

ACUTER DS20-60X80A DUAL-SPEED SCOPE

Looking for a scope on a budget? Matt Merritt tests Acuter's £250 effort



Acuter are another brand from the Optical Vision stable – I was recently impressed by their Helios binoculars – so it was always going to be interesting to see what they could do with a scope for just £250.

Well, let's start with the design. It's unfussy and clean, with easy-to-grip black rubber armouring all over, and a chrome rotating collar that click-stops in five positions. It's waterproof, too, and gives every impression that it would stand up to some rough handling. At 1,800g it isn't the lightest on the market by any means, but I generally prefer something that feels solid and robust.

The mounting plate has three different tripod fitting locations, which could certainly come in handy in maintaining balance if you're planning on doing any digiscoping. There's an extending hood, too.

Call me old-fashioned, but I liked having the split-focus wheel on the top right of the scope, although perhaps a more central position would suit both left and

FACTFILE

Exit pupil diameter

4mm maximum

Eye relief maximum

20mm

Field of view

37m@1,000m (20x) to

19m@1,000m (60x)

Length 415mm

Weight 1,800g

Price £249

Contact Optical Vision Ltd,

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right-handers. More on that later.

The zoom eyepiece screws in quickly and securely, and I liked the fact that the zoom control is well separated from the locking thread, making it very easy to find the zoom control without lifting your head from the eyepiece – in the past, I've occasionally come across scopes in which I've ended up unscrewing the eyepiece, inadvertently. No such problems here – even with gloves on, it was easy to grab exactly what you wanted to grab!

The rubber-covered eyecup is comfortable and twists up and down, offering a maximum of 20mm eye relief. There are only two definite positions, but in practice, it stayed in place at any intermediate point easily enough.

A nice feature is that the cup itself screws off, allowing you to fit a digiscoping adapter easily.

The image is bright and sharp, with excellent contrast, and maintained that quality right up to around the 40x mark, as well as at all distances.

Zooming in any further than that did bring an inevitable milkiness, especially around the edges, but that's one of the prices you pay with zoom lenses. I rarely use one at greater than 50x zoom, anyway, so I'm not sure I'd notice any great problem in extended use.

The colour is very natural, and even against very strong sunlight, there was impressively little, if any, chromatic aberration, at the lower magnifications. Once you get above 40x, though, it begins to get a lot more noticeable.

Field of view is 37m at 1,000m at 20x magnification, and 19m at the maximum 60x magnification. In practice, at anywhere between 20x and 40x it never felt restrictive, although at the higher end of the magnification range there was something of a tunnel effect.

Close focus is somewhere between six and seven metres – very respectable.

Focusing was easy and precise, thanks to those 'dual-speed' wheels. The larger took 7.75 clockwise turns from close focus to infinity, and both wheels turn relatively stiffly but very smoothly.

There's a really good stay-on case, and both a hard plastic case for the eyepiece (a nice touch if you're likely to be regularly packing your scope for overseas travel, etc) and a fabric one, plus a clip-on objective lens cover.

It's the price that's bound to create extra interest – for just £250, you get a good all-round performer that should stand up to all sorts of wear and tear. It does suffer by comparison with more expensive competitors in some areas (colour fringing at high mags, for example), but remember we're often talking about much more expensive scopes.

If you're on a budget, or looking to buy your first scope to extend your reach beyond the back garden, this is well worth a very close look.

First week with Acuter DS20-60x80A

