

Taipan



All this, plus all necessary tools and a cleaning cloth come as standard

24 Carat TAIIPAN

also metal flip-up lens caps, all necessary Allen keys, flip up scope caps and the correct tools for turning their locking rings, a built in sun shade, a large side focus wheel, a cleaning cloth and a tailored elasticated scope cover. The battery is also included, of course.

First Impressions

The first impression on opening the box is just how much there is inside, with all the supplied 'extras'. The scope itself is finished in what looks like (but is actually a tougher finish than) the same matt black as other MTC scopes, and the look, the feel, and the smoothness with which the controls operate suggest this is a quality product.

Your eye cannot help but be drawn to the telescoping sun shade or lens hood, which is an excellent idea. Nothing degrades the viewed image more than extraneous light entering the lens system, especially sunlight, and a long sun shade allows you to see clearly when the sun is in front of you and low in the sky, as obviously happens at dawn and dusk, when you can least afford a washed-out image. The Taipan's objective

MTC Optics quickly established a reputation as a supplier of quality scopes at reasonable prices, and is now building on that with the introduction of the top quality Taipan range. Jim Royce takes a look at the Taipan 4-16 x 50mm

A couple of years ago, MTC's Sammie Cooper told me that she first became involved with airguns because her two sons were interested in the sport, and she spent many hours shooting with them in the garden. One thing that niggled her at the time was that when she bought scopes for her sons, she also had to find extra money to buy sets of mounts and, perhaps with other mums in the same position in mind, she was determined that MTC scopes would come complete with mounts.

That tradition continues, only more so, with the new flagship MTC Taipan range. Not only do you get the scope and mounts, but



The saddle parallax adjuster has two raised sections, so grip is never a problem if you're wearing gloves



Flip-up lens covers should be compulsory



The supplied mounts feature double top clamps



The turret locking rings are chunky and lock the adjusters solid and prevent them turning accidentally



These push buttons give you the choice of red or green illuminated reticle, with five levels of brightness



The chunky sidewheel is designed with hunting in mind

lens is fairly deeply recessed within the objective bell, so most of the time, the shade can be fully back, though when sunlight could strike the objective, telescope it forward and you'll be able to see saturated colours and strong contrast rather than the washed-out image that results from extraneous light entering the system.

Weights and Measures

Weighing in at a fraction under a kilogram (2 lb. 2oz) and with a length of 409mm (16") with the sun shade retracted, rising to 479mm (18.9") with the sun shade extended, the Taipan is a large and pretty hefty scope. The sun shade is 66mm in diameter, and the ocular bell measures 40mm diameter. The eye relief, measured at 16x magnification, is 2.75".

Features

The target style turrets are a new design, and have a locking system that prevents them turning accidentally. At the base of each turret there's a large locking wheel, and to adjust the scope you first turn the locking wheel anticlockwise by roughly a sixth of a turn, and the adjuster then turns freely, with nice, positive and audible clicks. When the rifle is sighted in, you turn the locking wheel back, and the adjuster is locked solid. Foolproof.

The saddle parallax adjuster is silky smooth, and the distance marks for 10 yards, 25 yards and 50 yards on the test scope proved spot on. A chunky 75mm diameter hunting side wheel is supplied, and is keyed so that it can only be fitted in one position, so its distance marks were also accurate.

The reticle illumination control is also new. Rather than having the conventional dial operating a rheostat to control levels of brightness, there are two buttons, one for green, the other red. To select either colour you simply press the 'R' or 'G' button and, to select one of the five levels of brightness, you click the same button the appropriate number of times. There's a memory setting, as well, so that when you press either button, the reticle returns to the last brightness level you set.

The reticle itself is not the familiar MTC SCB, but the AMD – Advanced Mil Dot, with the mil dots appearing as small circles at the intersections between horizontal bars and the vertical, and the half mil dots as shorter bars. The AMD reticle was developed in response to requests from customers who liked the SCB

reticle, but wanted a less detailed reticle that's as simple to use as a 30/30. When illuminated, the centre cross of the AMD reticle illuminates – very useful when aiming off slightly in low light levels.

The magnification ring affords good grip and has two raised sections that allow it to be operated easily even if you're wearing gloves that offer little grip. The ring on the review scope was very smooth in operation though quite stiff to turn, but that's a good thing, because it means that, once set, it stays put.

All glass to air surfaces are multi-coated edge to edge with Micro-Lux coatings to improve definition, which is essential for low light performance. On the inside, the scope is sealed against the elements by 'O' rings, and there's a coil erector spring, so that the scope will react instantly when either adjuster is turned.

The supplied mounts are of a new design and have two separate top clamps on each mount, which means they're far easier to tighten evenly and less likely to come loose. Speaking of 'extras', one really nice touch is the elasticated cover, which is thick enough to protect the scope against scratches and minor knocks, appears to be made from a waterproof neoprene-like material, and securely slips over the scope while it's mounted on the rifle.

Performance

MTC scopes have always delivered optical performance a class above their price tags, and the Taipan does the same, only more so.

Most scopes give a bright image in decent light, but the acid test for any scope is how well it allows you to see in low light, and I decided to put the Taipan head to head against MTC's highly regarded Viper 3-12 x 44, viewing a clump of fine dead grasses from a range of 50 yards. This is a killer test for a scope, because not only does the target contain very fine detail, but it is fairly low contrast, and only the most precise lenses and the best lens coatings will be up to the task.

Even with good light levels, the difference in resolution between the two scopes was apparent and, as the light levels fell, the Taipan showed its class by continuing to reveal much more detail, as well as in greater saturation of colours and far better contrast. As the light level dropped further, I experimented with magnification to find the best low light setting for the two scopes; the Viper gave the best

image at 6x magnification, and the Taipan at 8x, at which setting I could still see quite well enough to shoot after the image through the Viper was too dim.

A visit by a shooting companion who brought a top European scope gave me the opportunity to compare the scopes side by side. The light was fairly good, and so we couldn't do a low light test, but my friend reckoned that his scope would just have the edge in low light due to its greater colour saturation, and I wouldn't argue with that. To buy a scope with the Taipan's specifications from the European manufacturer, you'd have to put a '1' in front of the Taipan's £259 price tag, but the fact that the Taipan was not disgraced in such company speaks volumes for its performance and value for money.

At 8x magnification, the Taipan would make an excellent scope for static hunting at dawn and dusk, often the two best times of day for rabbiting. For normal daytime hunting, 4x is low enough for closer range work and whenever the greatest depth of field is needed, and for longer ranges you can go right up to 16x and – the important bit – still have a beautifully crisp image. Do bear in mind that at 16x magnification, the exit pupil is just 3.125mm wide, and the eye relief becomes critical, so correct eye placement is essential. When you mount any zoom scope on the rifle, always set the eye relief at the maximum magnification. ●

MTC TAIPAN FACTS

MODEL: MTC Taipan 4-16 x 50
IMPORTER: MTC Optics
SPECIFICATION: 4-16 x 50
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: China.
MAGNIFICATION: 4-16x
OBJECTIVE LENS DIAMETER: 50mm
OBJECTIVE BELL DIAMETER: 66mm
OCULAR LENS DIAMETER: 33mm
EYE RELIEF: 2.75" @ 16x (measured).
CLICK ADJUSTMENT: 1/4" at 100 yards.
PARALLAX ADJUSTMENT: Yes. Saddle.
RETICLE: AMD (Advanced Mil Dot).
BODY TUBE: 30mm
LENGTH: 409mm (16")
WEIGHT: 990g (2 lb 2oz)
SPECS: Fully edge to edge multi coated lenses, fully waterproof, metal flip-up scope caps, field cover, side parallax, built in lens hood, illuminated reticle, all tools, cleaning cloth.
RRP: £259