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Boxes. Boxes after boxes after boxes. Boxes in front of boxes and boxes on top of further boxes. Boxes behind and underneath boxes. Small boxes and large boxes. Empty boxes and filled boxes... it seems like a never ending story featuring, jap, you guess it: Boxes.

Welcome to my backroom and my "photography dedicated storage shelves". One might think that I would store my cameras and other photographic gear on those two wooden boards, but behold, I don't. I keep boxes and actually use my precious shooting time looking for the right camera (depending on my mood and the purpose) in an massive and very chaotic heap of gear bags, film chemicals, flashguns, film loaders, cameras and unrelated books and bags. Shocking right?

Nearly everyone must have come across that saying that only idiots need to tidy up as a genius likes the chaos. Well, most of my old classmates swore by it, you wouldn't want to visit them back in their "talented" days... and to be frank; I never really enjoyed too much chaos. I like my mess and I stand behind that statement. I can, and need to be messy when it comes to certain aspects of my being, but in photographic terms, I think my time of "outstanding talent" is currently on ice.

I actually climbed into that large mass of matter this fine morning and sorted it out.

Well, let's see: We got old camera boxes, a box that used to hold my slave flash, boxes to which I don't even remember their use, torn and scruffy looking boxes, almost new boxes, empty film boxes – I don't even know why I kept those – and a handful of boxes that I think used to be the outer packaging of the boxes above. Will I ever need those boxes again? Will I really?

I think I might agree with most people, that you should keep the packaging as long as the product you bought is still in warranty, or if you are very likely to introduce your newly acquired object to the second-hand market. In the unhappy event that I have to send my kit back to the manufacturer to get it swapped or repaired during its warranty period, they usually don't ask for the original packaging. This doesn't actually happen to me very often at all – touch wood – but I did have to send one of my cameras back, and believe me, that period from dropping it off at the post office to the day the postman brought me a parcel

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containing the little thing, was far too long for my liking! But my point here being: They didn't want the box it came in, they just wanted the camera. I mean, who can blame them, they got gazillion of those boxes around anyway. And if my memory doesn't betray me here, my camera even came back in another of those boxes, and guess what, I've kept both boxes. Seriously?! I mean, seriously? Why both?

Well, before I blush even more, let's walk through the unlikely event of me actually selling one of my cameras: I'm going down the "online auction house"-route here, as it's even more unlikely I would actually drop it into a shop, but back to the thought: I might take a few photos of the camera itself to show all the details. Furthermore, I would take a photo of it in front of its box to show that I kept a useless piece of cardboard gathering dust on my shelf, instead of recycling it to give it another chance in this fast-moving world. Hmm...?!? Anyone interested in a useless dusty cardboard box?! Anyone at all?

Granted, if I am scanning websites and shops near and far for the gear that I still need to complete my collection of photographic equipment, I might want the original box. Display purposes or even just a feeling of "Yes, I have got it all in its original condition!", but I doubt very much that the cameras and accessories I own, will ever reach the higher level of "nostalgic and wanted gear" in the photo world. I like mass-produced cameras. I own five Box Brownies from various years, which doesn't seem very much in collector's terms, I know, but I love them. I actually bought my first one towards the end of 2007, and the others followed very quickly in a matter of weeks. I just couldn't resist a slogan like "You press the button, we do the rest". And yes, that is what the Brownie is all about – a mass manufactured product for the masses, the common people I might even say (in *Italic* though), anyone can use it. It's that simple.

Sometimes I need the camera to take over and show me the world from its point of view, and in such moments, I usually use or have my Brownie with me. But more to the point, I bought each single one of those small boxes, without their original packaging. Some came in their little original canvas cases, but none of them had a box. One could argue now, that because they are around in their millions, they haven't reached the sacred world of rare and hard-to-find gear. Obviously, they haven't, that is a fact. But amongst the Leica, Hasselblad and Canon Collectors (only naming a few here) there are Brownie Collectors

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out there who might appreciate the "whole package". I know that I don't. I believe in communication and interaction with my cameras. I waste film. I go out and shoot roll after roll, even if (or especially because) I am using a Box Brownie. I love shooting film, it feels like photography! Warning: This doesn't mean that I dislike the digital world, nope, I don't. I like shooting digital as well. I just cannot compare the two worlds – taking an image on cellulose acetate and taking a picture on an electronic sensor?! This is like comparing my precious Olivetti typewriter to my loved Dell laptop – Not easily achieved. I love my laptop as much as my typewriter, and I love my negatives as much as my RAW's and jpeg's. Let me give you an "weekend example":

Saturday am: I go out and shoot a roll of slide film in my Seagull TLR.

Saturday pm: I cross-process the roll and scan the images.

Sunday am: I go out and spend my morning with my DSLR.

Sunday pm: I spend a few hours on the computer "cross-processing" with the help of an image-manipulating software.

I probably end up with very similar, if not almost identical result, but both days were very different. And I am not talking about my lunch or the weather here... I like both worlds. Yes, I do! And this love for anything remotely photographic brings, unfortunately, a lot of boxes with it... and for some strange reason; I seem to keep all of them on my shelves, which should really hold my cameras and accessories, not cardboard boxes! For the rare occasion, that I need to build a cardboard box for it, I could probably use cereal boxes, which at least still have a purpose: they hold my breakfast. And I tend not to keep them once I used their contents. So what is it with keeping those boxes?!

Will the weather suddenly from one day to another turn and I need them for insulation purposes or feed a fire with? I doubt that very much. So why let them gather dust in places where my cameras should sit proudly?

But I guess enough of pondering the advantages and disadvantages of such useless substances and space occupying residents, I better get back into that pile. Call the recycling centre; I am ready to part with my boxes!