



With summer in full swing, I hope everyone is taking full advantage of the longer days and warm weather to get out and create lots of wonderful images. If you haven't been getting out, you should make a greater effort — this is Canada and we all know winter isn't that far off. Here are a few new and interesting products you might want to check out.

## Ray Flash

The Ray Flash is a unique photographic accessory that converts your flash unit into a ring flash. With your flash mounted on the camera's hot shoe, the Ray Flash attaches to the flash and hangs down and encircles your lens, hence the name ring flash. It attaches to the flash with a locking pressure plate that holds it securely in place. In my testing it never came loose. Made entirely out of plastic, it's lightweight, weighing between 460 and 495 grams, depending on the model. Because it's lightweight, there's no need to worry about its weight damaging your flash unit or the camera's hot shoe. The large diameter of the ring allows you to use it with most lenses.

The Ray Flash itself has no electronics, no flash tubes, batteries or cables. It just transfers and distributes the light from the flash through a series of acrylic light channels and reflectors to distribute the light evenly around the ring flash. It's simple but very effective. There is no noticeable colour cast to the light and there is only about one stop of light lost from the original flash output. All the TTL functions of your camera and flash are useable, making it very easy to use and adjust the light intensity to get proper exposure.

So what is so special about a ring flash and the Ray Flash in particular? Well, it produces a unique and special type of light that gives a "3-D shadow-wrapped" look that's often used in macro photography and portrait and fashion photography. Since it is front light that comes from around the lens, it produces a virtually shadow-less look on the front of the subject and a soft, even shadow around the edges. While this type of light might not work well with many subjects, it can be very effective when used in the right situation. If I was shooting wed-

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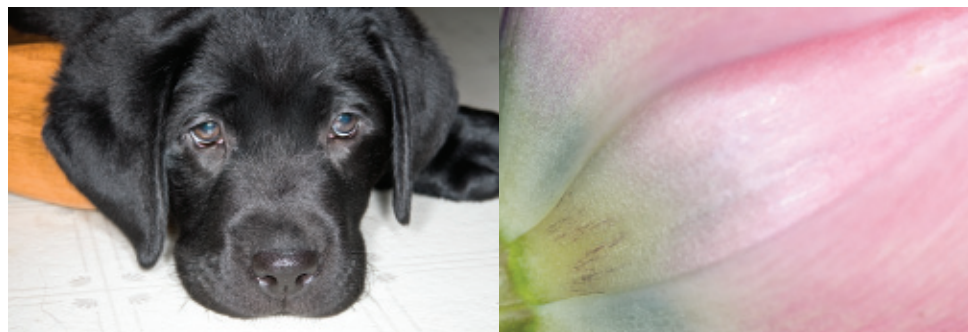
dings, I would use it for some of the portraits as it would give them a really neat look.

Although there's much to really like about the Ray Flash, there are a few minor issues as well. First, depending on the lens that you use, you may have some issues ac-

cessing the focus and zoom rings because the ring flash is blocking them. However, if you use auto focus then it isn't a problem. The second issue is its size; it takes up a lot of space and isn't easy to pack and carry around. Not a big problem, just more of an inconvenience. And finally, there are only a few models of the Ray Flash, so if you aren't a Nikon or Canon user then you're out of luck; they're available only for the Nikon SB-800 and SB-900 and Canon 580EX and 580EX II flashes. In addition, for these particular flash units, the model of Ray Flash you need depends on which camera body or bodies you own. That's too bad because I'm sure there are many photographers who would love to use the Ray Flash but can't because they don't have a compatible flash and camera system.

Despite these few minor issues, the Ray Flash ring flash adapter is a great flash accessory. It produces a unique lighting effect that can be used to create very pleasing images with the right subjects.

**Price: \$249.99**



Example photos taken with Ray Flash: Black lab pup face and tulip