

Imagic BGA SE 8.5x50

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The Opticron Imagic BGA SE binoculars are the 6th generation version of the Imagic series. They currently lie between the DBA Oasis (now replaced by the DBA VHD's) and Verano BGA HD models in Opticron's full size line-up. The range comprise 8.5x50 and 10x50.

The binoculars come in a nicely presented light grey cardboard box. Pulling out the contents reveals the instrument protected inside a soft leather case with magnetic press-stud fastener, warranty card/ instructions and a microfibre cleaning cloth packed a protective folding pouch. On opening the binocular case, a leather clip-on strap was the first thing out which I assume is used when hanging the case around your neck or over your shoulder. The binocular strap is a thick (approx 6mm) neoprene type which has some elasticity and importantly has soft edging to stop the strap cutting or digging into your neck whilst carrying the binoculars.

I have average sized hands and holding the binoculars felt very comfortable and well balanced. The black rubber armour around the binocular is smooth but not slippery even when the binoculars or your hands are wet. I weighed the binoculars in at 795g - bang on what Opticron publish on their website. Although this may seem heavy, to be honest it's not too much heavier than many 42mm sized models and about the same as the lower priced Discovery 8x50. That said, given the heavier weight - the neoprene strap supplied is very welcome!

The binoculars are stated to be nitrogen filled and waterproof to a depth of 3 metres. I tested these binoculars in both light rain but also in the recent heavy downpours for extended (1hr plus) periods and found they did not fog up at all. I was unable to test them in a deep (<3m) tank of water but see no reason not to trust Opticron on their waterproof capability!

The binoculars have a minimum focus distance of 3.5 metres. This is more than the Discovery 8x50 which has a minimum focus distance of only 1.5m so observation of nearby objects or wildlife such a butterflies may not be possible. So be aware of this issue. However the eye relief is a generous 23mm, and makes for very comfortable viewing especially for glasses wearers like myself. Dioptre adjustment is achieved by the usual rotating ring on the right ocular.

Looking through the binoculars gives a good wide 6 degree field of view. Focusing from minimum focus to the focus limit takes one and a quarter turns. This makes focusing easy as you are not continually rotating the focus knob when focusing at different distances.

The views through the binocular are best described as bright with high contrast. On a bright sun-lit day the instrument reveals plenty of detail on feathers of birds in my back garden as well as slightly larger low flying aircraft coming into Leeds-Bradford Airport. Nearby my house are a row of trees and the leaves, reflecting the sunlight, show plenty of structure with great vividness. The tree bark, in the sun's shade, also showed plenty of detail and contrast showing that the binocular's prism and lens coatings (PC Phase correction and F-type multi coating) were doing their job. On an overcast dull and cloudy day, views of the same trees again show plenty of detail and contrast.

Looking at grey clouds did show a slight warm, yellowish tint. I tested this by illuminating a sheet of paper with a white LED and found the same slight warm tone. However, this very slight tint is NOT off putting by any means and I found it only reveals itself under certain conditions - namely when the sky is overcast and grey.

The slight increase in aperture over the "standard" 42mm binoculars means the extra light grasp will be of interest to people wanting to do a bit of stargazing. I first tested the binoculars on a crescent Moon and found the view absolutely amazing. The craters on the terminator (the division between the dark and illuminated areas on the Moon) just "popped" out, and the dark "seas" being very vivid. The slight yellow tint was noticeable but not off putting, and one would have to ask oneself if it there. The binoculars do not use ED (low dispersion) glass and a very small amount of chromatic aberration could be seen around the Moon but once again it is well controlled and not intrusive. Views of the late-Summer, to Autumnal and now Winter Milky Way sprawling across the night sky show a myriad of pinpoint stars, some star clusters and some nebulae all in high contrast giving a very rich view.

Overall these binoculars are well worth the money from an optical viewpoint. The slight increase in size and weight over a 42mm aperture model is not really significant and the extra light grasp does give a