

CENS PROFLEX HUNTER

Prices from **£579.00** with aforementioned accessories

CONTACT: Puretone, 01634 719427 cens@puretone.net www.puretone.net

Animal Ability

Pete Moore checks out the latest version of the CENS hearing protectors and finds things have moved on a little - and for the better too



Left: The active package is removable and can be replaced with passive inserts

Middle: Detail of the active insert top - programme button, bottom - volume control

Right: The original, swing-out battery tray has been replaced with a far more practical design

I have been using a set of the CENS Hunter hearing protectors for over a year now and in that time have learned to appreciate what they offer; not only in terms of protection but also audible acuity. The manufacturers Pure Tone have updated the design a little and sent me the latest rifle-orientated; model the ProFlex Digital Hunter to see how they compare to the originals.

First things first; the CENS system is active in that it not only blocks harmful noise levels such as gun shots but due to integral microphones allows you to hear conversation and other normal level noises. So in a range situation for example you're fully protected but are not deaf and cut off from the outside world as you would be with a passive (sound blocked only) system. This makes for a generally safer environment all round. In the

field they do act like an improved ear and offer a lot more understanding of your location and the ability to detect quarry as I have found out on more than one occasion. We are no strangers to such active systems when built into large and bulky head sets, but the CENS do this in a discrete, custom-moulded ear plug made from soft, surgical silicone.

Full fit

The unit consists of the actual plug that not only fills the canal but also the inner surface of the ear too. You will have to get this moulded by Pure Tone and they offer a choice of solid colours and a 2-tone marble effect using any of the colours. These are marked with coloured dots - red right and blue left for easy identification. Unlike my earlier version the ends that fit into the canal are clear so you can

easily see any build-up of wax that could block the tube.

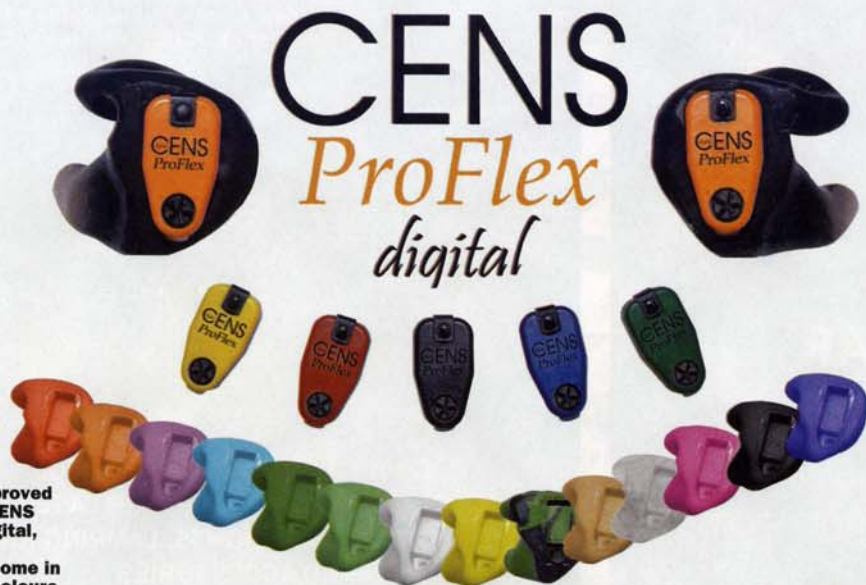
Into this fits the electronics package, which offers a combined, rotary ON/OFF and volume switch with slotted top for easy manipulation, above is the programme button that offers two modes of operation. There are also passive inserts that replace the electronics. The spec is as follows; frequency response: 200-6600 Hz, digital DSP circuitry, Zinc Air 312 battery (life approx. 150 Hours), digital compression, low battery warning and wax protection.

What you get in the package is as follows: personal laser marking (name), metal travel case, plastic travel case, squeeze-top pouch, air puffer for cleaning earpieces, brush with magnet for cleaning and battery removal, CENS wallet for storing user guide and gun licenses, pack of six spare batteries, CENS clothing patch, SmartCare earmould comfort cream and windshields in the comprehensive pack, user and guide CENS peaked cap.

Major changes

Comparing the old to the new shows a rationalisation of design with the electronic package being a tad easier to operate with improved battery access. The moulding is not as deep either with the inserts sitting proud rather than semi-flush as before. It could be me but I found the ProFlex just a bit easier to insert and maybe even more comfortable, though the originals were not an issue either. But for extended use you could tell...

One comment I made to Martin Dickman (Pure Tone) about my first set



Product improved - the new CENS Pro Flex Digital, active ear defenders come in a range of colours

was they were affected by wind noise, which is common with any active system. With muffs a foam rubber sock is included over the microphone that helps. The originals had moulded covers and when you wore the earbags they both combined to reduce the problem.

The Hunters are designed especially with the rifle shooter in mind. The brand new state-of-the-art circuitry is capable of suppressing loud gunshots with ease in either programme 1 or 2. As before I took it up to 375 Ruger a cartridge that is producing more than the old 375 H&H Magnum and with no ill effects. Programme 2 provides increased wind noise reduction, without losing the ability to hear sounds such as wing beats and animal cries. What I did find worrying was the fact that animals have considerably better hearing than we humans do and up a high seat for example the noise generated by clothing rubbing together and similar sounded deafening through the CENS. I would assume that is how the quarry might hear us and gives a whole new

meaning to being downwind of your potential prey...

Wing beats

On the plus side the beating of a bird's wings as it takes off or an animal pushing through cover should give the hunter the ability to locate the quarry's direction and location far easier. Likewise in a clay pigeon situation the spring of the trap as it launches should be more noticeable too.

That aside the CENS ProFlex Hunters offer a compact, practical, comfortable, effective and above all safe option in terms of hearing protection. Too many field shooters neglect this vital consideration; thinking one shot will not make a difference; well it does and all damage is cumulative so never gets better. We are not talking cheap here, but what price do you put on your hearing?

There is also an interesting new development as Martin detailed: "We are now building these for the Scandinavian markets which incorporate an inductive pickup input. These units are worn as usual but the hunter also wears a neck loop



CENS come with a neat hard case as well as a soft wallet along with a host of extras

↑ FOR
Compact, effective and versatile

↓ AGAINST
Expensive

➡ VERDICT
A truly practical approach to hearing protection for the shooter

(basically a coil worn like a necklace under the garments around the neck which plugs into the headphone output socket of audio equipment). This allows the user to hear the audio output of the radio's via a wireless link directly into the CENS device. Thus they can keep in communication with each other without removing or handling the walkie talkie."

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