

Re: Have refractors hurt the hobby?

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On 17 Nov 2004 20:07:09 -0800, gbarabinosr@yahoo.com (Gary Barabino Sr) wrote:

>RichA <none@none.com> wrote in message news:<8q1mo0pvj1hb6mu6g8612kgmk2gj57sjfd@4ax.com>...
>> *In the Dec. issue, the editor of Sky and Tel in December discusses
>> Christmas present telescopes. He of course makes mention of the junk
>> scopes, the 60mm 525x refractors and 76mm reflectors that are
>> mechanically and optically (usually by their eyepieces) challenged and
>> that they do more to turn people off the hobby than turn them on.*
>>
>> *This is undoubtedly true. But forget the 76mm reflectors, the main
>> culprit is the 60mm refractor on it's 9000 year old Tasco alt-az
>> rickety mount that is by far the main culprit, along with it's
>> dog crap little Huygen eyepieces and 3x plastic barlows.
>> So, has the mere presence of these telescopes harmed the hobby,
>> by driving many away from it.*
>>
>> *I used to have the view that if someone couldn't maintain their
>> interest enough to "live" with a 60mm for a few years until they
>> sought out something better, maybe they didn't deserve to be in the
>> hobby, that their interest was not genuine. But, after having
>> watched the behaviour of amateurs over the past 35 years, I realize
>> that some (more now than before) come into the hobby and can be
>> turned off by bad equipment. Whether they "deserve" to be in the
>> hobby is purely a judgment call on people's part.*
>>
>> *So if most agree that the lowly cheapo 60mm refractor (or worse,
>> the fully plastic 40 or 50mm trashrefractor) has turned away potential
>> devotees, what can be done about it?*
>>
>> *About 17 years ago, Meade and Celestron tried to help out here. They
>> both offered only decent (not great, but workable) 60mm refractors
>> with reasonable 1-1/4" eyepieces and real finderscopes. This was a
>> noble attempt by them to "upscale" the beginner. It worked for a bit,
>> but ultimately, both companies for whatever reason decided to dispense
>> with all pretense at being the hobby saviours and started selling
>> the same garbage scopes Tasco and Bushnell and Swift, etc, had been
>> selling. They needed the high margins these scopes offer.*

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>> They probably help offset R&D and production costs of real scopes.
>>
>> The editor of Sky and Tel offers up the usual advise (which is good)
>> about trying educate people about bad versus good telescopes, but
>> amateurs are too few in number to influence the bulk of telescope
>> buyers who are looking generally for just another Christmas gift to
>> offer up and who don't put anymore thought into it than someone
>> buying a shirt for someone. In fact, someone is more likely to know
>> a good clothing brand than telescope.
>>
>> But what if the only scopes offered at the entry level are decent
>> quality ones? Celestron and Meade tried this a decade+ ago, offering
>> decent beginner scopes, 1-1/4" eyepieces, good finders, etc, but they
>> couldn't sustain it and started selling the junk themselves to compete
>> with the odious Bushnell and Tasco.
>>
>> So, over the past 40 years, had good scopes only been offered, would
>> there be more amateurs in the hobby today, or (despite the rejection
>> rate of the junk) are there more in the hobby today because of the
>> sheer number of cheapo junk scopes that have been turned out?
>> If you sell 100,000 good scopes, and 80% of the people stay in the
>> hobby, or 500,000 pieces of junk and 200,000 stay in the hobby,
>> obviously the junk scopes did a better job.
>>
>> So have the cheap refractors hurt or helped the hobby?
>> -Rich
>
>Hi Rich!No I dont think that the 60mm refractors have hurt the hobby
>at all.I think that their manufacturers claims tend to discourage some
>beginners after they have had them for a while.I am familiar with
>TASCO because I owned a 50mm(2") refractor 100x ,and a JASON 280x
>Constellation 60mm refractor.Both gave me fine views,but I educated
>myself on telescope terminology and avoided the high powerlow aperture
>trap,so that I was able to enjoy use of the scope.Those scopes were
>built better without much plastic.The TASCO 2" even had an all metal
>rack and pinion focuser-it was the 6TE-5.My friend Melvin logged a
>sketch of the waning gibbous moon using it back in 1972 October (The
>drawings are in my 1972 Journal).I think that the optics of todays
>60mm's are better than those were.My suggestion to the 60mm user-take
>the time to learn your telescope and its capabilities.Learn how to use
>it and get some good books on scopes or join an astronomy club.Perhaps
>a 60mm telescope users group would be helpful.After you learn your
>scope,you can upgrade to a larger one or upgrade your 60mm scope with
>better eyepieces.Though these new scopes are built like junk,a little
>work can make them into decent units.Ya just need a little fire in the
>belly!Gary Barabino Sr

Oddly enough, the optics of the average 60mm refractor are probably fine in most cases. The dissuaders are the horrible, unstable mounts, the crappy eyepieces that push 300x and are hard to look though and the useless finderscopes.

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People like myself who grafted decent 1-1/4" eyepieces on those scopes found out they weren't that bad optically.