

DREW'S LAB

★ OPTICS EXPLAINED ★

Drew's Reviews – Pulsar Challenger Gen 2+



Challenger gen 2+ Unit with Pulsar 805 IR flashlight on Tikka T3 lite

Pulsar Challenger Gen 2 + 1 x 21 with rear mount attachment

Having used most digital scopes and thermal sights, I decided to try out a Challenger Gen 2+unit. These have all the features of the less expensive GS monocular range but with superior performance characteristics due to the higher sensitivity and resolution of their Gen 2+ and Gen 3 image intensifier tubes. I had borrowed one before for spotting and I was impressed, so I thought let's try one on a rifle.

Thomas Jacks kindly loaned me a rear attachment, and Pulsar Glasgow provided me with a Challenger unit and headset to trial. As I did when reviewing the Apex XD38, I took the Challenger unit out with the premise of trying it out in Argyll at the rabbits.

My good friend Alistair donated his rim fire to try it out on. It's a lovely wee Mauser with a Tasco 3x9 x 40 scope on it, ideal for the rabbits. I had already tried fitting the rear attachment in my house on my 222 tikka and all was well. Now trying to fit a rear attachment at 2.30am with one of the coldest east winds I have ever felt, in the back of a 4x4, is not the smartest thing to do I found out.

After I got the unit on I couldn't get a good picture. Alistair and myself were a bit disappointed as it's not a cheap unit. In the morning I came to the conclusion I must be doing something wrong, so I contacted Pulsar Glasgow to remedy the situation. My contact advised me I need to move the diopter lens (the lens at the back of the scope for the layman) on the scope until the cross hairs are pin sharp. If you have parallax adjustment you can use this but I don't on my rifle scope.

So the rear attachment bracket, let's talk about that. The gen super and gen 2+ brackets are different, so make sure you get the right one for the unit. It retails for about £40 and is a plastic/metal mix in construction with a weaver rail for your IR unit - which you will need if shooting any kind of distance.

The attachment comes with a range of adaptor rings and fits easily on to your gun, as does the Challenger unit to the bracket. There is also a storage bag and allen key. The bracket screw for the monocular is good also, nice and meaty to use. The part that clamps onto the scope has a cam bracket for quick removal once set up. The bracket itself is only rated up to 223 calibres, which is a bit disappointing. This is because of its construction I am told by the factory.

Thomas Jacks told me to get a good IR illuminator for the test, so I took my Pulsar X850 , Pulsar 805 flashlight and Nightmaster 800. This time I used my 222 Tikka T3 light with Burris 3x9x56 scope for the second test - determined this was going to work as the unit's expensive and I would be disappointed if it didn't work again.

I got to the land I shoot at and set it up in the car. The trick is not to attach the IR unit to the rear attachment bracket. Once the monocular is clamped on, you can rotate the monocular, rear attachment bracket and diopter lens of the rifle scope until the cross hairs are sharp. Then you can attach the IR.

Remember, and this important, you will need a stock extender for this product. This is what I did and put on the X850 and 805 for a test. The Pulsar X850, excellent when used with other digital products, performed fairly well however I found the Pulsar 805 not good for more than 70-100 meters. But on this trial, the Nightmaster 800 gave a better view, with a more even flood beam, easily seeing 200 meters. I thought yes I've cracked it!

The unit works great and it's really clear and easy to use. I think with a more powerful IR, or some more adjustment with the IR, I could see further without any problem. So we are out and after an hour of spotting with the Thermal imager we are ready to go home. I decide to get out and really give the polystyrene a good squeak on the car window for a few minutes.

Next thing through the gate across from the car some 220 meters away slinks through Mr Fox. I tell my mate Duncan keep squeaking as I get the rifle out the car window and call that fella down the field.

Now the field in front is sloping down towards me, and at 100 meters there a dyke, but from about 175 meters I can't see the fox because of reeds in front of the dyke. I've got the unit on and the Nightmaster and now I'm on the wing mirror of the car waiting for the fox to come through the dyke.

Keep squeaking I whisper to Duncan, and as he does the fox comes up on the dyke and peeks through the back. He's a wise old fella and he peeks through again - he knows something isn't right. This time I see him and go for it as I get the feeling it's now or never. I shoot.

So I'm walking over and there it is, a neck shot and the wise fox is no more. I knew it wasn't coming through the dyke but the job is done and I'm pleased. So the Challenger gen2 + unit what can I say, well I've mainly used digitals or thermals however this unit has the following

PROS:

- Versatile unit - 3 modes of use (rifle attachment, headset and monocular)
- Compact
- Lightweight
- Good battery life (up to 2 weeks depending on use with one Cr 123)
- Good viewing distance in the dark 200 meters plus with good IR
- Easy to remove and fit to rear attachment
- Rear attachment cost (£40)
- Head set excellent to wear and good quality
- Won't lose POI when taken on and off gun
- A grade or B grade tube options

CONS:

- 1 x mag for the headset so you can walk (but you can get doubler)
- Built in IR ok for about 30 meters
- Need adjustable eye piece on rifle scope to work
- Not recommended for daytim3 Tmight

