

Sky-Watcher SkyMax-150 / EQ6 Pro mount

Until the arrival of the new SkyMax-150, Sky-Watcher offered Maksutov-Cassegrain tube assemblies in apertures of 90, 102 and 127mm. Each of these instruments has garnered praise for its optical quality, fit and finish, a tradition continued by the SkyMax-150 Pro with its stunning champagne gold and white trim. This is no lightweight though: the tube assembly and 9x50 finder tip the scales at over 6kg. However, this does of course mean that you get a lot of telescope for your money.

The rich, deep green multi-coatings on the 151mm diameter meniscus at the front reveals an aluminised secondary mirror 43mm in diameter (with a 28 per cent central obstruction). A conical baffle tube fixed to the rear of the meniscus gives improved light sealing and reduced light scatter. The review instrument proved to be in perfect collimation, but should the need to adjust optical alignment ever arise, the rear cell does have three pairs of Allen-head screws.

Wide focusing range

The visual back eschews a standard SCT-style thread, while the rear aperture of the baffle tube is 24mm in diameter; this is a scope designed for 1.25-inch (31.7mm) diagonals and eyepieces. The SkyMax-150 is focused by moving the primary mirror via a focusing knob on the rear cell in the manner of Schmidt-Cassegrains. This does give a wider focusing range but the penalty is mirror shift, which in this model was in the region of 1 arcminute when changing focus direction.

Not surprisingly for a scope of this size and type, it required a cool-down time of about an hour before delivering the best images. Star testing revealed that the optics were smooth and well corrected, with very symmetrical intra- and extrafocal images.

Jupiter was a mesmerising sight when seeing permitted. Both pairs of epsilon (ϵ) Lyrae displayed a clean, single diffraction ring around each of the components, with other stars in the field; high contrast optics indeed.

The SkyScan Go-To mount is very rigid and imposing; with the tripod, it has a mass approaching 24kg. Add a counterweight and the SkyMax-150 tube assembly, and you're looking at a total close to 35kg. However, the weight is not a problem for this impressively equipped German equatorial: it will carry payloads up to about 22kg for visual use, approximately 18kg for imaging.

Like the HEQ5 Pro, I was most impressed by the performance of the new EQ6 Pro. At all slew speeds it was by far the quietest of all those under test and both the Go-To and tracking accuracy were superb. Astrophotographers will be glad to note that it has a built-in auto guider port and trainable period error correction (PEC) via the SkyScan hand control. Tests showed that it is possible to consistently autoguide the EQ6 Pro to an accuracy of better than 6 arcseconds.

VITAL STATS

- ▶ **PRICE** £1,549
 - ▶ **OPTICAL DESIGN**
Maksutov-Cassegrain
 - ▶ **APERTURE** 151mm
 - ▶ **FOCAL LENGTH** 1,800mm, f/12
 - ▶ **GOTO MOUNT** German equatorial
 - ▶ **GROSS WEIGHT** 35kg
 - ▶ **MANUFACTURER** Sky-Watcher (Synta)
 - ▶ **TEL** 01359 244200
 - ▶ **WEB** www.opticalvision.co.uk
- ▶ **FOR** Optics and high-spec mount
 - ▶ **AGAINST** Heavy to set up for one person



VERDICT

VALUE FOR MONEY	94%
OPTICS	96%
EASE OF USE	88%
BUILD QUALITY	90%
MOUNT & DRIVES	92%
OVERALL	92%