

Vixen GP2 Photo Guider

VITAL STATS

- **Price** £829
- **Hand controller** Yes (Type DD-3)
- **Polarscope** Yes, illuminated
- **Load capacity** 2.5kg
- **Tracking rates** Sidereal, plus three slew rates
- **Weight** 6kg (without counterbalance weight – several available)
- **Extras** Polarscope, tripod, counterbalance weight, carry bag
- **Supplier** Widescreen Centre
- **Tel** 020 7935 2580
- **www.widescreen-centre.co.uk**

THE GP2 PHOTO Guider looks very much like a conventional GP2 equatorial mount – until you realise that the dec. axis has been replaced with a custom head that enables you to attach a camera on one side and a small counterbalance bar on the other.

The two-section, adjustable-height tripod supplied was perfectly adequate for use with a lightweight camera

outfit, resulting in a very portable system. No ball head was supplied with this mount so we used our own. Calibrating the polarscope was simple, following the process adopted by many equatorial mounts. Subsequent polar alignment was straightforward and accurate, using the supplied reticule illuminator and the RA and date scales as a circular slide rule.

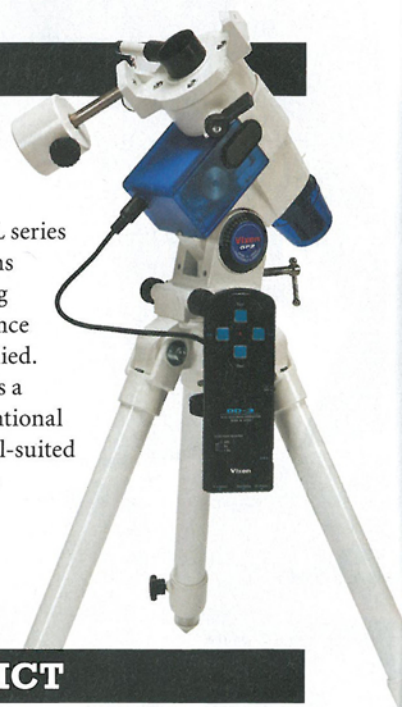
The mount itself had a solid feel and assembly was simple to carry out using the Allen keys supplied. The two manuals were detailed enough to help a beginner to prepare the setup for an astrophotography session.

A dual-axis hand controller is supplied but, of course, only the RA section is functional. This had northern and southern hemisphere sidereal tracking as well as 1.5x, 2x and 32x rates for locating celestial objects. There is also an industry-standard ST4 autoguiding port for use with a small telescope.

We were able to easily balance the weight of our Canon 450D camera and 200mm

f2.8 Canon L series telephoto lens using the 1kg counterbalance weight supplied.

The GP2 is a fairly conventional product, well-suited to beginners due to its accurate tracking capabilities.



VERDICT

FOR A good range of extras
AGAINST Basic camera attachment

ASSEMBLY	88%
BUILD AND DESIGN	90%
EASE OF USE	89%
STABILITY	90%
TRACKING ACCURACY	90%
OVERALL	89%