

The Viper comes complete with a set of mounts, screw-in lens covers, a sunshade, and a 3" sidewheel extension, not to mention a lens cloth, adjustment tools and a proper instruction booklet

Jules Whicker tests the 10x44 IRS model from MTC's popular Viper scope range

Over the last year or so Sammie and Gary Cooper's MTC Optics have earned themselves quite a reputation with their feature-rich and keenly-priced Viper range of riflescopes. So when I heard they had a new model out, I was keen to get hold of one. This latest addition to the Viper range turned out to be a fixed-mag 10x44; a classic military configuration that combines enough magnification to engage man-sized targets at long-range – or vermin-sized ones at airgun ranges - with an objective that is big enough to provide significant low-light capability without excessive bulk. The X10 mag also makes it easy to "do the math", as our American friends might say, when it comes to range finding and trajectory compensation.

A complete package

I'll say more about the scope - and its custom reticle - in a minute, but first I've got to mention the host of other goodies that come with it. To begin with, there's a set of mounts. This would be good news under any circumstances, but as Vipers are built around a 30mm tube, and not everyone

has a spare set of 30mm mounts knocking around, having a set thrown in saves you hassle as well as money, solving a potential problem even before it exists.

Next up are the lens covers. Regular scopes come with elasticated plastic covers and, be they plain black or see-thru, most of us just chuck them away and buy some Butler Creeks, which may or may not be a perfect fit. But the Viper is equipped as standard with a set of fantastic flip-open alloy lens covers that screw into the threads in the ocular and objective bells. What's more, these can be set up with the aid of the adjustment tools provided so the hinge is wherever you want it, and they've even got O-ring seals to keep the weather out!

If too much sun is the problem however, well, that's taken care of too, because the box also contains a screw-on sunshade, which is also threaded to take the cover for the objective lens. As if that wasn't enough, there's also a 3" slip-on extension for the side-wheel that controls the parallax, something I'll say more about when discussing the scope's controls.

Finally, there's a set of Allen keys, a lens cloth, and a clear and comprehensive manual

Snake eye

The ocular bell has a tactile fast-focus dioptre adjustment ring; also worthy of note is the O-ring seal inside the lens cover



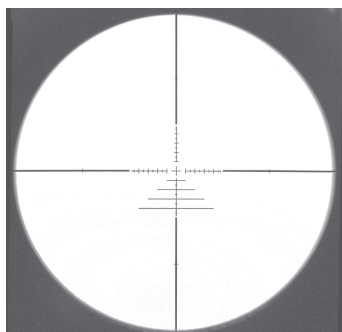
- in proper English - to ensure that Viper owners get the most from their scope from the very start, plus the reassurance of a comprehensive 12-month guarantee. Taken together, this is a uniquely comprehensive package of accessories, and it makes the Viper range supremely friendly both to the user and on the pocket.

Layout and build quality

So now to the scope itself: it certainly looks the business, with its 30mm tube, three chunky turrets and distinctive saw-tooth

knurling on the control surfaces. The entire scope has a tough-looking, matte-black finish, and all the lettering is pressed or moulded into the metal with none of the ostentatious gold or silver highlighting beloved of other brands. In fact, the only details that are picked out in white are the essential gradations on the controls, and these are duly crisp and clear.

Amidships the Viper has three adjustment turrets: the regular windage and elevation controls, plus a third turret that combines parallax adjustment and a rheostat to control the brightness of the illuminated



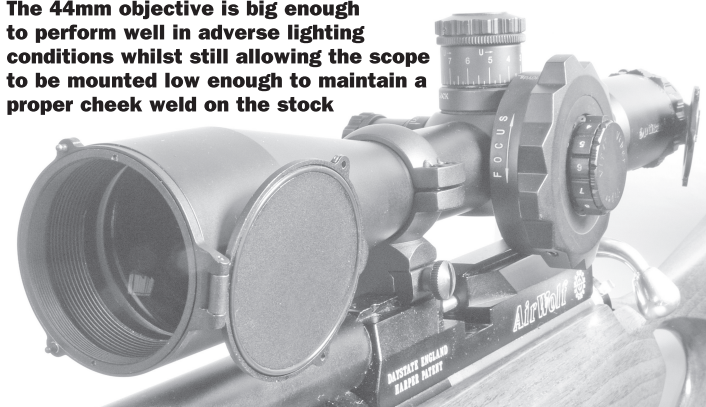
MTC's SCB reticle gives you all the precision you need whilst remaining quick and instinctive to use

The "regular" turrets are far from standard, however; in the first place, each click represents an eighth rather than a quarter of an inch of movement at 100 yards for greater precision, and secondly, the turrets have a neat, patented, lift-to-turn-push-to-lock mechanism, and a quick and simple system for resetting the dial to zero. This makes for adjustments that are supremely quick, visible and secure.

The clicks themselves are positive, producing consistent and repeatable changes in the point of impact, and, thanks to the 30mm tube, there's also a good range of movement, giving a maximum of 14' of elevation and 12' of windage at 100 yards.

The focusing controls on the Viper are good too, with a chunky quick-focus ring on the ocular-bell, which is stiff but smooth, and the parallax control on the third turret, which runs smoothly in a clockwise direction from 10m to infinity. As I mentioned earlier, you can make this control more precise by fitting the extension provided – an operation that takes only a few seconds. Just locate the rectangular lug on the parallax dial, align it with the matching lug on the illumination control, then line up the matching cutaway in the side-wheel extension, slip this on over the turret, tighten up the grub screw with the Allen key provided and Bob's your uncle.

The 44mm objective is big enough to perform well in adverse lighting conditions whilst still allowing the scope to be mounted low enough to maintain a proper cheek weld on the stock



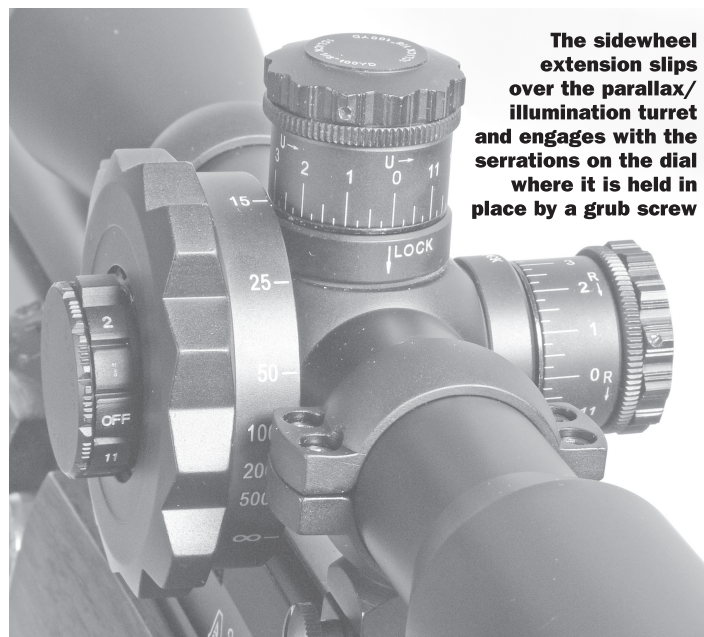
The rheostat isn't affected by fitting the side-wheel extension, and can still be cycled through its 11 positions, though all but the lowest two are too bright – which, to be fair, is more than you can say for many IR scopes. What's more, there's comparatively little flare inside the tube, and almost none at the useful settings.

As for the reticle itself, two options are available, both glass-etched: a standard mil-dot or MTC's own Small Calibre Ballistic (SCB) reticle. This is an enhanced mil-dot design offering multiple mil-radian stadia that allow bracketing from 20 mils to a quarter of a mil and featuring a "Christmas-tree" array at 6 o'clock as an aid to calculating windage/lead. I really like it; its quick when you need to be quick and as precise as you could wish for.

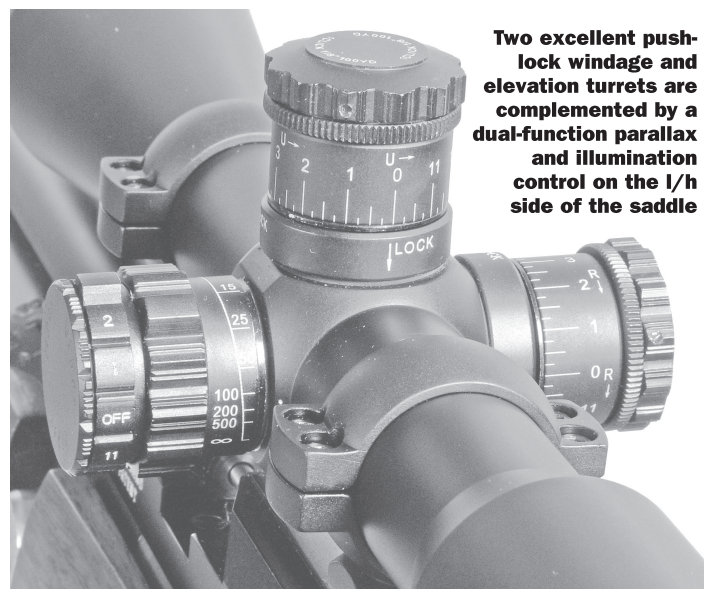
Conclusions

Of course, you can have all the bell, whistles and clever custom reticules you like on a scope – or at least with the Viper you can – but you still need to be able to see your target clearly, and that means top quality lenses and coatings. In this department, all I can say is I don't know how MTC and their Chinese supplier Optisan manage to offer the kind of brightness and resolution found in the Viper for under £200. There's little here to find fault with at any price, but I reckon you'd be paying at least twice as much before you found anything better.

All in all, then, the MTC Viper 10x44 represents simply superb value and an extremely user-friendly and practical package, and is well suited to a wide range of applications from air rifle through rimfire to centrefire use, both on the range and in the field. As for me, once I've done the photos for this piece, I'm going to be sending Gary and Sammie a cheque, not a scope!



The sidewheel extension slips over the parallax/illumination turret and engages with the serrations on the dial where it is held in place by a grub screw



Two excellent push-lock windage and elevation turrets are complemented by a dual-function parallax and illumination control on the l/h side of the saddle

TECH SPEC

Make	MTC Optics / Optisan
Model	Viper 10x44 IRS
Magnification	X10
Objective lens diameter	44mm
Length	w/o sunshade 14.5" / w sunshade 17.1"
Weight	w/o sunshade 22.2 oz / w sunshade 24.3 oz
Finish	Matte black
Adjustments	1 click = 1/8" @ 100 yards
Adjustment range	14' of elevation and 12' of windage @ 100 yards
Eye relief	1.5" - 3.125"
Reticle	Small-Calibre Ballistic rangefinding / compensating reticle
Reticle Illumination	11-position rheostat
Features	Side-wheel parallax Locking elevation and windage turrets Zero-able turret dials
Accessories	30mm alloy mounts Sunshade Flip-up alloy lens covers and installation tools Side-wheel extension Lens cloth Allen keys