

German
Precision
Optics GPO
10 x 32
ED Binocular

Reviewed by
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TEST FIRE



Who is GPO?

The brand was founded by ex-Zeiss Sports Optics bosses, Richard Schmidt and Michael Jensen, with their combined expertise aiming to deliver a high-end product without the high-end price "with regard to clarity and sharpness". Have they succeeded in providing a lower cost binocular that can compete with the optical attributes of a top-end unit?

GPO's significant launch of products have all been designed in their Germany headquarters, with manufacturing undertaken in Japan. The binoculars come in two product streams, Passion/Evolve ED (as tested) and the higher end Passion HD – the key difference being higher quality glass.

I'm somewhat fanatical about reducing bulk wherever possible, it's all about running with the most efficient, optimal kit possible that will still perform on the job. For this reason, I refused to test the 10x42 GPO binoculars – this common size being too big in my view for hunters that travel high and wide with gear on their back. Typically, I bush hunt with a 7x rangefinder for quick spotting which doubles as a range detector when needed. When I reach a spot that warrants wider and stronger viewing, I retrieve a set of 10x25 bino's from my hunting bag. For larger open tops hunting (Southern Alps / Fiordland etc) I forego the 10x25's for a pair of 10x32's which present a wider field of view and are easier on the eyes. The 10x32 is a great compromise between wider viewing with an acceptable size and weight for carrying.

Features:

ED glass technology.
Magnesium micro-bridge and body.
GPObright™ lens coating technology.
Waterproof and fog proof.
Lifetime warranty (understood to be transferable).
Tough aluminium eyecup tubes.
Lightweight and compact.
Custom-moulded hard case.

So how did the GPO's perform in the field?

A friend who owns a cheaper set of binos tried out the GPO's – this is what he said; "They start with a real nice form factor and keep growing from there. In terms of optics they are a step up and have better colour and brighter at low light. They appear to be slightly sharper all the way out to the lens edge. They were also 110 grams lighter! Overall, they are at least 20% better all around".

Now 20% may not sound a lot, however remember that in the optics world far smaller increments of improvement usually come at a significant kick in price, given the steep trajectory of cost vs quality.

In terms of optical perfection, the only thing I noticed was a small degree of chromatic aberration (colour fringing – inability of lens to concentrate all colour wavelengths



Build:

The GPO's utilise a magnesium body and a rubber armour with changeable texture – a bit rough on the outer side, smooth near the bridge and on the inner side of the tubes. The rubber clings to the binoculars well and I didn't find any loose patches anywhere, not even near the objective lenses. The central wheel, significantly big and ribbed, moves smoothly and is well-damped. Running from the shortest focal distance to infinity needs a turn through a typical angle of around 540 degrees.

Bugs:

I did strike a small problem with the central focussing wheel – a noticeable degree of free movement / lag when moving back and forth. The dioptre adjustment wasn't lockable though a locking dioptre is available on the higher end HD unit. The problem with being unlockable is that the dioptre could be moved in transit and you would have to reset it to match your respective eyes every time.

Conclusion:

As GPO testify themselves, the exponential cost of top end optical equipment compared to the additional visual benefit gained is often hard to justify for those of us who aren't on rockstar wages.

I believe that the GPO's represent a nifty niche in the market and the German designers have met their brief. Sitting between economy class and first class – these GPO ED binoculars sit nicely in business class and are well worth exploring with.

