

Sky-Watcher Evostar-100ED / HEQ5 Pro mount

The dazzling champagne and white livery of the new Sky-Watcher Pro series from Taiwanese optical giant Synta Technology Corporation is certainly arresting. The new colour scheme gives the 100ED a distinctive, quality aura, but how did field testing measure up to Synta's assertion that the Pro series represents a step-up in quality and performance?

The 100ED Pro's tube assembly is a manageable 88cm (35 inches) long without the star diagonal in place. The gorgeous deep green multi-coatings applied to all four surfaces of the air-spaced objective lens are evenly applied and blemish-free, while the inside of the tube and drawtube has no less than six internal baffles to ward off scattered light and enhance contrast. A laser collimator revealed that the alignment of this instrument's components was fine.

Viewing subtle details

Employing a lens with one element crafted from an extra-low dispersion (ED) glass, the 100ED does deliver high-contrast views and gives very good correction at visual wavelengths. The colour fidelity is almost as good as its smaller sibling, the legendary 80ED. Bright star Vega showed a hint of false colour, but the views were an order of magnitude better than those delivered by a good f/12 achromat of the same aperture. Jupiter displayed subtle detail in its cloud belts when seeing permitted, while the celebrated 'double-double' star epsilon (ε) Lyrae clearly showed dark sky between both component pairs.

The supplied 9x50 finder and bracket is excellent, and anyone wishing to exploit the wide-field capabilities of the instrument will welcome the 2-inch (50.8mm) mirror star diagonal with 1.25-inch (31.7mm) adaptor. The adjustable Crayford focuser is buttery smooth and very precise. For those who enjoy viewing in the 'straight through' configuration, the 21cm (8-inch) drawtube will permit you to focus without the star diagonal.

The supplied multi-coated 9 and 25mm focal length long eye-relief eyepieces with twist-up eyecups may look reminiscent of a premium Pentax range, but their performance is only comparable to an average Plössl; do not

think of them as Pro series oculars.

The lighter of the two Go-To German equatorials offered in the Pro series range, the HEQ5 Pro SkyScan mount, handled the 100ED with aplomb, damping vibrations in about a second on grass with the tripod legs retracted. Synta appears to have addressed most of the engineering issues associated with its former non-computerised incarnation and implemented a quiet, reliable and accurate Go-To system that has some very well thought out features. I was most impressed with its performance. To read more about the SkyScan hand controller's capabilities and alignment procedures, see the SkyMax-150 Maksutov-Cassegrain Plus EQ6 Pro review over the page and *How we Tested* on page 90.



VITAL STATS

- ▶ **PRICE** £1,599
- ▶ **OPTICAL DESIGN** ED refractor
- ▶ **APERTURE** 100mm
- ▶ **FOCAL LENGTH** 900mm, f/9
- ▶ **GO-TO MOUNT** German equatorial
- ▶ **GROSS WEIGHT** 35kg
- ▶ **MANUFACTURER** Sky-Watcher (Synta)
- ▶ **TEL** 01359 244200
- ▶ **WEB** www.opticalvision.co.uk

- ▶ **FOR** Good optics, excellent mount
- ▶ **AGAINST** Eyepieces could be better

VERDICT

VALUE FOR MONEY	88%
OPTICS	90%
EASE OF USE	87%
BUILD QUALITY	91%
MOUNT & DRIVES	89%
OVERALL	89%