



## **Ironman Pro: No Cheap Sunglasses!**

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I received a pair of Ironman Pro ILS *Passion* model glasses to test, and at this writing, I have used them for several weeks. I'm a bit of a snob when it comes to protective eyewear. Unlike ZZ Top, I won't get myself some cheap sunglasses. I have used Gargoyles, Rudy Project and other high-end eye protection for almost 20 years, so I'm pretty fussy.

The glasses were accompanied by a nice, semi-hard, foam-lined and zippered case with room for the eyewear, two extra lenses and a micro-fiber cleaning cloth. About twice the size and thickness of a handcuff case, it would take up a good portion of a rear rack mounted bag, but the contents would be sufficiently protected from damage. If you prefer, you can clip the case to a belt, backpack or the like.

When I picked up the glasses, I was surprised at how lightweight they were. The rubberized earpieces are mostly straight so they rest above the ears, securely and comfortably. They are of the same style I see on many other high-end wrap-around eyeglasses – made famous by TV foodie Guy Fieri and IPMBA's own John Washington, but of course, they usually wear theirs backwards!

The frame, gaskets and earpieces are made of tough TR 90 nylon which is resistant to stress, impact, UV, and chemicals. According to my research, TR 90 is used in many brands of high-end sporting eyewear due its durability and because it resists perspiration and chemicals such as sunscreen and make-up.

ILS stands for "Interchangeable Lens System". These are a bit different from other interchangeable lenses I've used. Each lens has its own unique gasket mounted along the top and at the rubberized nosepiece. The gaskets are vented to provide airflow that should help prevent fogging due to perspiration or exhalation.

Unlike other glasses which require you to grab the lens itself to replace it – and risk scratching it or covering it with fingerprints – the gasket and attached nosepiece enable the user to avoid touching the lens. Pulling the gasket out of the nylon eyewear frame and installing an alternate one proved to be quite easy – though it did help to read the user manual first. As it described, I was able to complete the process without once touching the lens surface.

The *Passion* model tested comes with three lenses: smoke, light smoke and yellow. Smoke is good for bright sunlight; light smoke is said to be good for low light, but it won't replace clear lenses in terms of clarity in darkness or reduced light. Yellow improves depth perception in low light, overcast and night time conditions. All lenses are made of impact and shatter-resistant polycarbonate and are said to block 100% of both UVA and UVB light. It would be nice to have a clear lens, but that does not appear to be an option.

One thing I noticed, that wasn't apparent in the brochure, was that the lenses appear to be "semi-mirrored" when worn. While that can help reduce glare, and isn't normally a problem, there may still be a police agency here and there that prohibits personnel from using so-called "mirrored" sunglasses. If mirrored lenses are forbidden where you work, you may wish to get them approved prior to purchasing them for on-duty use.

The "full" wraparound lenses on the *Passion* model do extend around quite far. I detected no ambient light sneaking around the rear periphery of the lens. While keeping the visual field uniform, this also keeps out more of the wind, dust and anything else from which eyes need protection.



The only downside of such an extensive wraparound is that they won't fit into the built-in eyeglass holder in the ceiling of my car!

In terms of comfort, the Ironman Pro glasses ride securely on the sides of my head and upon my nose. The rubberized sides and nosepiece work well to keep them from slipping. The only complaint I have – and it may be unique to me – is that I can feel them brushing against my eyebrows. My other sunglasses have an adjustable nosepiece, which allows me to move them farther from my face and avoid that problem. The Ironman Pro glasses have no provision for any such adjustment, but it is a minor problem. They are otherwise comfortable for all-day wear. Besides cycling, they are great for running, driving, shooting and, of course, as safety glasses. They are appropriate anytime eye protection is important.

One of the most important things quality eyewear can offer is reasonably priced lens replacement. There is no such thing as a scratchproof lens; with use and time, all lenses eventually need replacing. Knowing I can replace a lens for substantially less than the cost of a new pair of glasses is essential before I will buy any brand. I've been unable to get a clear answer as to the cost of new lenses from FGX, the company that owns the Ironman brand. I was merely told to contact the company and they would deal with it on a case-by-case basis. They don't seem to have a "lens replacement program" like many high-end eyewear companies do.

The retail price on these glasses is usually around \$100, but through the IPMBA Purchase Program, the price can be brought down about 35%. Contact Bill Paine at [painews@aol.com](mailto:painews@aol.com) to take advantage of this discount.

Does the Ironman Pro *Passion* model compare with ultra-high end glasses retailing for \$150-\$200? No. They are missing some of the "polish," refinements and warranty I've come to appreciate in the high priced brands. Are these worth paying \$65 or so? Absolutely, especially with the quality case and the three sets of lenses included. It is like buying three pair of decent quality protective eyewear and getting a durable \$20 case and micro-fiber cleaning cloth thrown in to protect them. That makes it a good deal, even if they were cheap sunglasses – though these aren't the "cheap sunglasses" of ZZ Top fame. Made of quality materials, in a highly functional style, they serve admirably as protective eyewear. If you are looking for quality and versatile eye protection, without paying the big name prices, Ironman Pro is an option well worth considering.

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