

ON TEST: RILEY'S NEW SHOOTING GLASSES

Clay

HISTORIC PERAZZI UNEARTHED

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fascinating story of the very first MT6

SHOOTING

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CLAY SHOOTING

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Hearing protection is essential to protect against the damaging effects of gunfire

YOU KNOW IT MAKES CENS

Lloyd Pattison is mighty impressed with the latest CENS electronic ear plugs – but which model is right for you?

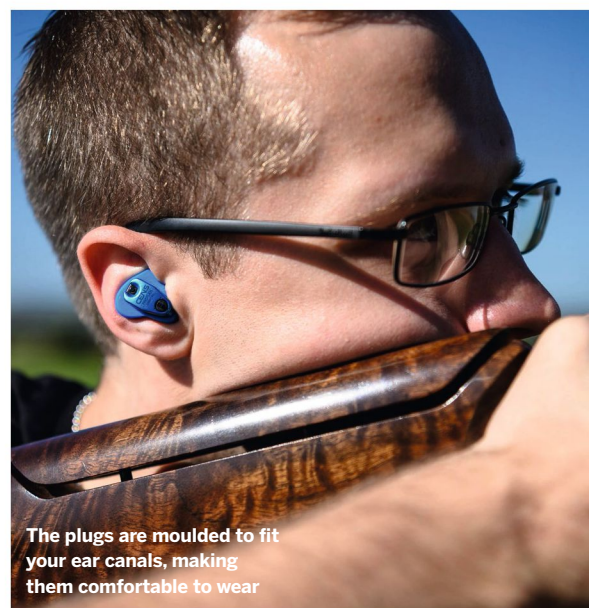
Q uite apart from being compulsory on shooting grounds, hearing protection is essential if you want to retain full use of your ears. All of us will suffer from a little degradation in our hearing as we grow older, and this mild loss can prompt us to have a rather laissez faire attitude toward hearing protection. Standard passive muffs or plugs can seem a pain when wearing them means you can't hear anything at all, never mind hold a conversation.

This is where a set of active ear defenders really start to make sense. Speaking from personal experience, I suffer from a mild form of hearing loss where I find it difficult to pick conversation out from background noise. Wearing passive muffs or plugs effectively renders me deaf to shooting mates when anyone is shooting in earshot.

That might sound attractive, depending on who you shoot with, but I prefer to be able to hold a conversation – even if it's only to bemoan my lack of skill on the previous stand.

In the past, I have worn active muffs, and while they provide excellent protection, I find them cumbersome, sweaty, and easy to foul with my stock while shooting. Contact with your stock isn't just an annoying distraction, it also breaks the seal over the ear nearest the gun, and renders the muff less effective.

My first foray into custom moulded plugs was a Christmas present from my wife, who bought me a voucher for a set of passive plugs from CENS. I had to visit a local audiologist to have impressions made. This involves an initial examination of the ear canals to make sure there is nothing untoward. A small spongy plug is then inserted to act as a dam and stop the impression fluid from filling your ear completely. Then the fluid is squirted



The plugs are moulded to fit your ear canals, making them comfortable to wear



THE DX1 FEATURES:

- Push button on-off
- Push button volume control
- Low battery warning
- Two-year warranty
- WaterShield coating
- Size 13 Zinc Air battery
- 33 colour options for moulded plug
- Six colour options for module battery cover
- EN352-2 & SNR 25dB
- Deluxe packaging including: the modules and earpieces, 36 batteries, air puffer, cleaning gel, cleaning wipes, CENS patch, CENS cap, small case, caribiner, 2 power magnets, large carry case, CENS wallet, user guide, feedback card, warranty cards, presentation box, quick start guide

THE DX3 OFFERS ALL THE DX1 FEATURES PLUS:

- Six new metallic colour options for the module battery cover
- Digital multi-switch
- Mute function
- Mode and volume memory function
- Vocal feedback
- Three modes: Game, Clay and Tactical



THE DX5 HAS ALL THAT PLUS:

- Digital multi-switch instead of on/off push button
- Gunmetal finish cover
- Five selectable modes for different shooting scenarios: Clay, Game, Hunter, Comms and Range

into your ear. The whole process takes only a few moments and is not unpleasant. After a minute or so, the mould has set and is removed. This is sent off along with your order form, and CENS return the plugs and your chosen inserts by post.

The custom moulded plugs are, in my opinion, unparalleled for comfort. You can wear them all day with no itching or niggling. The plugs can be made in a wide range of

colours – and can be had with or without glitter, if you are into that sort of thing.

It wasn't long after receiving my first pair that I took the plunge and upgraded my modules to the active ProFlex Digital modules and although I found the sound somewhat tinny, I have never looked back.

The active module is basically a tiny signal processor which transmits sound to your ears based on volume level. Quiet sounds can be

boosted giving you acute hearing, while loud pulses of sound that would damage your hearing will be cut completely.

This year, CENS have completely revamped their product portfolio, simplifying the ProFlex Digital range into three models – and I have tested all three this season to bring you this article. The new line up comprises the top of the range DX5 from £699, the DX3 from £549, and the minimalist DX1 from £399. »

The plugs and inserts come in a variety of colours, with metallic effect battery covers

All about the modes

The key difference between the three models lies in their modes, which affect what ambient sound you hear and how the audio is processed before it reaches your ear. The DX 1 features a single mode which is a generalist shooting mode suitable for any conditions but with no specialist focus.

The DX 3 features three different modes: Game, Clay and Tactical. Tactical mode is similar to Game mode but optimised for action shooting.

The DX 5 signal processing modes are as follows:

- Game mode – optimised for game shooting, this mode is designed to give the user the best chance of hearing approaching quarry, with a fast reaction time in cutting out following a gunshot. This mode also features a wind noise reduction algorithm.

- Clay mode – as you'd expect, this mode has been optimised for clay shooters, and is designed to suppress the sustained constant gunfire encountered on clay grounds. It also features wind noise reduction.

- Range mode – this is definitely the most isolating signal processing profile, designed for fullbore rifle shooters and indoor range users. Little ambient noise is allowed through, meaning this mode is not great for conversation.

- Hunter mode – this one is optimised for stalking, and suppresses the crackly noise from stepping on dry leaves or underbrush, while still boosting ambient noise, and of course suppressing gunfire. It also includes wind noise reduction.

- Wireless comms mode – this is a general shooting mode with additional support for an accessory only supplied with the DX 5, the neck loop, which works like an induction loop similar to that fitted to some hearing aids. An optional accessory is the SRC harness for connecting to a two-way radio.

Practical testing

In practice I was able to test the three models on a clay ground, and also while game shooting, but not on a range. I found that with all three models, the improved signal processing has resulted in significantly improved audio fidelity and quality versus the older units. I found it much easier to just leave them in my ears and carry on about my day, so much so that I occasionally found myself in the car on the way home before realising I was still wearing them.

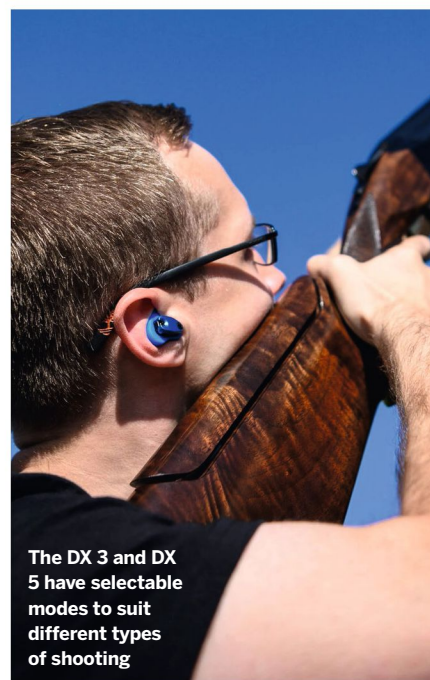
With the multi mode functionality on the DX5 and DX3 models, I found myself tinkering and trying the different modes constantly trying to find the ones most comfy for me, and usable in the shooting scenario I was doing at the time.

Clay and Game modes were a favourite for me, as they seemed to sound the most natural without too much processing. I found the Hunter, Range, and Tactical modes less useful – but that's not surprising, as I was not in any of those shooting situations. Controls were easy to use and quite intuitive. The little toggle switches on the DX3 and DX5 are quite easy to use, with a short flick up or down changing the volume, and a longer flick changing the mode.

The on/off button on all models is a simple press on or off, with a voice prompt on the more expensive models telling you what mode you are using. The slight downside was that the button was easy to hit accidentally when putting them in or taking them out, and could perhaps do with a click or a little more travel in the button.

The new metallic battery covers look ace and are an eye catching addition to the range. My wife was particularly enamoured of the colours, and thought I looked very handsome wearing them, although I doubt her impartiality.

I was unable to test the induction loop mode on the DX5 as I didn't have any



The DX 3 and DX 5 have selectable modes to suit different types of shooting

compatible equipment – however, I can see them being invaluable for gamekeepers or ground staff who are working at shoots where the squawk of a two-way radio can be distracting.

The DX1 model is for me (primarily a clay shooter) the pick of the bunch. The basic mode sounds great, there are no processing modes that I don't really need, and the price is hard to beat. Were I a more varied shooter, I can definitely see the benefits of the more expensive units with their specialist modes. However for me the simplicity and price of the DX1 made it a winner.

I have even put my money where my mouth is and upgraded my set to DX1s, while giving my original ProFlex modules – still going strong after three years – to my wife. ☑

For more details about the CENS range, see www.censdigital.com