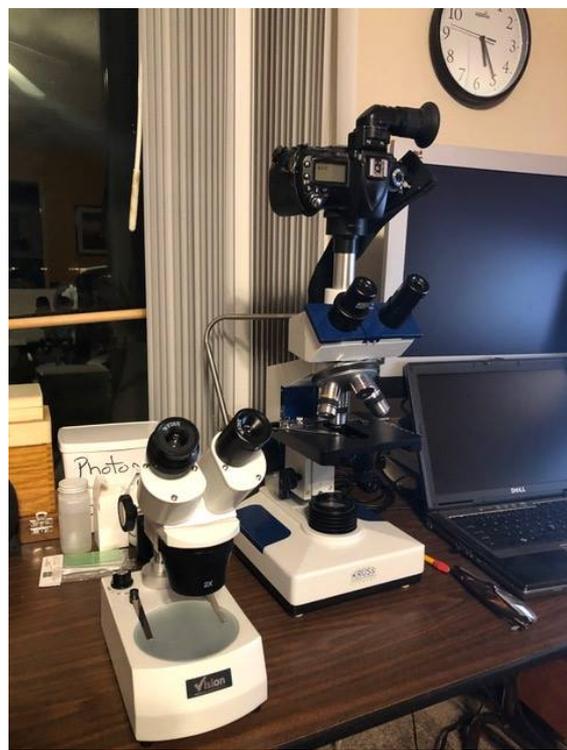


Review: Vision Scientific stereo microscope

Tom Harnish, USA

I bought a little Vision Scientific stereo microscope through Amazon for those times when my compound scope isn't the best solution—typically when I want a closer look at opaque or bigger subjects. After a quick trial run, I was very impressed with what I got for US\$121 including shipping in U.S. and Canada.

The same scope, as far as I can tell, is available with other labels and SKU numbers but the only difference seems to be that some are priced \$20 higher because they're shipped for second-day delivery. I waited 8 days and saved twenty bucks. Other brands have a base price as much as US\$40 higher for what appears to be exactly the same product and you'll pay for shipping, too.



The scope has three lenses in a closed turret with 1x, 2x, 3x or with 2x, 3x, 4x objectives. The eyepieces are advertised as WF 10x, but the oculars I got were 20x so I emailed and asked for replacements. They responded in less than an hour, said they'd ship the 10X, and "Please keep the 20x". How's that for customer service! Note: they're 30.5mm lenses, so you can't use old 23.2 oculars if you have some laying around.

The scope is diminutive next to my other scope, but it's solidly built out of metal with two LED light sources offering both transmitted light for slides and transparent subjects and incident light for opaque subjects. You can use both sources at the same time, but there is no brightness control.

The scope is not a toy but it's not what I would call an instrument, either. The focus rack is coarse and doesn't have the smooth feel as if the other end of the shaft is in a jar of peanut butter, to use a strange metaphor. The stage, with two slide clips, is fixed transparent ground glass that adds speculated flecks to an image, although an opaque disc is included with a white and a black side.

But it is reflective, too, so I'll need to find some kind of backdrop material, perhaps just a piece of paper.

The head is moveable in three dimensions which is good, but the light sources are not, so uneven light is inevitable (although sometimes that is desirable, admittedly).

My 'first light' subject was a former gnat that spent the night on a paper towel and was thoroughly dried out by the morning. So he came apart and never had a chance to take a bow when I put him on the stage.

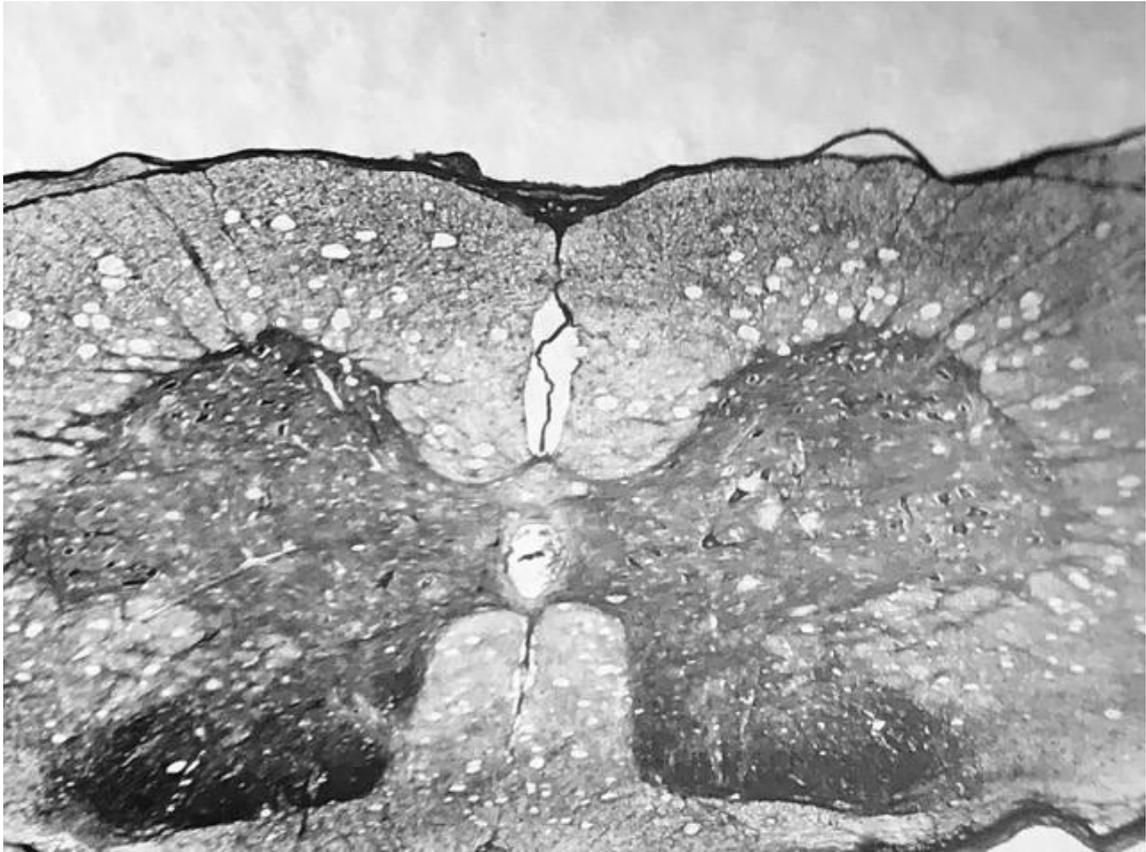


But that was just the first problem. I had several teeny-tiny pieces of bug that I tried to slide around so that they were visible and that was definitely not easy without a mechanical stage. So I scraped what was left of him on the white side of the disc and that made it a lot easier to get them in the right place. In retrospect, I should have used a microscope slide to begin with. Duh.

I used the iDu Optics LabCam [Editor's note: the author's review next month] and my iPhone to painlessly take a quick shot (the pups were reminding me it was time for a walk) and forgot I had the white balance locked. But the images were satisfactory and reasonably sharp. I wasn't happy with the sparkly background, however.



A shot of a prepared slide, a section of a rat spinal cord, worked rather well and I converted it to B&W.



Then I took a shot of a penny and I liked the result a lot because of the resolution and color. That shot definitely promises good results to come.



In summary, then, the little scope is certainly adequate and, I think, a bargain at the price (I couldn't find a used 'real' scope for anywhere near the price on eBay). So if you want to add a stereo scope to your toys, I mean tools, this is a decent choice at a rock-bottom price.

Comments to the author are welcomed, email: [tdharnish AT gmail DOT com](mailto:tdharnish@gmail.com)

Published in the June 2019 issue of *Micscape* magazine.

www.micscape.org
