

## MM4 77 GA ED/45 with SDLv2 Eyepiece

Paul Brewster (July 2019)

Just when many birders are downsizing their scopes, why has Opticron launched a new larger objective diameter scope in their MM Scope range? In my opinion this product is a stroke of genius, fitting nicely, in size and weight, between the travel scope options and the 80mm-plus scopes. It gives birders an option to downsize from larger bulkier models to one with the light gathering power of a 77mm diameter objective, but with a comfortable weight of 1.25kg.

As a long term owner of an original Leica APO 77 scope I feel in a perfect position to critique the only 77mm scope currently available from the leading suppliers. This allowed me to perform a side-by-side comparison between the old and new. Putting the two scopes next to each other, the Opticron MM4 77 looks so much more compact and is significantly smaller in most dimensions compared the Leica. The Opticron is also much lighter, weighing in at just over 1.5kg with the SDL v2 zoom compared to the Leica body plus zoom combined weight of just under 2.4kg.

Size may be important, but what about performance? Side-by-side my first test of the two scopes used a 'test' pattern of converging lines; a standard test for optics resolution. The two scopes could not be separated at minimum magnification (18x Opticron vs. 20x Leica). Both were excellent for resolution and brightness. At mid-point, the Opticron matched the Leica and maintained parity through to the top end (54x Opticron, 60x Leica) where the latter shaded the newcomer for resolution but not brightness. Although the Leica is the premium priced scope (the equivalent Leica combination is currently over £2000) the performance difference was minimal. This piece of kit certainly punches well above its weight with its RRP of £978.

The rest of my testing was done in field conditions with the MM4 77 alone. I chose an overcast day in order to test the light gathering quality of this scope in less than ideal conditions. The first test was at 18x magnification, and the image obtained was stunning; bright and sharp with no discernible reduction in quality towards the edge of the field of view. The dual focus knob has always been my favourite way of focusing a scope, and the coarse focus allowed me to home in quickly on the subject, whilst the fine focus allowed a tweak to sharpen the image to perfection. The field of view was wide enough to make finding the subject easy, and the close focus of around 5m was fine for birding; although I would have liked it a tad closer for my insect digiscoping!

Next, increasing the zoom I found the instrument perfectly useable in the relatively dull conditions of the day right up to 54x. As with all scopes, field of view and light gathering decrease as magnification increases but I didn't find myself asking for more of either. The quality of the 40936 SDL v2 zoom eyepiece complements this scope perfectly and together they are a fabulous option for those with a budget under £1000.

As a final test I did some digiscoping through the scope at 18x (900mm in telephoto lens language) using my old Contax U4R Digital Compact 4 Megapixel camera.

The two images shown are uncropped and show a Grey Heron, first a shot straight from the camera with no zoom and then the digiscoped shot through the Opticron MM4 77 Scope; I think the result speaks for itself!

