

Group test

SIX BINOCULAR VIEWERS UNDER £460

Overall winner

William Optics binoviewer **86%**

What's clear from this *Group test* is that the qualities one would look for in a large aperture pair of binoculars are quite different to those you'd look for in a binoviewer.

Firstly, conventional binoculars are essentially two separate refracting telescopes in parallel which produce two light beams, whereas the prisms in a binoviewer split a single beam of light to feed two eyepieces.

Secondly, conventional observation binoculars are rarely used above a magnification of about 40x, while a well-made and finely collimated binoviewer may handle a magnification up to five times that amount.

The optical demands made upon a binoviewer are therefore quite high. Should you really be expecting these mid-range models to deliver tangible benefits like enhanced detection of faint light, improved colour perception and better communication between the eye and the brain? We believe the answer is a firm yes for the



three models that came out as the front-runners, when they're used on deep-sky and planetary subjects. But it also pays to remember that even the best models can fail to produce that 'wow' factor in some people: just like 3D puzzles, not all of us can see them.

Even so, there's no denying that it is more relaxing to view the stars with both eyes open, and when you're comfortable you see more. If you have unusual or exacting optical requirements, then the Baader Maxbright






certainly gets the nod for the most versatile product.

But in the end, we liked the fact that the William Optics binoviewer performed like a well-crafted system. It really felt like a good deal of thought had gone into the practicalities of using it with different types of telescope. Consequently, it's this month's best buy.

NEXT MONTH
We look at that supportive piece of equipment, the telescope mount, testing four models with Go-To capability for stability and accurate tracking

At a glance guide

MODEL
BUILD QUALITY
OPTICAL QUALITY
FEATURES
ADJUSTMENT
VALUE FOR MONEY
OVERALL

						
MODEL	1.25-inch Moonfish binoviewer	Revelation binocular viewer	Burgess Optical binocular viewer	William Optics binoviewer	Baader Maxbright binoviewer	Baader Stereo binocular viewer
BUILD QUALITY	74%	78%	81%	87%	85%	92%
OPTICAL QUALITY	76%	73%	76%	83%	80%	85%
FEATURES	75%	83%	84%	94%	93%	89%
ADJUSTMENT	66%	71%	78%	73%	82%	67%
VALUE FOR MONEY	88%	92%	89%	94%	84%	62%
OVERALL	76%	79%	82%	86%	85%	79%

William Optics binoviewer

VITAL STATS

- ▶ **PRICE** £179.99
- ▶ **PRISM TYPE** BaK4, broadband coated
- ▶ **DIMENSIONS** 120 x 112 x 42mm
- ▶ **WEIGHT** 520g
- ▶ **INTERPUPILLARY DISTANCE** 54–75mm
- ▶ **EYEPIECE FIELD STOPS** 19mm
- ▶ **SUPPLIER** Ian King Imaging
- ▶ **TEL** 01892 550100
- ▶ **WWW** iankingimaging.com
- ▶ **FOR** Great optics and design
- ▶ **AGAINST** No collimation adjustment

VERDICT

BUILD QUALITY	87%
OPTICAL QUALITY	83%
FEATURES	94%
ADJUSTMENT	73%
VALUE FOR MONEY	94%
OVERALL	86%

PAUL WHITFIELD

With this binoviewer, we move into the mid-range price bracket and begin to see a marked improvement in design, features and optical quality.

Anyone familiar with the William Optics philosophy of high quality at a reasonable price will be glad to know that it extends to binoviewers. Conceived very much as an observing system, the unit comes in a presentation box with two wide-angle 1.25-inch eyepieces of 20mm focal length in addition to a 1.6x Barlow lens. The latter screws into the front of the binoviewer nosepiece, permitting you to use the unit with a wide range of scopes, from Newtonians and refractors to Schmidt- and Maksutov-Cassegrains.

We were especially pleased to note that William Optics provides



safety undercuts on the nosepiece and the eyepieces. This means that if the screws in your scope's focuser or the unit's eyepiece holders slacken off, your precious investment isn't going to go crashing to the ground. What's more, brass compression rings in the ocular holders stop your eyepieces being scratched.

We found the deep green multi-coatings of the BaK4 prisms to be

excellently applied, which further enhanced the high-contrast views. There isn't much provision for adjusting the eyepiece centering, but we found the collimation to be extremely good. All in all, this is a versatile binoviewer with the added bonus of a two-year warranty.

Sky at Night
BEST BUY