

Pila GL3 tactical flashlight

WHAT IS A tactical flashlight? The company's website is full of pictures of their wares mounted to assault rifles, if that's any clue. What's trick about these units is that they use very powerful batteries for their size, 9V rather than the more common 3-4.5V, so the light they put out is very impressive. If you make the mistake of looking into the reflector when you turn it on, you'd think you'd just witnessed a camera's flash.

Available in various sizes, the light output is rated between 80 and 195 lumens. The model shown is rated at 130 and uses either three CR123A camera-type batteries or two Pila rechargeable units (which have useful life of 50 minutes of continuous use before recharging). In addition to a powerful and evenly spread beam of white light, the rear of the units feature an LED array of five bulbs that are red in the standard model, making it suitable as an emergency flare. Because the units may be used for various military uses, the tail lights may be ordered in white, green, amber or infrared as well, and the front light is also optionally available with red, infrared or UV



filters or can be configured as an LED emitter with the full complement of color choices.

Made with an aluminum housing carved and anodized into a heavy and manly shape, the lights should justify their high prices (\$97 for the GL3 shown). Twist-style switches are used to turn the light on and off, but we would have wished for more friction in their mechanisms, so that we might avoid an accidental illumination that could waste the batteries, and we noted that the lights will roll rather easily on a smooth surface.

If your campfire wagering runs to "who has the trickiest flashlight," the Pila models should win hands down. Check the company's website for different sizes and accessories at: www.pilatorch.com.

—Dave Searle

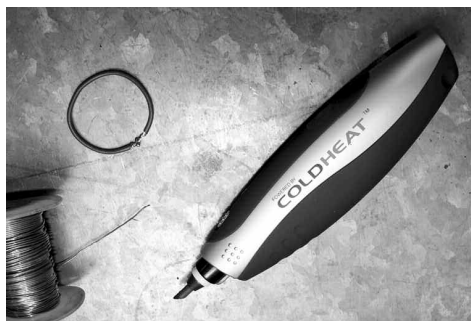
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Cold Heat soldering tool

WHEN I SAW the late-night TV ad for the Cold Heat cordless soldering tool, which promised to heat quickly and cool down even quicker, I ordered two of them at \$19.95 ea. plus \$4.95 for S&H (one for evaluation, the other to be a gift... if it worked).

Powered by four 1.5V AA batteries (not included) the tool is stylishly designed and its heat tip is unusual, made of lightweight carbon. The modest six volts of power is supplied through opposite sides of this carbon tip (separated by an insulator except at the very end) and a proper connection to the work is indicated by a red light that illuminates to indicate continuity. Specifically recommended for "light duty" soldering (18–24 gauge is recommended), I tried it on a loop of 18 gauge wire, the size that's ordinarily used in a bike's wiring harness, which is pretty light in my book.

Alas, even fitted with four brand new batteries, the tool was barely able to melt solder, and I used premium easy-melting electronics



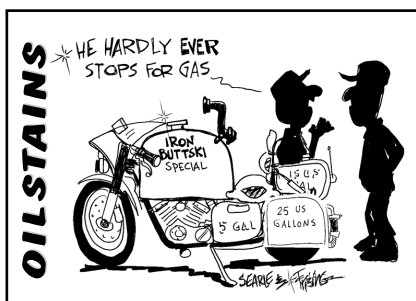
solder of the recommended 20AWG (0.032" dia.). Although I was able to stick a bit of solder on one side of the wire, that was it. I couldn't get any more solder to melt or to even begin to flow fully into the connection. The result was totally unacceptable. Next, it was tried on very tiny wire (just 0.019" dia., thinner than button thread), in hopes that its small size wouldn't carry away the heat too rapidly, but I found no improvement in its performance. Finally, just in case

I'd gotten one dud tool, I repeated the experiments with the second one, but it worked no better.

Don't waste your money. For motorcyclists, Cold Heat is less than an oxymoron. However, 90-day Money Back Guarantee is offered... so long as you don't open the package!

—Dave Searle

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