is a really clever, very sturdy mini-tripod, but what makes it unique is that it has a clamp built in to two of the legs, so you can clamp it on a railing. It's small, lightweight, but tough.

Price: \$44.95

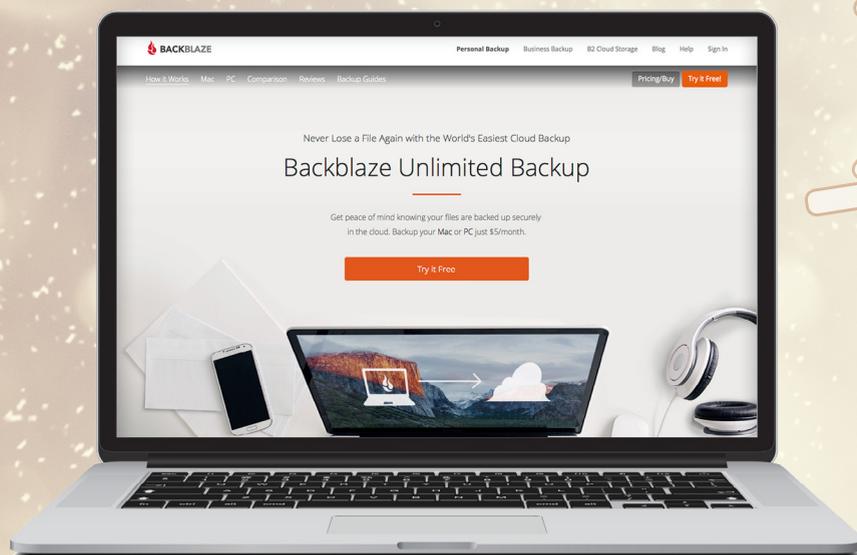
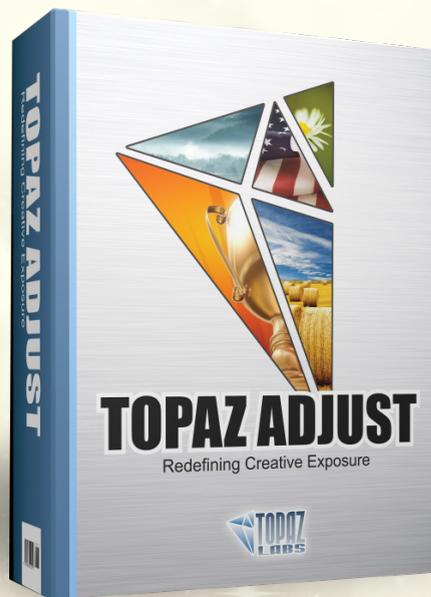




Topaz Adjust

Probably Topaz's most-popular plug-in (for Photoshop or Lightroom), it's great for creating a wide range of special effects, and it comes with loads of presets, so all your holiday gift receiver has to do is click on presets until he sees one that looks good, and click OK. Of course, he can tweak away to his heart's content, but by that time, he'll already be basking in the glow of your generosity for getting this for him in the first place.

Price: \$49.99



A Year of Backblaze Unlimited Backup

There's more than a reasonable chance that the photographers on your gift list don't have an offsite backup of their all-important image library, but don't worry: You can get them one for just \$5 a month for unlimited storage. The whole process is automated, and best of all, they can back up external drives. They'll totally dig this, and one day, if catastrophe strikes and they need to retrieve all their images from this backup, they'll never forget you! It could be, literally, the ultimate gift.

Price: \$5/month; \$50/1 year; or \$95/2 years

Westcott 30" White Diffuser

Put this diffuser between your subject and the sun, and you'll turn that harsh nasty light into beautiful gorgeous light and it's only \$14.17, which is a crazy low price to pay for beautiful light. Plus, it's collapsible and folds down to one-third its size, and the whole thing looks like it cost three times the price. It's all good.

Price: \$14.17



Some Cool Books

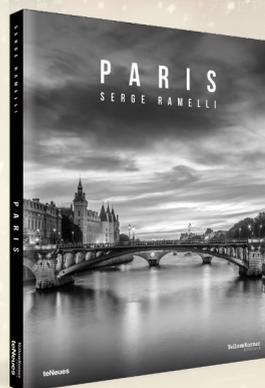
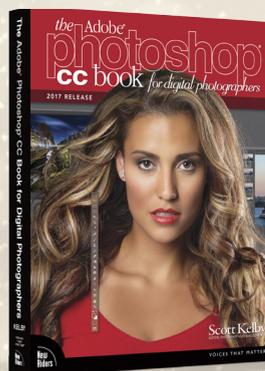
If they're into sports, they'll love ***You Will Never Get in the Game*** by Jimmy Cribbs (the story of Atlanta Falcon's team photographer). **Price: \$34.95**

Or how about ***Photo Adventures for Kids*** by Anne-Laure Jacquart, which is a really great photo project book to get kids interested in learning about photography. Very well done! **Price: \$19.95**

Hey, they just might like my brand-new book, ***The Adobe Photoshop CC Book for Digital Photographers*** (2017 Release). **Price: \$54.99**

Or if you want to splurge just a little, get them either of these gorgeous coffee-table style photo books:

- ***AIR*** by Vincent LaForet: **Price: \$59.95**
- ***Paris*** by Serge Ramelli: **Price: \$75.00**



Great
Value
Gear



Westcott 26" Rapid Box Octa Softbox for Flash

These pop-up softboxes are just brilliantly designed: They open and close like an umbrella. This particular one is actually a pop-up beauty dish, and it's awesome! I think it's the best designed and most durable collapsible I've ever seen, and it fits in such a small, lightweight, soft-sided case that you won't believe it could even fit. I would call this "ultra portable," to say the least. Designed to work with your off-camera flash, it comes with a well-made hot-shoe bracket, so you're ready to go in 60 seconds. I'm a big fan of these, and Westcott now also makes 10x24" strip bank versions. (I have two of them!) They're worth every penny.

Price: \$169.90

Think Tank Photo TurnStyle 10 Sling Camera Bag

A friend turned me on to this small sling bag and I love it on a level you can't imagine! I took it with me on my last photo trip, and now it's my travel companion—perfect for carrying a couple of lenses and accessories. You carry it like a backpack, but then you swivel it around in front of you for easy access. So well designed, super-lightweight, and built like a Think Tank bag (amazing quality). They'll love this.

Price: \$84.75





Haida 150 Series Filter Holder System

If the photographer on your holiday list shoots landscape, architectural, or travel photography, they'll love this filter system that lets you take long exposure shots in broad daylight. Really wonderfully designed and built. (I started using these this summer, and I was just so impressed.) And the price (especially for the quality) is really amazing—much lower than the competition's—plus the case and overall presentation makes them look like you spent way more than you did. Make sure you know which type of lens your photographer friend uses, get the filter holder adapter ring set that fits their landscape lens, then pick up a **Haida 150x150 ND 3.0 Optical Glass Filter**, which is a 10-stop neutral density filter, to go in the bracket. You'll feel much love when you give this gift!

Haida 150 Series Filter Holder: Around \$150

Haida 150x150 ND 3.0 Optical Glass Filter: \$129



Platypod Pro Max

This new model grew out of a huge Kickstarter campaign because photographers are either looking to put cameras where tripods aren't allowed or into spaces that are too small or tight for a tripod; or they just want to shoot at really low angles. (I use one for shooting remotes at football games or weddings, where I can place it behind the altar.) The Platypod Pro Max is probably the best solution ever! Built with lightweight but crazy-strong commercial aircraft aluminum, this is such a clever design.

Price: \$99



Lexar 128 GB JumpDrive C20i Lightning to USB 3.0 Cable with Built-in Flash Drive

Okay, that's a boring name, but this is a really cool, handy device that does more than you might think. Not only can you transfer up to 128 GB of photos, either from your iPhone or iPad to your computer (or vice versa), it also actually acts as an iPhone or iPad charger. So small and lightweight, but backed with power!

Price: \$136.99

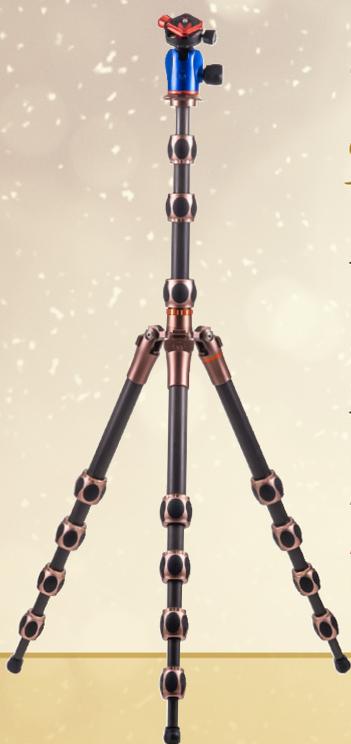
Tether Tools Case Air Wireless Tethering System

Photographers have been dying for an inexpensive, reliable, easy way to shoot directly from their DSLR straight to an iPad or iPhone (also works for Android devices), and Tether Tools totally nailed that with their new Case Air Wireless Tethering System. You can even focus and fire your camera using their app (for iOS or Android). So easy to set up and use, and the price is right. Very cool stuff!

Price: \$159.99



Great Value Gear



3 Legged Thing Equinox Albert Carbon Fiber Travel Tripod and AirHed 360

This has become my go-to tripod for travel, because it really packs up small, it's fairly lightweight, but sturdy as all get-out, and it comes with a really nice ballhead (and a nice ballhead alone can cost more than this entire rig, so that helps make it a great deal). They make an even smaller, lighter travel tripod called the "Leo," if size and portability is #1 on your list; otherwise, I'd go with the Albert, even though it's a little heavier, and a little bigger.

Albert: \$489.99

Leo: \$349.99

Battery Grip

This is one of those gifts that they'll love you for forever because it's so handy and it makes their camera look and feel more like a high-end pro camera, as it gives them a second battery holder and a shutter button for when they're shooting vertical. The price starts at around \$50 for a third-party grip, but if you buy a Nikon brand for a Nikon camera, or Canon brand for Canon, expect to pay at least 2–3 times as much, so give the Vello brand at B&H a serious look. You'll be a holiday hero for this one!

Price: Starting at \$50



Mpix Premium Panoramic Photo Books

I made my first one of these photo books earlier this year, and I have to say, they scream quality! The thickness of the pages just gives it such an expensive feel (but without an actual expensive price). Your giftees can design their books right on the Mpix site (it's so simple to create a book; anyone can do it), and they'll be amazed when their photo book arrives—just beautiful! Either gift them the ability to make one using their images, or make a book of your images and present it as a gift.

Price: Starting at \$39.99



B&H Photo Gift Cards

Not sure exactly what to get your photographer friends? Yes you are. Get 'em a B&H Photo Gift Card. I don't know anyone who doesn't want something from the greatest photo store on earth, plus this way they can get whatever they want (within the limit of how much you put on the card, of course). You can order them direct from the B&H site, and they send a card and a catalog, so it looks pretty substantial.

Price: Starting at \$25





Macphun Luminar for Lightroom or Photoshop



If you haven't heard of it yet, it's just because it's brand new. I think this might be the perfect plug-in for people who are just getting into using plug-ins, because: (a) it has lots of presets; (b) it does *tons* of stuff; (c) it's very easy to use; and (d) it's super affordable at \$69. It does everything from photo special effects to editing tasks (even editing RAW images); and again, its big strength is lots of presets that create good looks. It's pretty full-featured photo-editing software on its own, so you'll see stuff like Layers, Noise Reduction, Curves, and more, but I just use the special effects—of which there are plenty to keep your giftee busy. The downside is that it's Mac only at this point, so make sure your photographer giftee uses a Mac.

Price: \$69



Phottix Mitros+ Transceiver Flash

If you want to get the photographer on your gift list a really good quality flash without spending \$600, this is what I'd go with. They're awesome quality flashes, but I have to say it's the wireless transmitter—the **Phottix Odin II Flash Trigger Transmitter**, sold separately for around \$199 and used for wirelessly controlling one or more flashes—that made me fall in love with this system. It's like it was designed by a photographer (rather than an engineer). If you've seen me out on the road this year, these are the flashes I've been using.

Phottix Mitros+ Transceiver Flash: Around \$350

Phottix Odin II Flash Trigger Transmitter: \$194.90





Impact Venture TTL 600w/s Battery-Powered Monolight Kit

The hot things in lighting right now are these studio strobes you can take on location and, instead of having a separate battery pack, the battery is built right into the light itself, so it's just the light, on a stand, and that's it—no cables whatsoever. Of course, the problem has been that they've been crazy expensive, which is why I like this Impact version so much: The light, a 32" hex softbox, the wireless controller, and a spare battery are available as a kit from B&H Photo for just \$1,249.95, which is a pretty screaming deal. It has built-in high-speed sync and LED modeling lights. And did I mention the price? It's less than one-half the competitor's. Sweet!

Price: \$1249.95



Canon EOS 5D Mark IV



If the Canon shooter on your holiday list is looking for a new camera body, the 5D Mark IV is perhaps the best all-around camera Canon has ever made. It's a *big* upgrade over the industry workhorse Mark III, and just about every single aspect is improved or enhanced on this bad boy. It has more megapixels, better sensor, built-in wireless, built-in GPS, more frames per second, and I could go on and on, but the bottom line is this: It makes better images. If you buy them this body, they'll follow you around like a puppy for the rest of their lives.

Price: \$3,499





Elinchrom ELC Pro HD 500s Flash Head

Want something awesome for the studio photographer on your list? These new strobes from Elinchrom are the best I've used from them (and they're known for their quality/value ratio). Great new design, but beyond that, it fires about as fast as you can shoot with virtually no recycling time between shots. And you can do stroboscopic, sequence, and delayed strobe effects easily—these modes are built in. Very consistent, well designed, and a lot of bang for the buck.

Price: \$1,049.99



Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L III USM Lens

This 16–35mm range is one of my all-time favorites for a super-wide-angle lens, and Canon just released a new updated version of this classic lens that's sharper than ever. If your photographer giftee shoots landscape, travel, architecture or football (I use it for my remote cameras), he'll lose his mind if you get him one of these. This is the good stuff!

Price: \$2,199



I'd be remiss if I didn't at least make mention of some of the cool gifts we have over here at KelbyOne.

A One-Year KelbyOne Membership

Wanna give them a gift that they'll remember all year long? How about world-class, online training on everything from Photoshop to Lightroom to photography. It's \$199 for an entire year (with 24/7 access to literally thousands of lessons), or just \$19.95 a month. Not only will they love you for it, so will I.



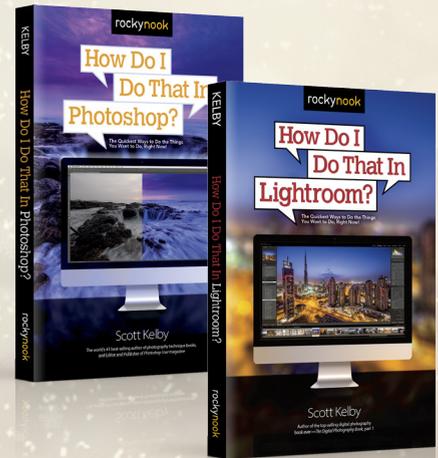
My How Do I Do That In Photoshop and How Do I Do That In Lightroom Book Bundle

I created these two books for people who are already at least somewhat familiar with Photoshop and/or Lightroom and they want reference books they can keep right at their desk, so when they ask themselves, "Isn't there a way to do that in Lightroom or Photoshop?" they just turn right to the page in the respective book that describes just that one topic. These books have been a *huge* hit with readers (the Lightroom book is already in its third printing), and you can get a deal from the publisher on the two-book bundle for only \$30.00.

Both eBooks: \$20

Both Paperbacks: \$30

Both Print and eBook Bundles: \$45



Treat them to the Photoshop World Conference in Orlando

Okay, do you want to totally blow them away to the extent that they need a spinal tap? Give them a full conference pass to the Photoshop World Conference in April in Orlando, Florida. It's a three-day Photoshop, Lightroom, and photography love fest, and they'll be talking about this gift, what they learned, and the overall experience, for years to come. As a KelbyOne member, if you buy it for them now, you get \$100 off with the Early Bird discount, so it's just \$599. ■

CLICK TO RATE ★★★★★