

MSA-Gallet F2 X-trem

The F1 Fire helmet (top-yellow) and the F2 X-trem Rescue helmets (red & green) in use during the rescue of an injured dock worker. The original version of the F2 (bottom-black) is also in use here.



MANUFACTURER: MSA Gallet

ORIGIN: France

COST: from £76.00 exc VAT (no accessories)
**Ear Defenders - £15.00, Goggles - £14.00,
 Lamp Bracket - £5.75, Peli Torch - £41.00
 Helmet only - 650g**

WEIGHT:

Officially it's the MSA Gallet X-trem not 'Gallet Extreme' as we'd previously thought.

Gallet has become a 'hoover'-like term for fire-rescue helmets so it's been difficult to adjust to the new MSA ownership and identity. The F2 has for many years been Gallet's cut-down version of a fire helmet aimed at rescuer and wildland/bush firefighting. It's still an excellent helmet in its original design but there was room for improvement

and it probably was time for an upgrade, or at least the option of an upgrade!

From a rescuers perspective the classic F2 had a couple of drawbacks – it was tedious to adjust the sizing because it was an old-fashioned plastic pin & holes requiring trial and error to get an exact fit, it could be fitted with a mounting bracket for a torch but this wasn't standard and most dramatically it could not be fitted

with industry standard clip-on visors and ear defenders. Enter the X-trem...

CONSTRUCTION

At face value the X-trem would seem to be little different from the F2 but it is in fact an entirely different animal, the shell has been modified to accept a completely different cradle, gone are the polystyrene crown cap and 2-part cradle with velcro chin adjustment. Instead we now have a webbing impact cradle with net comfort mesh suspended below it. The head band is padded and there are two small squares of padding for the back of the head that can be moved/adjusted on a Velcro strip.

Instead of the 'leather' lined fixed chin strap there is now a suede lined chin cup with a Nexus buckle. Size of the head band is adjusted via a ratchet that is divided in two and closed (made smaller) by squeezing together between the thumb and index finger (easiest to examine the photo!). Two hands are required to enlarge the head band via a button on each side which is slid sideways while pushing the yellow adjuster tabs towards it. (again, easier to examine the photo!).

The Helmet shell itself now sits noticeably higher on the head and appears to be much larger than the original F2 but in fact there is little difference in the size of the shell itself. There is however an additional slot over the ears which will accept ear defender and visor clip-ons and a torch mount specific to an MSA Peli Sabre. This slots into the mount and can be rotated up and down allowing light direction to be altered.



Colours are still as varied as ever with a range of shells that can be married to a range of coloured reflective decals: shells can be white, orange, red, blue, yellow or green, we have traditionally used red helmets with yellow decals and black helmets with silver decals while some UK Fire services have opted for blue with silver but take your pick, experiment even!!

IN ACTION

Put the helmet on and you have one-handed adjustment of the cradle enabling rapid tightening on the head. Reaching behind your head with both hands and pushing the adjustment buttons easily loosens the cradle (it's only when adjusting off the head that you need to physically push the yellow tabs towards each button.). This is a vast improvement on the original F2 but to be honest it's no better or worse than a number of ratchet adjustment systems on the market now – it's just better than it was. The chin cup can be worn over the chin paratrooper style which provides a very firm fit or it can be worn under the chin as before. The difference now is that a nexus buckle allows the chin-strap to be detached for donning BA masks – something that was previously very difficult. The buckle connects quite high on one side so that the strap hangs down GI style when not connected. There is little doubt that the new cradle suspension system provides improved impact resistance since clearance to the top of the head is much greater but this does mean the helmet sits noticeably high on the head. Every wearer considered this to be a drawback whether in appearance or practicality when negotiating confined spaces.

What sets the X-trem apart is its ability to accept slot-in visors and ear defenders. We had two different sets of ear defenders, one low profile the other a more standard size. With USAR as prevalent as it is in modern rescue and the use of petrol engine or hydraulic tools that are larger and noisier than ever before this was a vital development and had Gallet not introduced it they would undoubtedly have lost ground to folk like Petzl with their

excellent, lightweight Vertex in the war to supply the latest generation of rescuers. The visors too are necessary adjunct. The F2's traditional Bolle Chrono or Commander goggles actually provide superior protection and are still an available option but most tool operators and a number of rescue tasks benefit much more from the freedom provided by a clear or mesh visor (in the case of chainsaw operators). MSA provide 2 versions of clear visor and a mesh visor on an easily detached mount that pushes into the ear defender mounts. The SoundBlocker ear defenders are excellent, capable of on and off-ear positioning as well as rotating to the back of the helmet for storage. Noise retardancy is 26db which in



and mount. The credentials of the Peli Stealth are well known; this is an intrinsically safe, submersible torch with superior light output, This MSA version has been modified so that it will slot into the helmet mount and adjust to one of 4 angles from straight ahead to 45 degrees downward. With all the extras on one helmet this becomes a



industrial terms is 4 or 5db less than the aircraft tech models you see on the airfield so most rescue applications won't overstretch its capabilities. However, the mesh visor has failed to pass the test of time and began to separate at its top edge with relatively little use and abuse. This is a common problem with mesh visors but perhaps we were a bit too rough? Luckily it's an inexpensive component but could certainly be improved. The fire retardant straps on the head cradle were found to have a little too much tail on the forward 'y' strap causing some annoyance with peripheral vision.

Finally a word about the torch

quite sizeable and complex set-up but don't forget they're all detachable and underneath is still one of the best all-round rescue helmets on the market.

FOR:

- Adaptability to wide range of rescue activities
- Comfort and 'snug' fit
- Adjustability of fit
- Colour & decal range

AGAINST:

- Sits higher than original F2
- lot of cradle straps!!

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