

Quantum Leap

Pete Moore tests yet another far eastern scope and finds that 'good' just got a whole lot better

At one time you could split telescopic sights into three areas: cheap crap, average to good and excellent but expensive. The first lot were usually sourced from China and Japan and catered for a market place that did not really know any better. However, and like the digital camera market, time and technology moves on and today this group has changed out of all proportion.

Cheap has been replaced with 'competitively priced', and the 'crap' label no longer fits. What we are now seeing are some sophisticated and well-built optics. But this latest 'far easter' is probably the best thing I have seen for some time.

Impressive

Made by Optisan and distributed in the UK by MTC Optics, the Viper range of scopes is impressive. The example I have here is a 3-12 x 44, a useful spec for a lot of needs. MTC appear to be more airgun-orientated than anything else, as they tout the Viper for Hunter Field Target (HFT) and general hunting use, but with its reticule and other features I see it fit for firearms too. The build

offers a 30mm, one-piece body tube, with lockable target turrets, side-parallax and an illuminated, Mil-Dot reticule, plus flip-up lens caps, 1/2" claw mounts and a 2" sun shade. And all this in a package with good quality optics at just over £200.

Of note are the turrets, un-capped they offer fast adjustment but can be locked in place, which gets over the real problem of accidentally moving them off your zero position. All you do is pull the drum up 1/16" to free it to allow normal dialling, then push it back down to re-engage. A slipping scale is incorporated that allows you to set to 0 after you have zeroed.

Click vales are 1/8" at 100 yards, precise and good for the shorter ranges used by airgunners, but it would appear to limit the amount of movement offered at longer distances. However, both turrets offer 12 full rotations (6" per turn), which equates to 72" of movement, which is generous. The drums are marked from 0 to 11 and sub-divided into four, so each large division equals 1/2" at 100 yards.

On the left of the saddle is the side focus/parallax drum, which is marked from 10 to 500 yards then infinity. Typical of its airgun roots a larger diameter wheel is included for those who like to use this



Detail of the Viper's saddle, the turrets are easy to dial and can be locked in position, on the left is a combined side focus and rheostat

facility for rangefinding. The Viper also incorporates the illuminated reticule control into this too with an 11-position rheostat. Moving back we have the magnification ring and fast focus eyepiece, all of these controls and the three turrets have deep, castellated gripping rings, which give plenty to get hold of.

Modern Mil-Dot

The reticule uses a modified Mil-Dot pattern with hash marks (lines) as

BELOW:
The new Viper from MTC Optics, an impressive and sophisticated package at a price you might not believe at first



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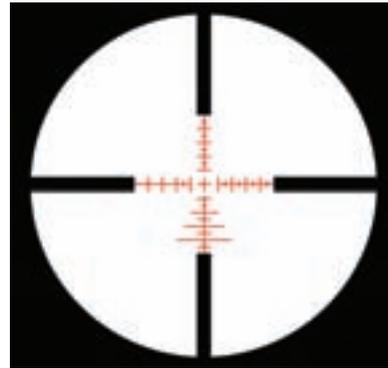
opposed to dots and offers 1, 1/2 and 1/4-mil subtensions. The centre cross is free floating and offers 1/2-mil arms, the 3, 9 and 12 o'clock arms are sub-divided into 1 and 1/2-mils with 1/4-mil at the ends. The 6 o'clock arm differs slightly: it has the same values as the others but has a 1/4-mil measure on the first dot. It also has lead arms to compensate for wind and moving targets of 2, 4, 6 and 8-mil, which forms a Christmas tree pattern on the 1,2,3 and 4-mil positions. Finally the thicker, outer arms show a 10-mil line. Describing this pattern makes it appear complicated, but in use you have a fast and efficient method of determining holdover as well as range, as the subtensions are most useful. Someone has really done their homework on this one.

What really surprised me was the illumination facility. I'm not a fan of lit reticules, as the light tends to blur the pattern so making it less efficient. But on the Viper this does not happen to such an extent, as it's possible even at position 9 to make out the 1/4-mil subtensions. I would have to say that this is far superior to some scopes costing four times as much.

I also fitted it to my 223 rifle where it performed with no ill effects and I will be trying it on a heavier calibre too. In truth a spring-powered air rifle will probably place more strain on an optic than a cartridge-firer.

Accessories are also well thought out, with flip-up caps that screw directly into the lens housings, special keys come with these that allow you to position them where you want. The sunshade is always a useful item, as are the 30mm rings, even though offering a 1/2" claw base. If I had to be picky I would say the magnification ring is a bit too firm in movement and the finish comes off the turret rims a bit too easily. But everything else is spot on including the optical quality, with the clever features like the locking turrets and useful reticule really making this a scope to be taken seriously.

The Vipers are flying off the shelves and I can now see why. I have been promised a 4-16 x 50 to test and I reckon that might end up on one of my varmint rifles. And I have no hesitation in giving this scope the SHOOTING SPORTS RECCOMENDED award, as it really is an excellent and practical design. **SS**



The reticule takes the form of a modified Mil-Dot with hash marks as opposed to dots, 1, .5 and .25 subtensions and four lead arms

TECH SPEC

Name	Optisan Viper 3-12 x 44
Body	tube 30mm
Reticule	modified Mil-Dot
2nd focal plane	
Click values	1/8" @ 100 yards
Clicks per turn	48
Full rotations	12
Lockable turrets	
Illuminated reticule	
Side focus	
Lens caps and sunshade	
30mm rings	
Price	£219
Contact	MTC Optics, 01666 826468, www.mtcoptics.co.uk



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