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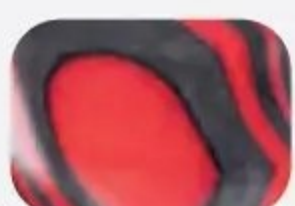


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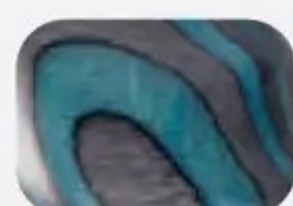
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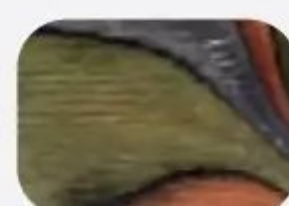
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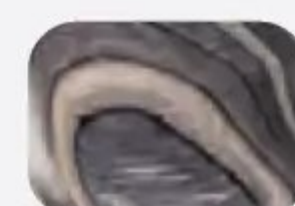
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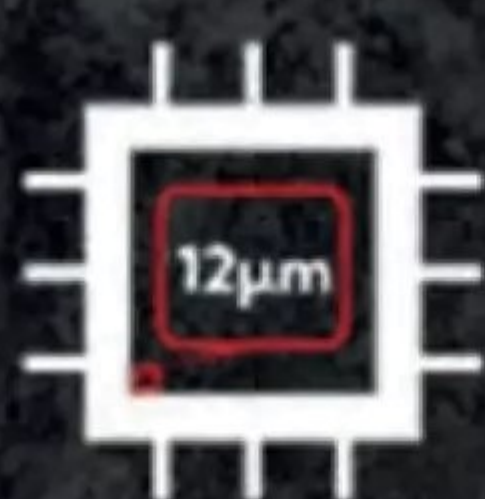
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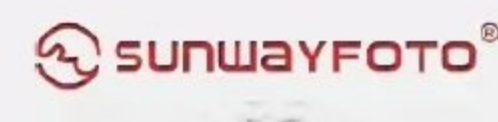


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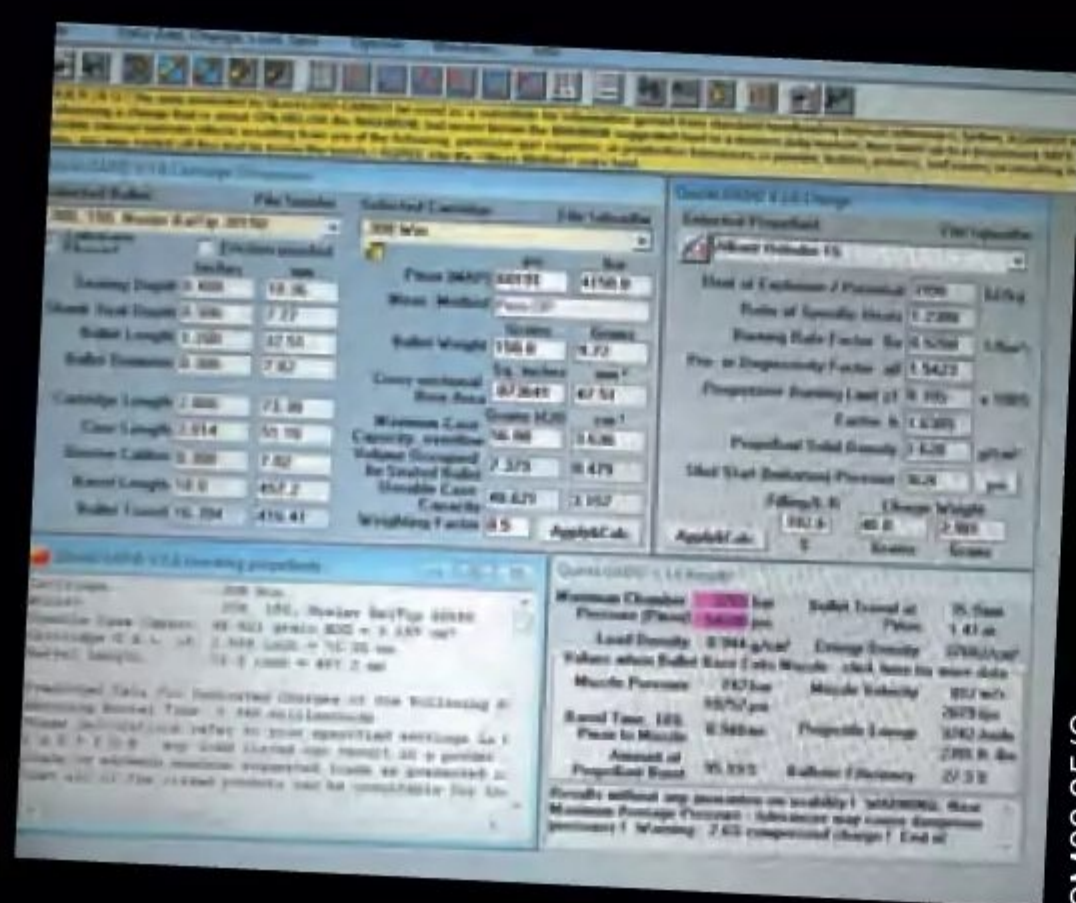
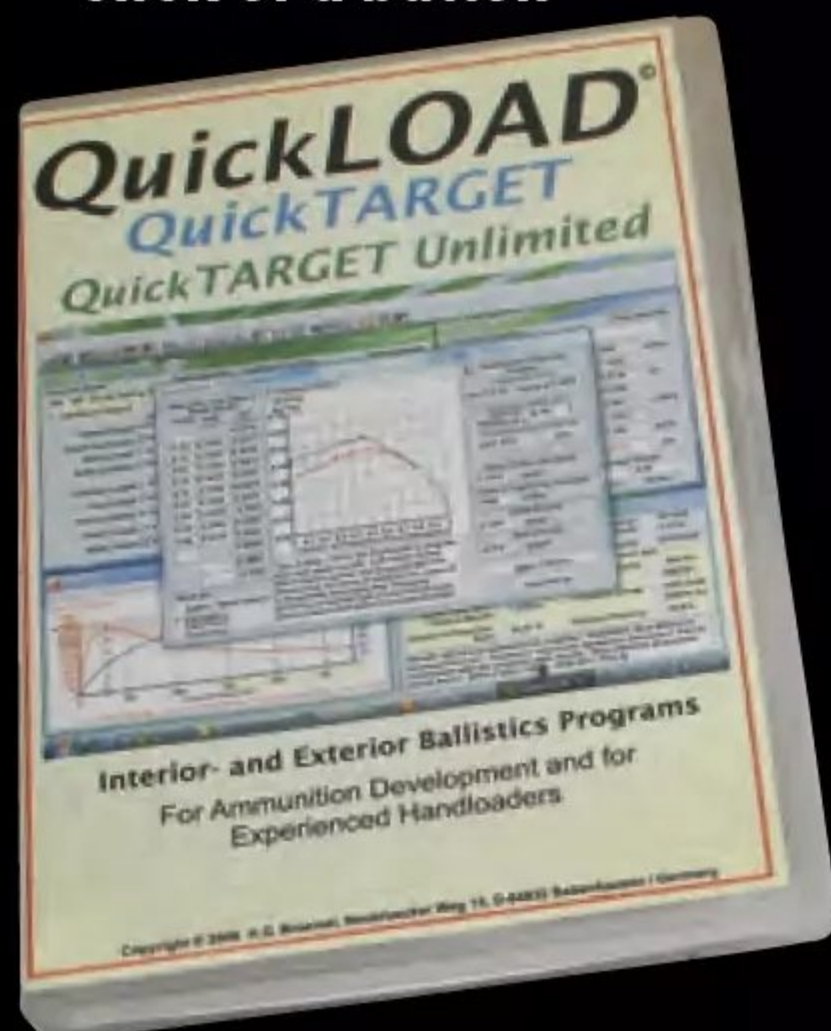
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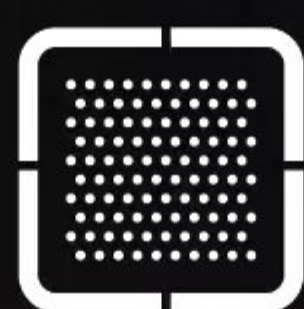


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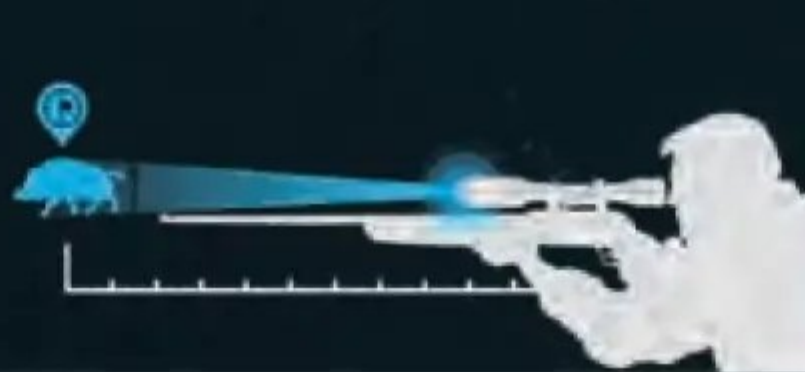
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

The wait is over—this month's Gun Mart is here. As always, there's plenty to get stuck into, from in-depth gun tests to expert insights into optics and field gear.

If you're into airguns, Mark Camoccio has been busy! He takes an in-depth look at the AGT Manul, highlighting what makes it a standout performer, and if you're after a budget-friendly springer, his review of the Crosman Summit is worth a read. Mark also checks out the Rainson Wild Plus, putting its build quality and accuracy to the test. Meanwhile, Dave Barham explores the BRK Pathfinder XR O.D. Green, a compact yet capable little number. Finally, for those in the market for a red dot, Mark puts the Hawke Endurance 1x30 through its paces.

Over in the firearms section, Chris Parkin does a rifle round-up, showcasing some solid options for foxing. He also gives the FX Impact M4 Extended (FAC) a proper test, while seeing how the Nocpix Lumi H35R stacks up as a compact thermal monocular. Mark Underwood shares some essential reloading tips for consistent bullet seating, and Jules Whicker gets hands-on with Pulsar's latest laser-rangefinding thermal riflescopes—bigger isn't always better, or is it?

For the shotgun shooters out there, Bruce Potts evaluates the Hatsan Escort Trio, while also breaking down Hull's Pro One cartridges to see why they're a go-to for many shooters. Finally, Rob Speed takes a look at the Fabarm Columba Palumbus, a versatile semi-auto with plenty to offer.

Enjoy, and as always, safe shooting!

Ed Jackson
Managing Editor

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- 030 Best on Test:** Our expert reviewers bring you a selection of shooting's top new products

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- 040 Gun Test:** From design to performance, Mark Camoccio examines why the AGT Manul stands out
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FIELD CUTLERY

- 072** This month's round-up of all the best cutting-edge tools of the trade

FIREARMS

- 076 Rifle Round-up:** Chris Parkin does a roundup of some decent rifles for foxing

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Gun Mart is published monthly by Time Well Spent, and goes on sale the third Thursday of the month preceding the cover date.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY:

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PRINTED IN THE UK**INTERNATIONAL STANDARD**

SERIAL NUMBER (ISSN) 2977-2567

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News

All the latest news and views from the shooting world

Gamekeepers 'spared torment' of pregnant deer cull

➤ **Gamekeepers say they have been spared the mental torment of shooting pregnant red deer at times when they are close to giving birth.**

The Scottish Government had proposed extending the open season on female deer as part of measures to control deer numbers and protect woodlands and peatlands from overgrazing. However, Agriculture Minister Jim Fairlie has now said the change will not be implemented.

Responding to a question from Highlands and Islands SNP MSP Emma Roddick, Mr Fairlie said current levels of culling had reduced deer numbers without the need to extend the female season.

Yesterday, the Scottish Gamekeepers Association welcomed the "common-sense" decision by the Minister, saying that having the buy-in of professionals would be essential for meeting higher culls in future.



The British Association for Shooting and Conservation's Scotland Director, Peter Clark, said: We are glad to see the Minister has acknowledged the potential distress caused to many stalkers by being required routinely to

shoot heavily pregnant female deer. This demonstrates an understanding of the practicalities of deer management and a willingness to listen to the views of those actively involved in conservation on the ground."

Edgar Brothers partner with Svemko

➤ **Edgar Brothers, the firearms and ammunition wholesalers, have announced that they have agreed an exclusive UK distribution partnership with Norwegian moderator manufacturer Svemko.**

Founded just eight years ago, Svemko has quickly established itself as a market leader in the European moderator market.

Svemko owns several key patents and innovations, such as the Quick Mount System, and they offer an

industry-leading eight-year warranty on their full titanium models.

The public and trade alike will have the opportunity to explore the range first-hand at the British Shooting Show.

An Edgar Brothers spokesperson said: "We are eager to build on our already strong relationship with Svemko and look forward to delivering their exceptional products to our customers. This partnership represents a shared commitment to quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction."





Bird flu restrictions put in place across all of England and Scotland as cases rise

➤ **Restrictions have been placed on the whole of England and Scotland to try to slow the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).**

All bird keepers, from those with pet birds to farmers with large flocks, are now required to follow strict hygiene measures imposed by the Government.

In some counties, mostly across the east of England, even stricter rules in the form of housing orders (HOs) are being put in place, meaning birds must be kept indoors.

The Scottish Government has also introduced a national Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (AIPZ) across the country, while both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland have had AIPZs in place since mid-January. In England, regional HOs have been extended to include York, North Yorkshire, and Shropshire.

Dominic Boulton, Game Sector Representative at Defra's National Avian Disease Core Group, told GM: "The extension of restrictions announced recently by Defra was only to be expected after

the sharp upswing in the number of confirmed cases. Unfortunately, the trend of falling case numbers seen in the first half of January did not persist, and the Game Farming Association supports Defra's decision to extend the AIPZ to cover the whole of England.

"The main implications for game management at this time of year are the England and Scotland-wide mandatory requirement to observe the 21-day standstill before moving caught-up birds, and the enhanced biosecurity requirements laid down in the AIPZ and HOs for anyone with captive birds, such as overwintered breeders or recently caught-up birds (which become captive once caught up).

"Catching-up is only permitted by law until 1 February in England and Wales and 28 February in Scotland. Anyone with captive birds should familiarise themselves with their legal responsibilities, details of which can be found on the relevant government websites."

Islay and Jura kids feast on venison for school dinners

➤ **In a UK first, young people in the Scottish islands will have locally sourced venison added to school menus.**

The pilot project, being rolled out at six schools across Islay and Jura, is a collaboration between the council and Wild Jura, a new business founded by locals Cath and Andy McCallum.

Recognising the high demand for local venison on the islands, they established Wild Jura to include commercial butchery and processing facilities, enabling local communities to enjoy affordable wild venison from nearby. The venison comes from the Ardlussa, Barnhill, Tarbert, and Ruantallain Estates.

Children from Small Isles Primary on Jura played a key role in product testing, with their favourite dishes—wild venison meatballs and burgers—now featured on the school menu.

Culinary Director at Eat Wild, Leon Challis-Davis, told GM: "This is another monumental win for the countryside community, and an even bigger win for the children who will now get to enjoy quality, fresh, nutrient-dense, high-protein venison on school menus. It's brilliant for them.

"It's a no-brainer. I applaud the local council for their common sense, and Wild Jura for their drive to successfully push through this project. Excellent work all round."



Frank Whyman (1939–2024)

➤ **Frank Whyman, a prominent figure in the shooting community and a key contributor to Napier, has passed away.**

Frank's collaborations with Napier influenced the company across a range of products, particularly in the creation of the Gun Care range, many of which have become flagship products for the firm.

Frank's involvement with Napier lasted many decades. He was instrumental in testing and refining the oils and cleaners that would become synonymous with Napier's trusted reputation. As the first UK professional to undertake this role, Frank brought a level of expertise and care that set the foundation for the high standards that Napier maintains today.

Frank Whyman has also been the face of Napier, with his image gracing each and every can of lubricant they sell.

Frank developed the Cogswell and Harrison-based formula which he then shared with Napier, enabling them to commercially produce their London Gun Stock Finish. This act of trust exemplified his character. Frank was well known for his belief in



sharing knowledge to elevate others and for his nurturing qualities.

A Napier spokesperson said: "As we mourn, we also celebrate Frank's legacy. To honour his memory, Napier will update the iconic "man on the can" image, a symbol that has come to represent not just the quality of our products but also the people who have made them exceptional.

"Frank personified the very values Napier strives to uphold, proudly making him an enduring part of our story and identity. His legacy lives on—not just in the oils and finishes he helped perfect, but in the spirit of excellence he embodied. He was a pioneer, a mentor, and above all, a friend."



PCC on firearms licensing

➤ **Key shooting organisations have called for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) across the UK to use increased licensing fees to support firearms services.**

Licensing fees are set to increase from 5 February 2025, and BASC has contacted every PCC in England and Wales to seek assurances that the additional funds raised will be used to resource firearms licensing departments.

BASC's Executive Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Christopher Graffius, said: "The government's justification for the increase is that the extra funds raised will go to support improvements in the work of firearms licensing departments, although they have no powers to ensure that this is what happens.

"We have written to the officials responsible for setting the policing budget for their forces to seek their assurance that all funds raised from firearms licensing fees will be assigned to resourcing their firearms licensing departments."

BASC has also called on the government to reconsider increasing fees and provide transparency and a balanced system that protects public safety without penalising lawful firearms owners. The organisation continues to engage with senior policymakers and rural MPs to advocate for meaningful reforms.

SGA launches survey on copper bullet usage as lead ban looms

➤ **As lead ammunition faces a potential three-year phase-out, the Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA) has launched a survey to gain more data on alternatives.**

Last December, the UK Health and Safety Executive published its position that lead ammunition should be phased out in the UK.

The British Government must now decide whether to act on the Executive's recommendations in full or make other provisions.

The survey was launched after the SGA became aware of animal welfare concerns within the deer management sector regarding a full transition to copper ammunition.

Six-time and current UK Pro Stalker of the Year, Chris Dalton, told GM: "I welcome the survey announced by



the SGA, looking at the use of copper ammunition at night by forestry contractors, as the move to end the use of lead ammunition for deer control looms. Shooting deer at night, with either thermal or IR scopes, is a totally different proposition with more complex challenges than those faced stalking during daylight. I have had many comments from FLS staff tasked with night shooting—almost all express disquiet at the move away from lead."

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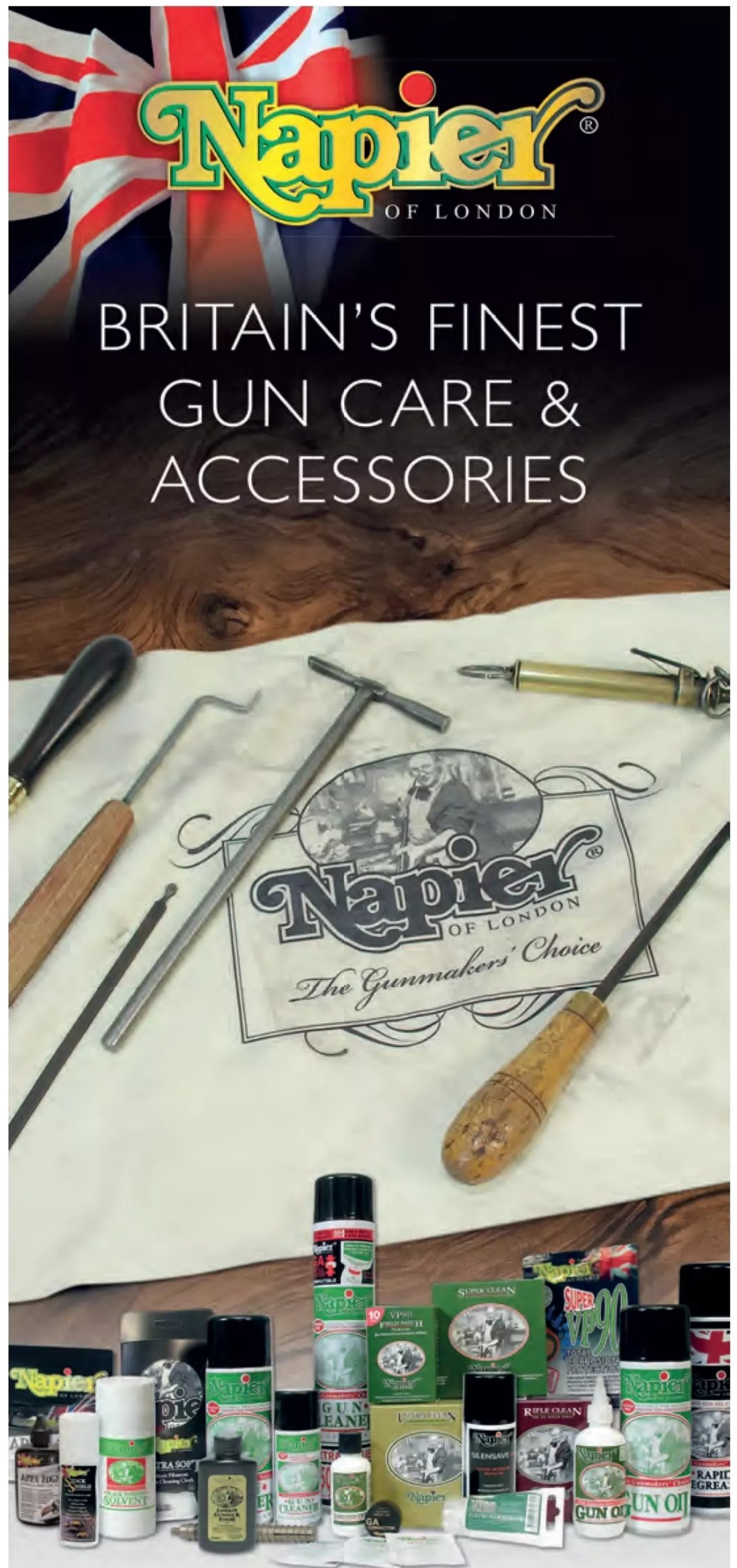
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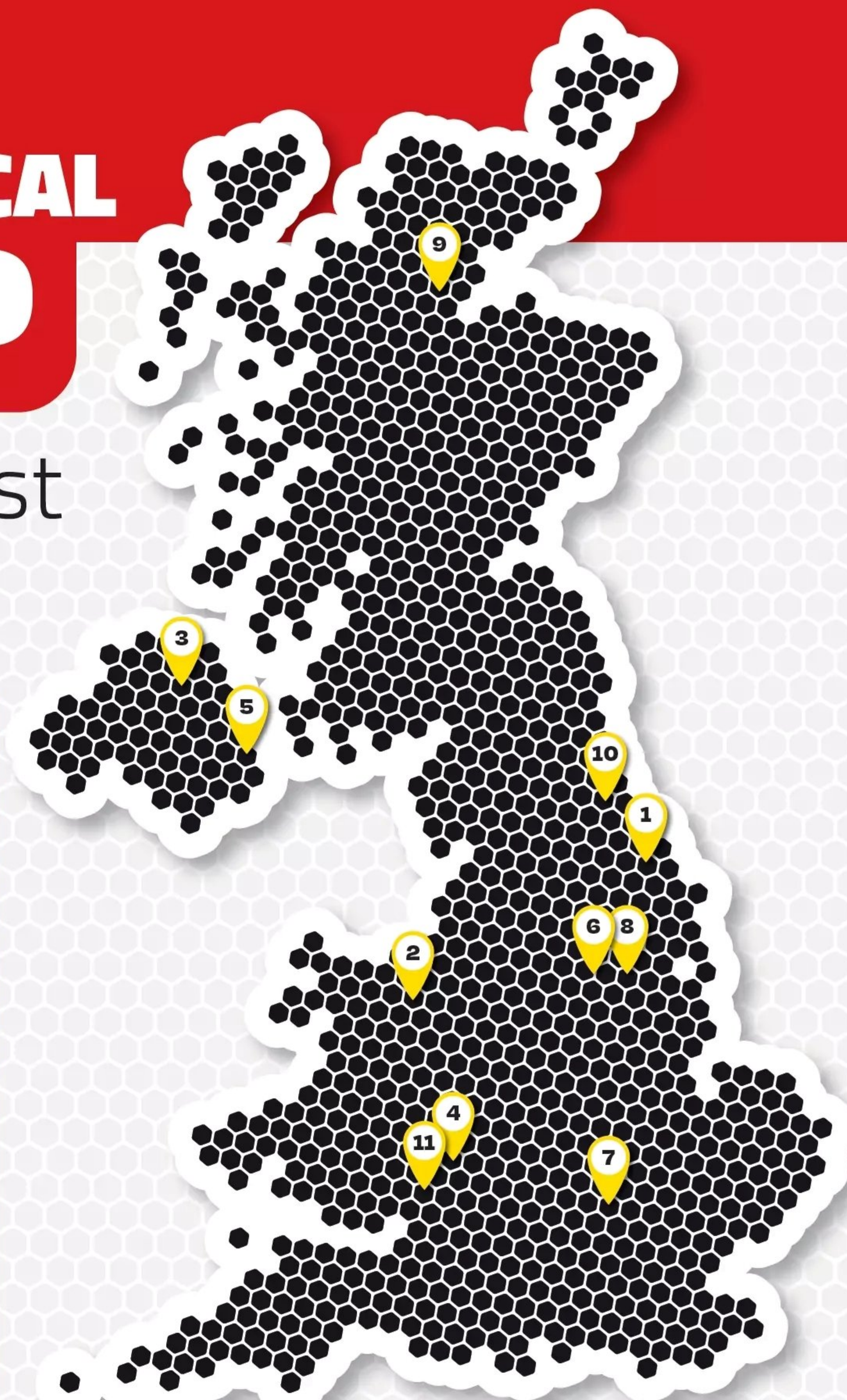
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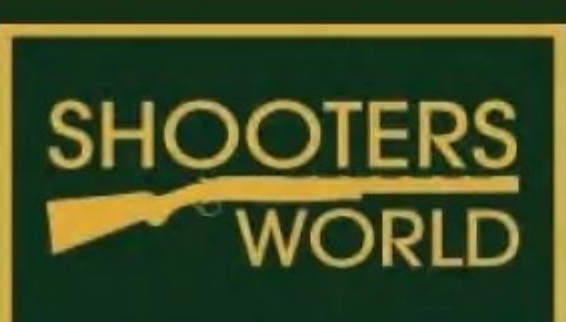


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The logo for Pro-Shot features a stylized target with a red bullseye and concentric black and white rings. The target is positioned over a background of horizontal red and white stripes, with a blue field containing white stars on the left side, reminiscent of the American flag. The text "Pro-Shot" is written in a large, white, cursive script with a black outline, slanted upwards to the right.

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Konus Eternity 6-24x50 riflescope

➤ This was my first opportunity to use and review a Konus riflescope, and I was pleased that it arrived in the 6-24x50 specification, as many other manufacturers use this format, making comparisons easier.

Starting with the finish

The Konus has a well-burnished, hard-anodised 30mm main tube with an enlarged objective body housing the 50mm lens, which is recessed 10mm for protection. A 75mm sunshade is supplied along with clear lens covers that stretch front to rear, and these have enough extension to work with or without the sunshade. As you would expect, the centre saddle carries the windage, elevation, and parallax dials, with the latter also showing the extended intensity adjustment dial for the illuminated reticle. There are 11 stages to control the red-illuminated reticle, and the common CR2032 battery fits under the end cap with a coin slot.

Control options

The parallax on the outer dial runs from 10 yards to infinity through approximately 290-degrees of rotation. It does this without excessive backlash, enabling the image focus



to be dialled quickly with repeatable precision. All the controls feature acceptable knurling for grip, and are 36mm in diameter, striking a good compromise between excessive bulk and easy manipulation. The elevation and windage turrets lift to unlock and have 80 clicks per turn, which equates to 8 MRAD (80cm at 100m). The dials are clearly marked with individual 0.1 MRAD (1cm@100m) increments, and the clicks are both tactile and audible for assured adjustment. The clicks are

ideally spaced, with 80 on a 36mm dial, so it's easy to operate the turrets quickly without excessive overrun. Finally, the windage turret allows you to dial left or right of centre, and this is also clearly marked with obvious clicks.

Options

Konus supplies two elevation dial outer caps. The one fitted runs continuously within the mechanical limits of the scope's internals, while the other has a zero-stop mechanism within. I quite like



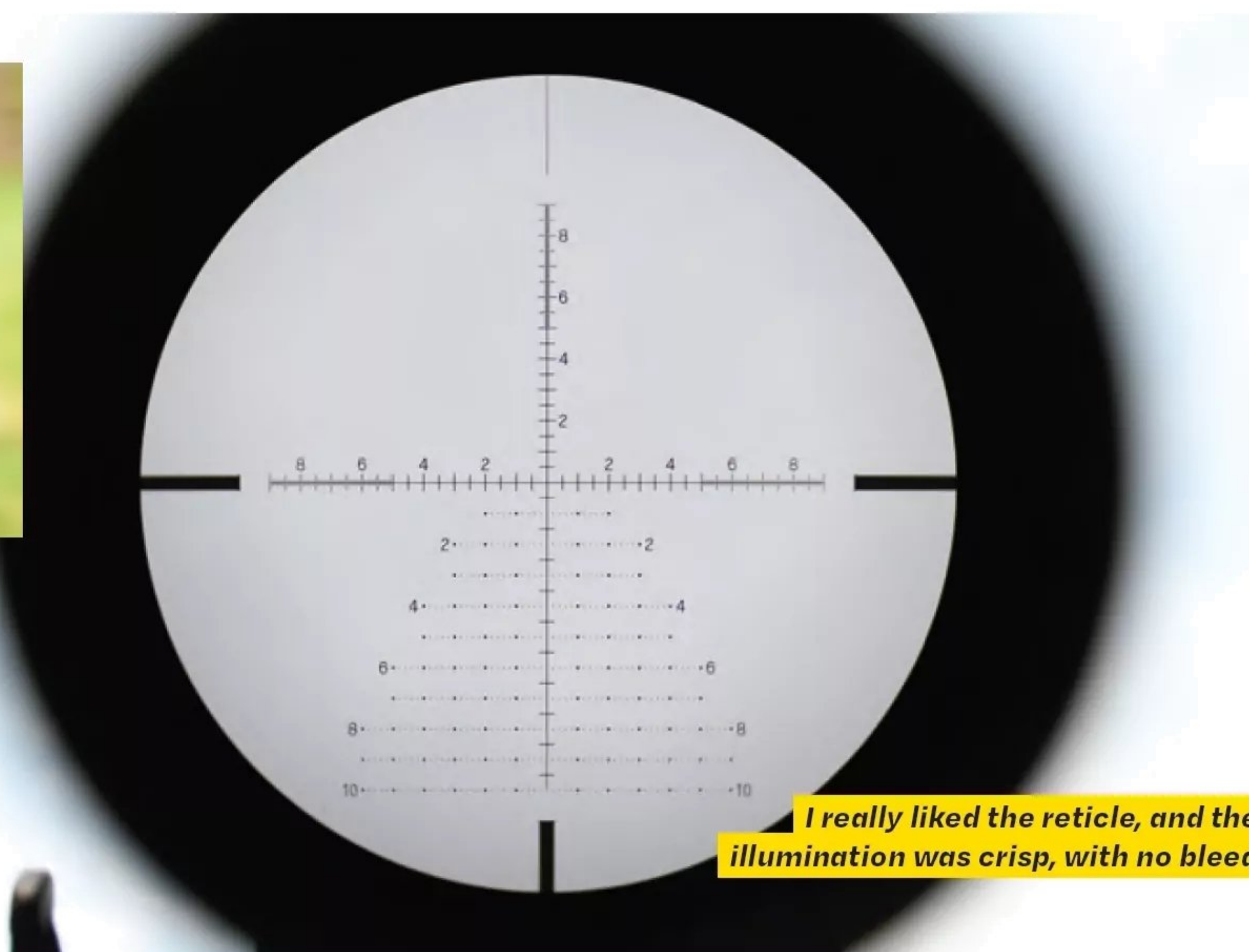
The lift-to-turn turrets feature 80 clicks per rotation



The parallax goes down to 10 yards, making the scope viable for smaller calibres and airguns



The fast-focus eyepiece helps produce a crisp reticle. Note the throw lever



I really liked the reticle, and the illumination was crisp, with no bleed

this feature, because on a moderately priced scope that is possibly going to attract less experienced new users, zero-stop turrets can often complicate and confuse zeroing procedures if they are not fully understood. Here, you have the option of keeping things very simple if you prefer.

No data has been published, but the scope appears to offer 17 MRAD of overall windage and elevation adjustment for zeroing and longer-range shooting. It certainly isn't a market-leading specification, but this is not an excessively expensive optic, and I like the fact that capability has been capped because I see too many scopes offering too much for too little, and they usually suffer badly for it. The Konus doesn't seem to have fallen into this trap.

A red polymer tool is supplied to remove the turret caps so that you can reset the zero markers or fit the zero-stop dial.

Free space

There is 65mm of clear tube space in front of and behind the saddle for the scope rings, enabling lots of room for setup on different rifles. The eye relief is specified as 81 to 86mm from 24x to 6x magnification, meaning it remains pleasantly stable across the magnification range. This ensures you don't need to reposition excessively to maintain a full, vignette-free field of view.

The magnification is controlled at the front of the ocular body, by rotating the collar 180-degrees from 6x to 24x. Knurling is featured for grip, and a removable 19mm throw lever is supplied for faster operation. At the very rear of the scope's ocular body is a fast-focus eyepiece, which is rubberised for grip and provides excellent reticle focus. Excessive eye relief beyond 90mm is often optically detrimental on

anything other than heavy-recoil rifles, so I was glad Konus kept it shorter.

The best of FFP

The reticle is clear and nicely weighted, and it comes in the first focal plane, so it visually grows as the magnification is increased. This ensures that all the milliradian hash marks are accurate, no matter what magnification setting you are on. The outer edges feature broader bars, while the centre contains 20 MRAD of finely detailed etchings. The lower half of the reticle carries Christmas tree-type markings for extended windage aim-offs, which are also illuminated. Illumination with a fine, first focal plane reticle makes a scope more versatile, as you can maintain the full field of view at low magnification without losing the inherently small reticle. When wound up to full power, I was pleased with the clarity and how much free space was still available to see the bullet strike on target without excessive complexity. The mechanical tracking proved acceptably precise and correlated well to the reticle, so I was confident dialling to longer ranges with my .22 rimfire and getting an accurate return to zero.

Conclusion

As stated before, it's good to see an optic properly scaled in specification for its price point and realistic capability. The Eternity was not a disappointment. I thought the picture was of good quality, with a flat field of view and no particular gloom emerging around the edges. At the highest magnification

setting, the field of view is 16 MRAD (1.6m@100m). At 6x, this equates to 6.4m, which is plenty of space to initially align targets or quarry without excessive compromise. I found the colour balance honestly flat without generalised weighting toward any colour, but this is my personal opinion. The contrast was still decent with above-average optical resolution. For target use in good light, the scope offered me no doubts whatsoever, and I didn't seem to suffer excessive chromatic aberration. The image brightness through the magnification range was linear, so as you dropped back to 6x, you got much closer to realistic performance in a weak light hunting scenario, where again, the illuminated reticle is still easily acquired even at its now quarter size.

REVIEWER: CHRIS PARKIN

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Konus Eternity
6-24x50 riflescope
Reticle: FFP
Weight: 845g
Eye Relief: 81-86mm (24-6x magnification)
Click Values: 0.1 MRAD
Field of View: 1.6m@100m (24x magnification)
Body Tube: 30mm
Minimum Focus: 10 yards to infinity
Length: 390mm
Price: £449
Contact: Range Right - www.range-right.co.uk

Tactacam Reveal X 2.0 Trail Camera

➤ The Tactacam Reveal looks like many other trail cameras, with an opening cover to access controls, and camera and flash lenses for day or night photo and film recording.

There's a strap to fasten it to a tree/post and a threaded mounting point for a tripod. It uses a standard SD card to store all recorded footage, but the newest attribute is the ability to broadcast via an included SIM card over the usual 4G network. It's not the only camera to do this, but this increasingly common feature invites us into the realms of app usage. Some competitors are fiddly to use, but the Tactacam is straightforward. I'm glad to see programmers are beginning to prioritise simplicity, ensuring the tool serves its purpose effectively rather than becoming an amusement or hobby in itself.

Power up

The Tactacam will run from 16x AA batteries, although I was fortunate to be sent the proprietary lithium battery, as well as an SD card and a security box. The instructions are easy to follow, and with the SD and SIM cards installed, you can register with Tactacam and choose a one-off or monthly data plan suited to your needs.

The phone app can be customised to suit you, and it's great to be able to control settings on the Tactacam itself, which may be many miles from your home. Most importantly, you can use the app to adjust day or night sensitivity settings, modify video length and quality, enable multi-shot capability, and tailor the camera to its specific scenario. This allows you to study the location and quarry habits without physically disturbing the animals or leaving your scent. I found motion sensitivity most useful, as being on a farm with vehicles and cows, I could easily switch the unit off when it was being overwhelmed by cattle invading a specific field. Data usage costs €6/£5 per 250



Installing an SD card for backup storage and using the main on/off control



photos, and everything is stored on the SD card if you want to minimise transmitted data consumption.

Real world

The camera is weatherproof and seems durable, with a strong hinged cover and easily accessible control panel, but you will have to use the app for full control of all the features.

I like the fact that the app on my phone ties in with my Tactacam account on the web, so when I'm at my desk, I can see what's going on in real-time. I can also keep track of the battery, which is charged via the supplied USB-C cable. After two weeks, 90% of the

A quick snap of a badger at night



Can you spot the squirrel?



battery remained after capturing 246 day and night photos, with the latter using the onboard IR flash.

Conclusion

Tactacam offers a full range of accessories on their website, including the steel Reveal security box I purchased, which screws to a post and can be padlocked. With the optional solar panel, it could theoretically run indefinitely—a major benefit for distant stalking syndicate land. Overall, I'm impressed with its functionality, photo quality, remote control features, and excellent value for money.

REVIEWER: CHRIS PARKIN

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Tactacam Reveal X 2.0 Trail Camera

Price: £182.00

Tactacam SD Card 32GB: £32.00

Tactacam Lithium

Battery Pack: £64.00

Tactacam Security Box

Reveal X 2.0: £44.00

Contact: Edgar Brothers - www.edgarbrothers.com

MFH Rifle Bag

➤ **Max Fuchs AG is a leading wholesaler of military and outdoor equipment that also manufactures its own products under the MFH and MFH Professional brand names.** Military 1st carries a large range of MFH gear, from backpacks and clothing to shovels and tents, and the quality of the products is very well known.

What have we got?

The rifle bag on test is a well-made item, and it's available at a very competitive price. There are two carry handles, a detachable and adjustable shoulder strap, and detachable backpack-style carry straps (including a waist strap), so you can carry the rifle however you like. All of the straps are nice and wide, making for a comfortable carry, and the option to detach the ones you are not using allows you to 'declutter' the outside of the bag and just retain the one(s) you want. The fact that there are two carry handles situated next to each other on the spine of the bag, means that if the load sits out of balance on one handle, you can use the other one. The carry options on this bag are really well thought out, and MFH has very cleverly covered all of the options.

On the side of the bag, there are three bellowed pockets, with flaps secured with Velcro, for accessories and ammunition. The large pocket is approximately 30x22cm, with two straps inside to secure larger objects, and the two smaller pockets



Several different detachable carry options

are 22x10cm. The fact that the three pockets are bellowed, and very large, means that they will hold a lot of accessories without putting any pressure on the side of your gun or scope. There is also a longer side pocket, approximately 60cm long, with a zip on the fore-end section of the bag.

Finer details

All of the stitching is very well done, and reinforced at stress points, and the zips, clips, and buckles are all good quality. The surface of the internal padding is well thought out, allowing



A large, well-padded rifle bag with plenty of space

the gun to slip in easily without too much friction. This will prevent any rubbing on the rifle or accelerated wear on the inside of the bag.

The main compartment is approximately 120cm (48") long and is well-padded to protect the gun. It has a double, and lockable, zip along one end for approximately half of the length of the bag, and it is deep enough to carry a scoped rifle comfortably.

Finally

The bag weighs just 1.2kg, and the external dimensions are 123x30x6cm. It is big enough to carry a large, scoped rifle and a lot of accessories safely, and the level of protection is very good. Overall, it is a great carry option at a very reasonable price.

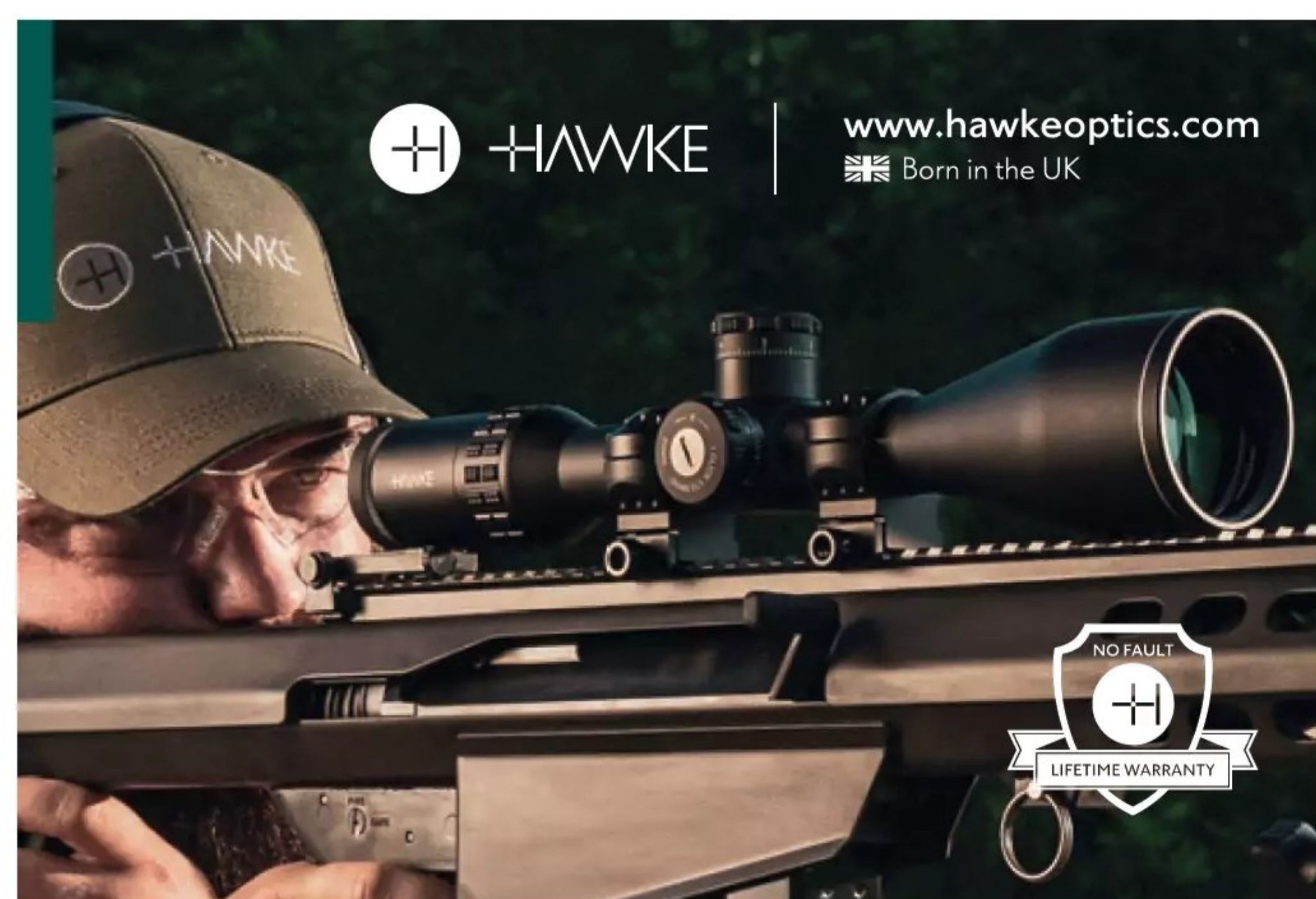
REVIEWER: MARK UNDERWOOD

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: MFH Rifle Bag

Price: £50.96

Contact: Military 1st - www.military1st.co.uk



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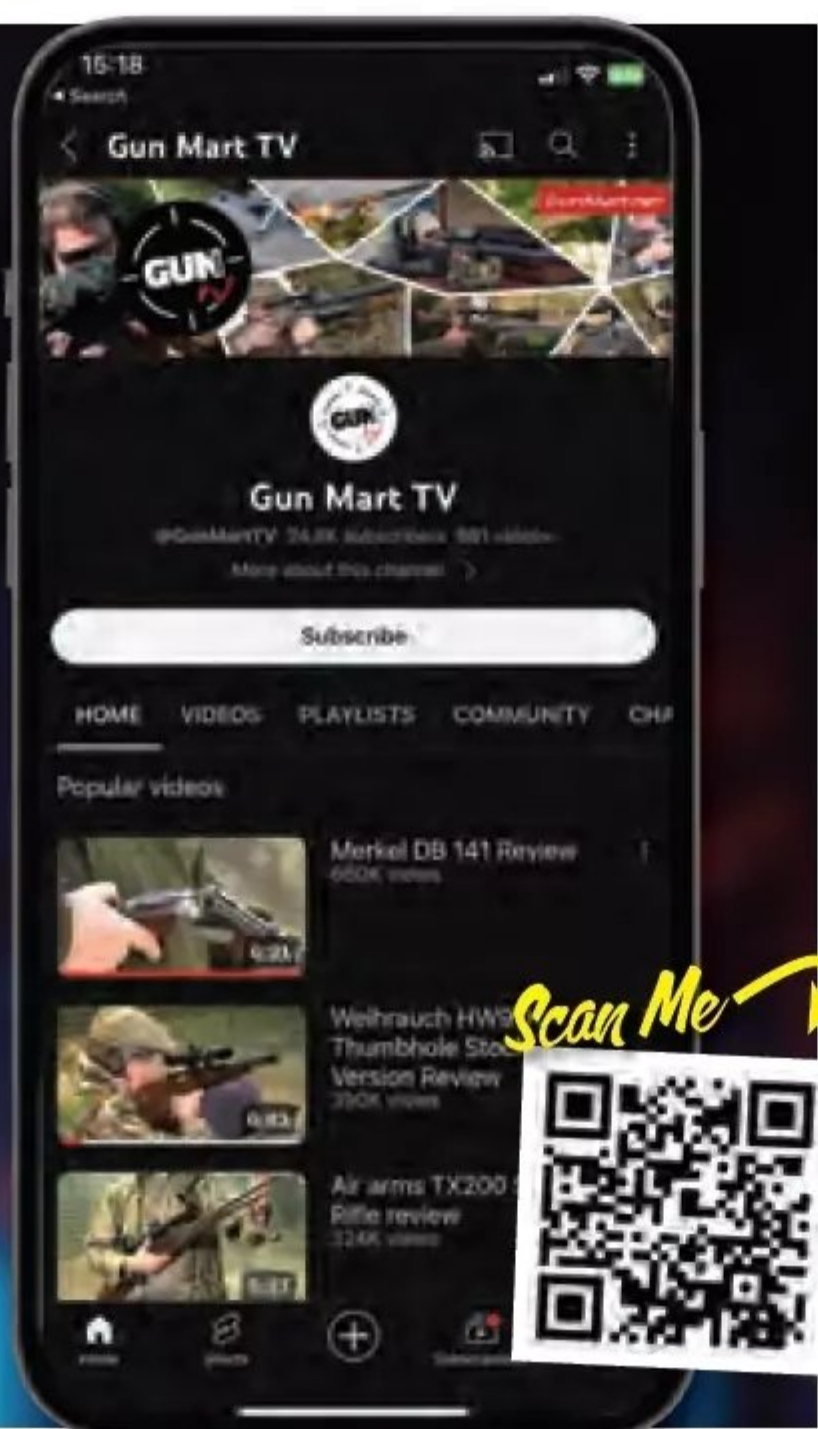
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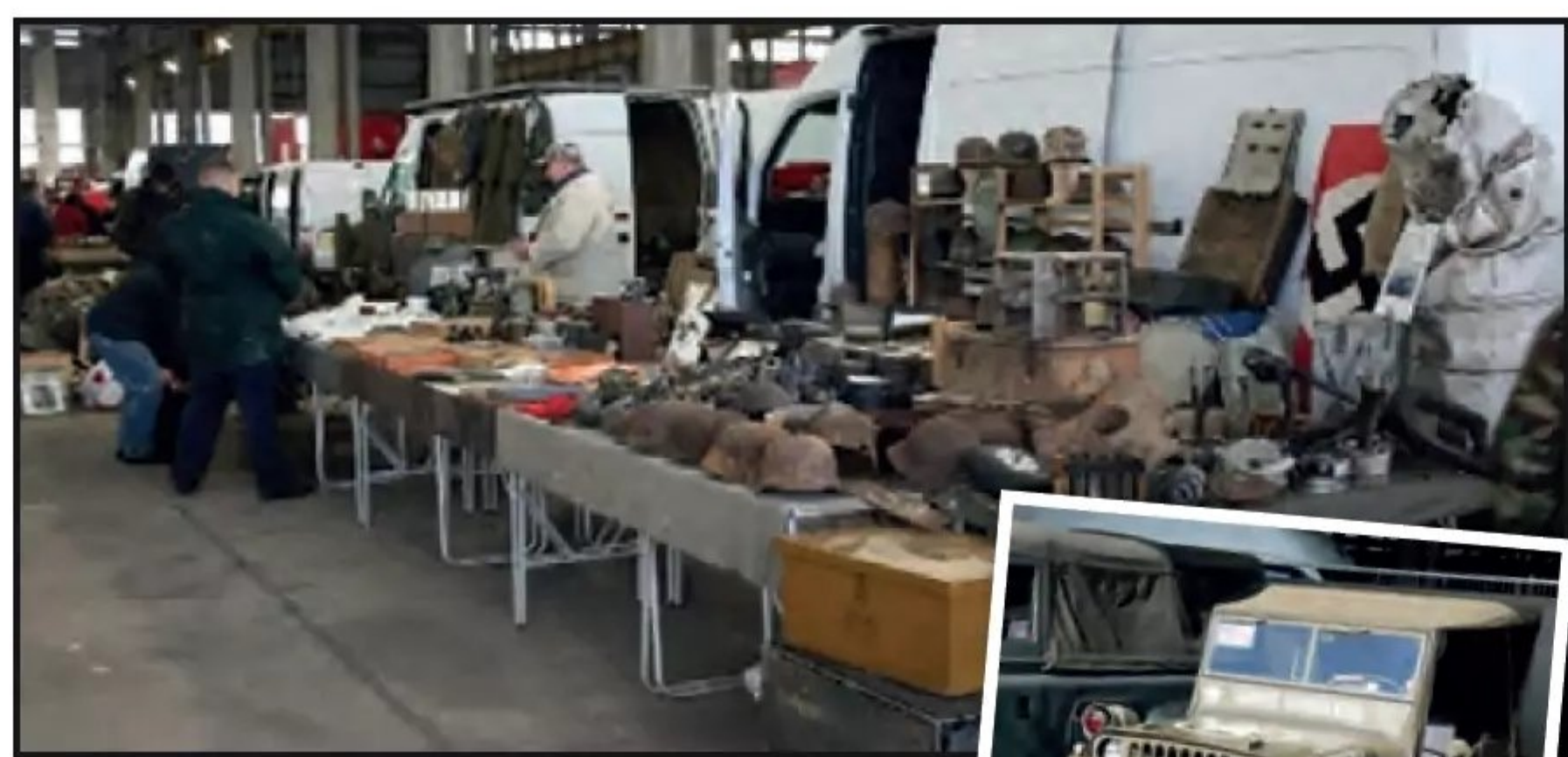
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GM03.25/48

This hits **THE SPOT**

From design to performance,
Mark Camoccio examines why
the AGT Manul stands out



Airgun Technology (AGT) is based in the Czech Republic and is known for its range of robust, high-grade pre-charged pneumatics.

Up until now, its output has consisted of various bullpups and rifles, but under review here is a new addition to its line-up: the Manul. As can be seen, this model represents AGT's first foray into the world of pistols.

In the box

Named after a small wild cat, the Manul certainly looks the part. Open the padded box, and alongside the pistol itself, you'll find a single-shot tray, quick-fill adaptor, spare seals, air release pin, and instructions. First impressions are of a super-sleek, modern-looking pistol, with plenty of features built in. The magazine, for example, is part of a mini assembly that comes pre-fitted, and the rotary design offers six shots in .22, as with my test gun, and seven shots in .177.

Open sights are fitted, along with a two-stage trigger, side-lever action, Picatinny scope rail, and manometer. Everything feels very well-machined, and with a matte black finish throughout and all-metal construction (save for the side-lever handle and grips), there's a refined air about the Manul. The barrel is manufactured by CZ too, which is always good to hear, given its standing within the industry.

Charging

AGT supplies this new air pistol with a neat push-fit probe adaptor, and it's designed to snap straight into a Foster connector from the air supply, whether that's a dedicated pump or a diver's bottle. That part worked a treat, but just as I began to get overexcited, the probe refused to play ball. Twist open the dust cover at the front of the cylinder, and the probe should just insert into the valve. On my test gun, the front O-ring on the probe proved just slightly slack, and that



Unusually, the magazine stays in position while you fill it



Detail of the ambidextrous composite grips



was enough to block entry. Luckily, AGT supplies some spare O-rings, so after I removed the offending item and nudged a new seal into position, the probe finally worked. I should note that the probe is a bit too tight a fit in any case, making the job irritating and fiddly, but I got there in the end. The fill pressure is 250bar, which is quite high, but it should deliver a high shot count.

Firing cycle

Before making any other changes, it always pays to get familiar with the firing cycle. To cock the action, the slimline cocking lever just to the left of the breech needs to be pulled up and backwards, just over a 90-degree arc. This sets the hammer and trigger.



IT'S NOT CHEAP, FOR SURE, BUT I'M DEFINITELY IN THE CAMP THAT APPRECIATES THAT PRODUCING A PCP PISTOL CAN INVOLVE JUST AS MANY PROCESSES AS A RIFLE, JUST IN A SCALED-DOWN FORMAT. SO WHY SHOULD IT BE SIGNIFICANTLY CHEAPER THAN ITS LARGER STABLEMATE?"

Interestingly, the instructions didn't cover filling the mag, but I arrived at the following procedure: In multi-shot mode, the mag cannot be removed, so it must be filled in-situ. With the lever up and breech open, insert a pellet into the visible chambers, then twist the mag anti-clockwise, filling

each chamber in turn and twisting as necessary. Ensure the magazine is fully twisted anti-clockwise, then close the side-lever, and six shots are ready to go.

Fancy going single-shot? To fit the single-shot tray, the magazine assembly (the mag and block) first needs to be removed via the two small



Detail of the magazine assembly. Note the rear sight

Here you can see the adjustable foresight and the rotating valve cover



The Picatinny rail means that the sighting options are endless

star-headed socket screws, and then the single-shot tray can be fixed into place in the same manner. No tool was included for this, and my star tool proved too wide for the job, so I stuck with the magazine for the duration!

Sight adjustment

Open sights are fitted as standard, and unusually, the foresight element is adjustable for height. Using the correct Allen key, the blade can be angled down or up. As for the rear sight, the small retaining screw needs to be slackened off, and then the sight block can be adjusted left or right. Not the most user-friendly design, but once set, these sights work well. The angled foresight

PELLET TYPE	HIGH (FPS)	LOW (FPS)	AVERAGE (FPS)	SPREAD (FPS)	ENERGY (FT/LBS)
AIR ARMS DIABOLO FIELD	405	341	366	64	4.8

catches the light, effectively creating a different coloured element, so the bead looks light grey between the dark black notch of the rear sight. A small detail, but a huge improvement on many rival designs.

In use

The two-stage trigger is adjustable, but again, there's not so much as a passing comment in the instructions. However, my test gun arrived with the trigger about as perfect as I could wish for. I love the broad blade, and after a short first

stage, the trigger trips crisply and predictably. The Manul generates a fair crack, and there's no provision for a silencer. Up front, there is a small air stripper inside the chassis, and some vented air can be felt escaping from the tiny holes along each side of the upper section. One slight negative concerns the side-lever. Operate it with any speed, and the left hand brushes across the sharper edges of the magazine. Basically, the lever is just a little too close to the action with the magazine installed. A minor irritation,



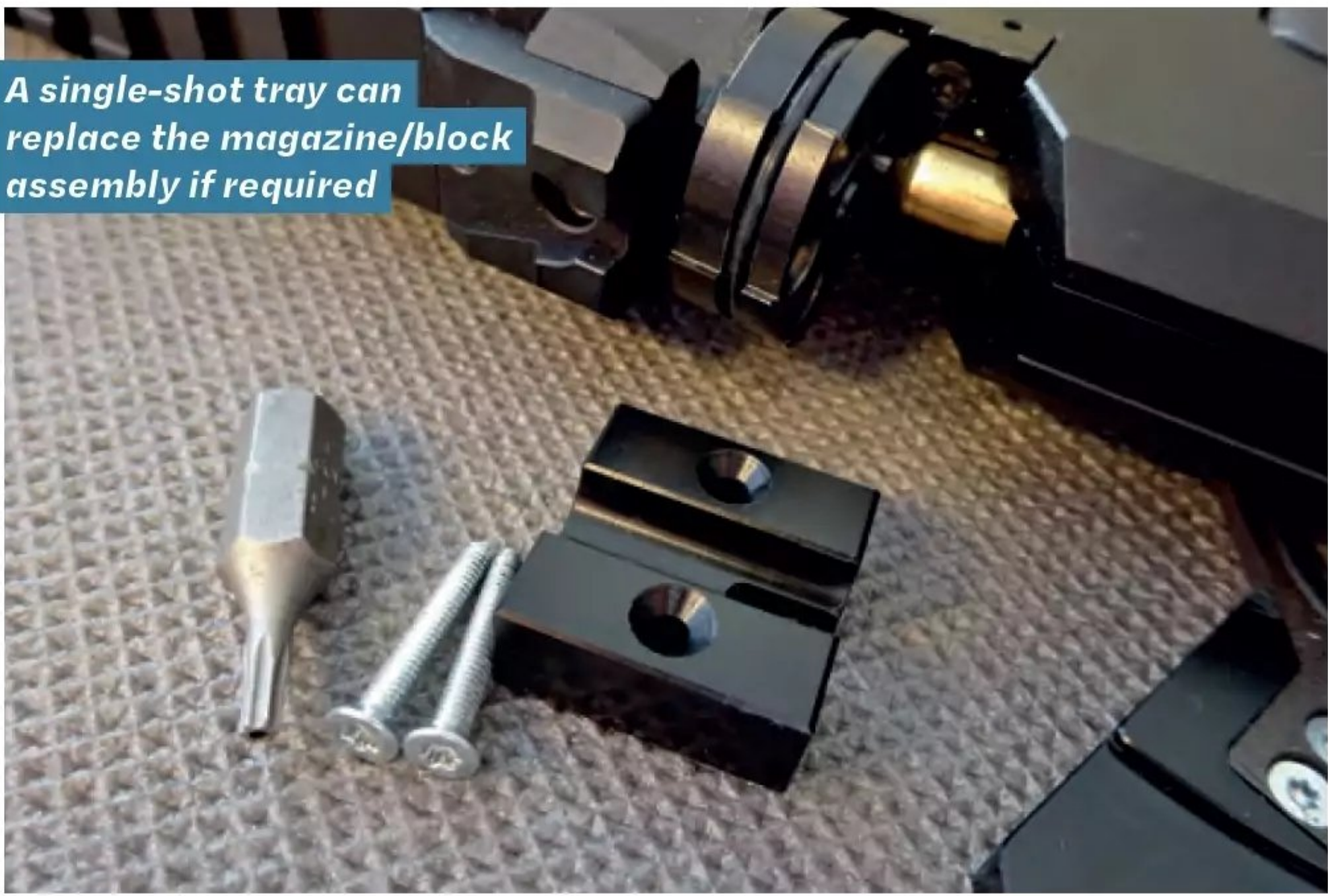
Along with the pistol, you get a few bits and bobs



Using the push-fit probe adaptor proved fiddly on test



This pistol achieved some serious accuracy



A single-shot tray can replace the magazine/block assembly if required

but definitely one I am duty-bound to highlight. Switch to the single-shot tray, and it won't be an issue.

As for using alternative sighting systems, this is straightforward since the Manul sports a large integral Picatinny rail up top.

Performance

I began with open sights, and over 10 yards with a mild rest, I could easily manage penny-sized groups. But with the lure of some other sighting system, I was itching to see what the Manul was capable of. Using my trusty 2x20 SMK pistol scope and Picatinny mount adaptor, the 10-yard

groups soon shrank to the size of a 5p coin. Moving targets out to 20 yards proved a more realistic test for the Manul, and here, satisfying groups around the size of a 2p coin were my reward. Pretty impressive for a pistol, yet given that the 2x optic is hardly stretching things, I reckon the Manul has even greater potential.

And so, to the chrono. From a 250bar fill, I recorded 138 shots on test, shot down to a residual 100bar. That's a great shot count from such a compact cylinder. Energy topped out at 5.8ft/lbs, with an average of just under 5ft/lbs, and when you bear in mind the legal limit for an air pistol is 6ft/lbs, this pistol is fairly pokey.

Verdict

The Manul is a tidy piece of PCP hardware from a manufacturer that's fast gaining ground in the marketplace. It's not cheap, for sure, but I'm definitely in the camp that appreciates that producing a PCP pistol can involve just as many processes as a rifle, just in a scaled-down format.

So why should it be significantly cheaper than its larger stablemate?

The Manul is, in short, a very likeable pistol. Yes, the rather cramped cocking lever arrangement is mildly irritating, and the instructions are curiously half-baked but look beyond these flaws, and this pistol has so much to offer. The firing cycle is very close to dead, and this pistol features a great trigger, a slick action, plenty of power on tap, and a multitude of accurate shots to play with. I love the styling and sleek profile too, so overall, a big thumbs up from me.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

- Name:** AGT Manul
- Type:** Multi-shot PCP pistol
- Calibre:** .22 on test, .177 available
- Barrel Length:** 7.5"
- Overall Length:** 12.5"
- Weight:** 1.65lbs
- Energy:** 4.8ft/lbs (average)
- Price:** £995
- Contact:** Edgar Brothers - www.edgarbrothers.com



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There was plenty of attractive figuring on show



The laser chequering aids grip





Detail of the stylish barrel finisher/cocking aid



During a search for a capable and affordable springer, **Mark Camoccio** finds the Crosman Summit

Spring-powered airguns still account for a significant slice of airgun sales, and I believe the classic break-barrel still tops the listings. My first gun was a break-barrel model, and I've never quite lost my affection for the concept. It's all about ease of use at the end of the day, and there's something about just settling on the range with a tin of pellets, and being able to completely relax and simply enjoy the shooting. No bottles, no pumps, just the time-honoured system of getting a pellet into an airgun. Slow and deliberate, or quick and instinctive? You decide. Just yank down the barrel, push home a pellet, and slap the breech closed.

Package deal

On test here is one of the more recent models from Crosman, the massive American manufacturer that now operates under the umbrella group, Velocity Outdoors. Crosman is known for their range of budget models, and the Crosman Summit on show here is a good example of what they are all about. Sold as a package deal, this attractive sporter comes complete with a kit scope—an unbranded 3-9x40 AO model—and a one-piece mount, all-in currently for £185.

There's also a barrel fitting/cocking aid, a two-stage adjustable trigger, an in-guard manual safety catch, and dovetail rails.

Sitting pretty

Straight out of the box, first impressions are good, and while the ambidextrous stock is undoubtedly fairly basic in the scheme of things, the hardwood utilised, with its subtle matte lacquered finish, really sets this rifle off. Plenty of grain pattern and figuring are on show, and with a few features incorporated into the configuration, the overall profile of the Summit is easy on the eye for sure. The rounded fore-end tip looks stylish and comfortable, and the panels of laser-cut chequering on both the fore-end and pistol grip are further added details, designed to appeal. OK, the chequering is rather shallow, but it can only help where handling is concerned, and it certainly enhances the visuals. As for the rubber butt pad, as with so many springers these days, this is constructed from some of the hardest rubber compounds known to man. Doesn't that defeat the object?

Anyhow, switching focus to the action, barrel, breech block, and cylinder, these are all treated to chemical bluing,



Crosman's Summit is an attractive spring-powered sporter

AS FOR PERFORMANCE, TEN-SHOT STRINGS WITH A TOTAL SPREAD OF AROUND 12FPS, ADMITTEDLY USING QUALITY PELLETS, AND GROUPS OF 5/8" AT 30 YARDS, LEFT ME MIGHTILY IMPRESSED."



The one-piece mount should hold firm



Everything is finished to a reasonable standard



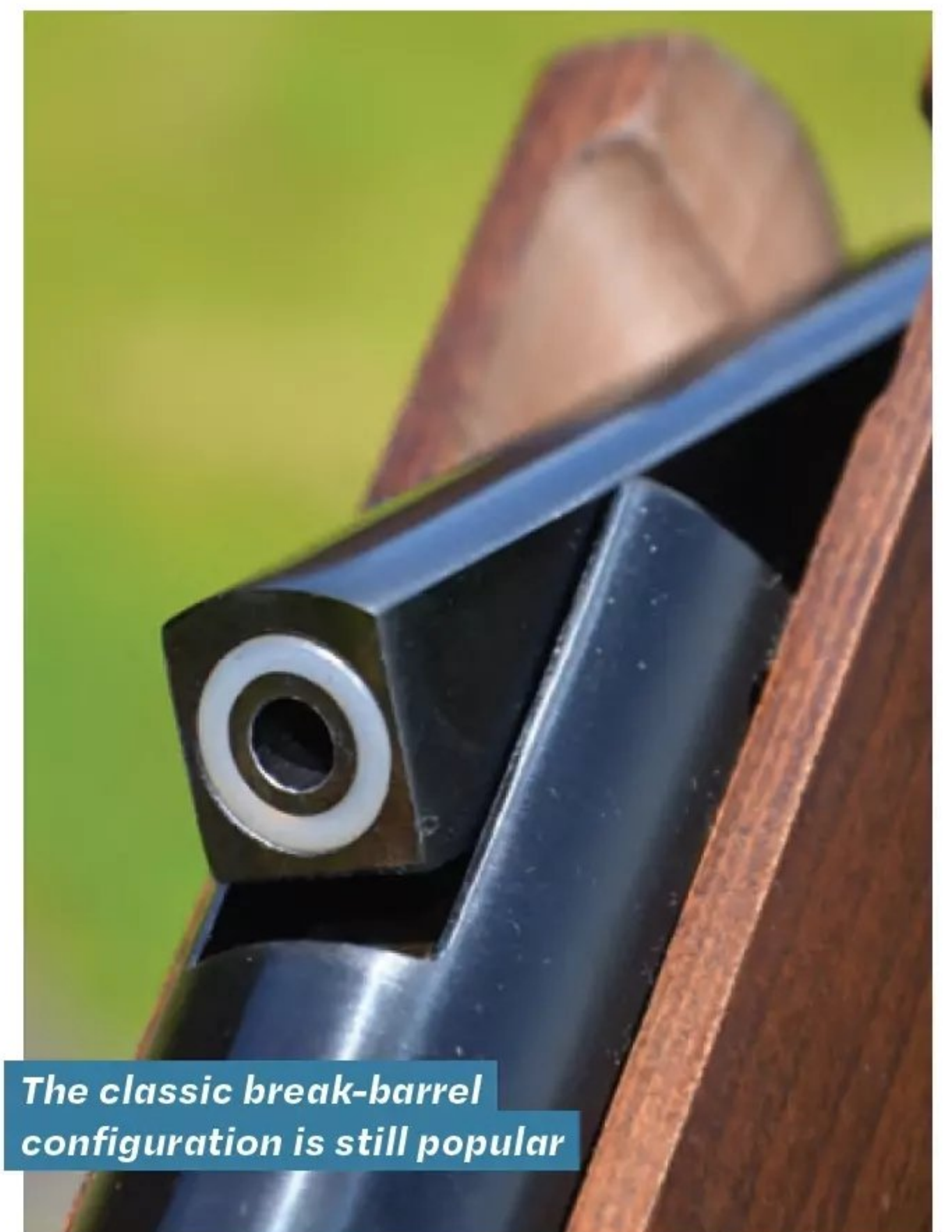
The trigger is a two-stage adjustable design. Note the safety tab



An articulated cocking linkage keeps the cut-out to a minimum



The 3-9x40 scope and one-piece mount come with the rifle



The classic break-barrel configuration is still popular

which is carried out to a respectable standard. Synthetic components are kept to a minimum too, with just the cylinder end block, trigger guard, and the barrel fitting up front ticking that particular box. Indeed, there's a precision feel to this model that well and truly belies its price tag.

You'll notice that I used the term 'barrel fitting', and this is because the attachment up front is made of lightweight synthetic material, so it can't be called a muzzle weight. Likewise, the rifled barrel actually runs inside to within 1/4" of the tip, so it isn't a silencer either. Come to think of it, maybe we should settle for 'cocking aid'.

Three cheers!

OK, remember this model comes with a 3-9x40 scope, so it's time to get that set up. I would always favour a one-piece mount for a springer, and that's what we get supplied here. It features an arrestor stud at the back, so I had to first remove the scope from the mount and wind this in with the Allen key, as it sat a bit proud when first offered up. Positioning the mount so the arrestor stud locates into the hole on the receiver is easy enough, and with all four bolts gently tightened in the usual alternate manner, I soon had the scope locked in position. As with any scope, the first task was to adjust the rear dioptre to get the reticle and subject clear and crisp. The parallax can be corrected for a particular distance using the front-mounted adjustable objective (AO) collar, and this shows a minimum

distance of 5 yards followed by 10, 15, 20, 30, 50, 75, 100, and infinity.

I was testing at 30 yards, so set the parallax to that. I have to say, three cheers are in order for this scope being way better than several kit scopes I've encountered recently. The clarity was impressive from the off, although while zeroing, I did experience a slight delay in adjustments coming in. However, it settled down, and all was fine. It's a great starter specification too, allowing novices to get going straight out of the box, which is always handy.

Range notes

So, how did the Summit perform? Well, firstly, the breech was a little sticky on test, needing a good jolt to open it up, but the cocking stroke was pretty easy and comfortable, given the synthetic cocking aid up front. Just nudge a pellet home in the breech (it's quite tight, so some ammo will prove unsuitable), snap the breech closed, and you're ready.

I love the rounded fore-end tip, and it feels spot-on in the aim. The use of an articulated cocking linkage means a smaller cut-out is necessary underneath the fore-end, and this contributes to the solid feel overall. An inherent flaw of this type of springer is its cheekpiece, which is often ideal for open sights but too low when used with a scope. However, I have to say that the cheek here, whilst it could be slightly higher, did its job, with gentle contact with the face throughout.

Unsurprisingly, the Summit does recoil, but my test model was quite

subdued, with more of a bounce on firing than anything harsh. The trigger is fairly basic, but the usual approach of squeezing through the initial creep is definitely the way to go. At this point, a quick comment on the manual safety catch. You can, by definition, ignore it, but when applied, the in-guard tab is a bit too close to the trigger blade itself. But hey, I would just ignore it!

As for performance, ten-shot strings with a total spread of around 12fps, admittedly using quality pellets, and groups of 5/8" at 30 yards, left me mightily impressed. This is a rifle that not only offers sleek looks and comfort in the aim but also delivers half-decent performance where it matters.

Conclusion

If the test gun is anything to go by, this model is one of the best buys in the current Crosman springer line-up, and with the scope and mounts all in for the money, the Summit has to be on any shortlist for a budget sporter/starter pack.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Crosman Summit

Type: Break-barrel

Calibre: .22 on test, .177 available

Barrel Length: 18.5"

Overall Length: 44.6"

Weight: 6.7lbs

Energy: 11.8ft/lbs

Price: £185

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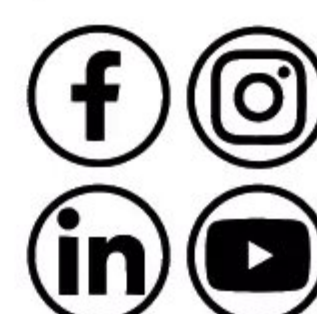


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MASTER YOUR AIM



Mark Camoccio tests the Hawke Endurance 1x30 red dot sight, revealing why it's a top choice for shooters

Hawke Optics now offers a great choice of sighting systems, and various red dot sights are in their line-up. On test here is the Hawke Endurance Red Dot 1x30 Dual Height QR, and at just 3.5" long and 8oz in weight, it's a super versatile unit that won't easily unbalance a rifle combo. In fact, the compact specification makes this the perfect partner for various AR-style guns and bullpup/tactical airguns, where space can be at a premium.

Unrestricted

Shooting with a red dot sight can feel quite liberating to the uninitiated, and part of the attraction is, unlike a conventional scope, eye relief is technically unlimited. In practice, I still prefer to have the unit just a few inches away from the eye, but unlike conventional glassware, the system doesn't dictate exactly where.

Inside the protective box, you get linked rubber lens caps, two mount bases, some instructions, a coin-style battery, an Allen key, and a lens cleaning cloth. The dual mount system uses the Weaver/Picatinny configuration and offers both a low base and a high mount, the latter featuring a witness window that allows the target to be viewed through a hollow in the mount base. Clever stuff, bringing added versatility. Fit this to a gun with open sights, and they should still be usable as a dual system, which can sometimes be fun apart from anything else!

First impressions

Pick up this sight, and the high-quality aluminium construction immediately becomes obvious. The matte black finish is wholly practical and seems durable enough, and it all feels extremely robust. The internal specification boasts 25-layer multi-coated optics, which certainly sounds impressive, and with metal screw-cap turrets protecting the external adjusters, it all seems slick yet reassuringly familiar.

Quick-release

As mentioned, two mount bases are supplied, with the low one measuring 10mm in height and the high one 25mm. The latter comes fitted with a quick-release (QR) lever, and whilst I thought the lever would be transferable, depending on the base selected, it appears that it isn't. Anyhow, the high mount bolted onto an EB Arms XV2-RS with relative ease. The QR lever did need to be slackened off a bit, and the pre-tension in the bolt is easily set by slackening off the screw from the left side with the supplied Allen key. Then, when it is slack enough, locate the sight into the gun's Picatinny rail, lock off the lever, and then gently nip up the Allen bolt again. Thereafter, when the sight is removed, the tension should feel about right. To unlock the lever, incidentally, just press the small spring-loaded catch first. It's a really neat system and means that the sight can be whipped on or off in a second and relocated onto another gun if necessary.



Into action

With the unlimited eye relief, we have plenty of flexibility as to where the sight is located, and for the record, the unit is parallax error-free from 10 yards. Unscrew the left turret cap and load up the disc battery, and we're now ready for action. Switching on the device illumination shows the dot in red, which is apparently 3 MOA in size. The eight stages of digital brightness are controlled via the rubber-armoured +/- buttons on the top.

I found the dot appeared to get fractionally larger as the brightness was increased, and for my initial sighting in, I cranked it up to level four. Zeroing the sight proved easy and quick, with both windage and elevation turrets being finger-friendly. Click values are 1 MOA and very positive in use, and it's worth noting at this stage that the sight will enter into standby mode if no movement is detected for five minutes. This still uses battery power, but the amount used is greatly reduced. To power off the sight, just hold the '+' button down.

I shot in perfect daylight with a slightly overcast sky, and when I reduced the brightness to level two, the dot appeared perfectly within my 2" Jack Pyke sticky black target at 25 yards. At this illumination level, the dot was ultra-precise and free from glare. Obviously, brighter conditions may well need a different approach. I had a border of black around the dot, and this made it really easy to centralise and aim accurately. As for results, I printed several easy five-shot groups, coverable with a small 5p coin, which I reckon is pretty superb.

Verdict

This type of red dot sight never fails to surprise me with its remarkable accuracy, and the Endurance proved particularly impressive during testing. I reckon it's a great alternative to a conventional scope for mid to close-range hunting work, or informal plinking sessions. Over 30 yards on test, it proved pretty deadly and instinctive, and whilst personal eyesight will dictate how much further that range can extend, as it stands, this is an ideal tool for pistols, ARs, and all manner of hunting rifles. Hawke products all come with the standard guarantees – shockproof, waterproof, etc., but don't forget their conditional lifetime warranty and respectable after-sales service, which all stand for a lot these days.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Hawke Endurance Red Dot 1x30 Dual Height QR

Dot Size: 3 MOA

Weight: Fitted with low base 8oz, fitted with high base 8.5oz

Eye Relief: Unlimited

Click Values: 1 MOA

Length: 3.5"

Clicks Per Rotation: 60 elevation, 60 windage

Number of Rotations: 3 elevation, 5 windage

Price: £199

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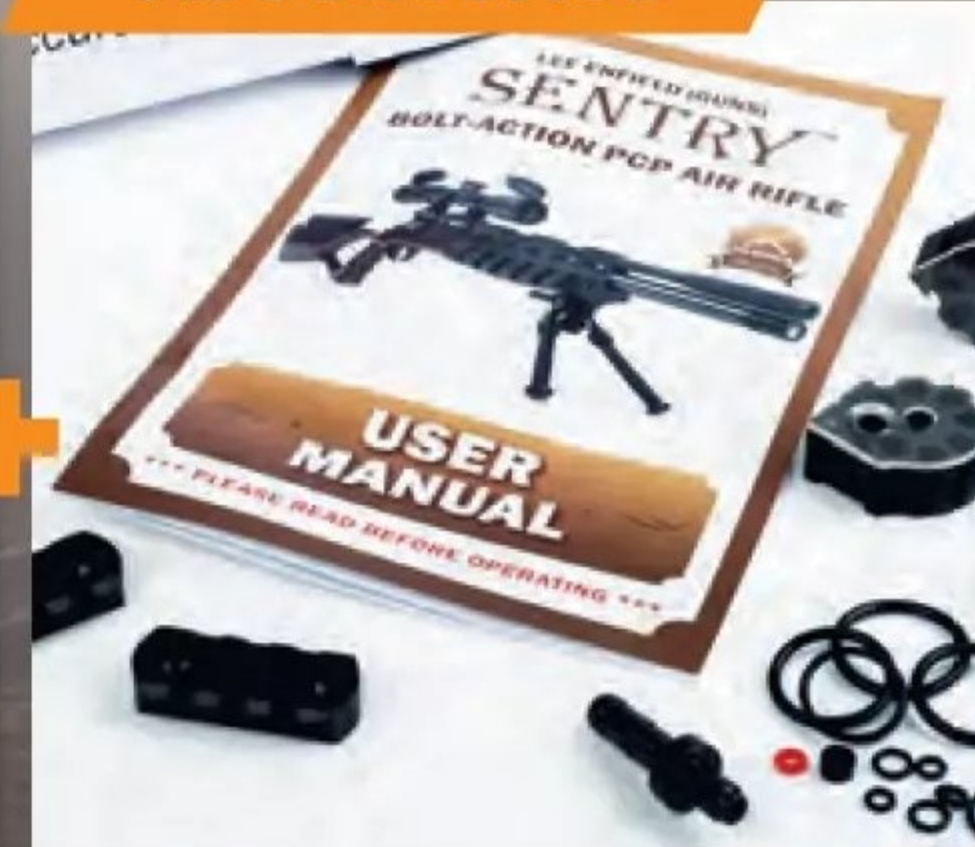
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WHISPER QUIET, HUNTER APPROVED

Dave Barham explores the compact brilliance of the BRK Pathfinder XR O.D Green





Launched last year, the original BRK Pathfinder XR has long since proven its worth and popularity, especially among pest controllers. There aren't that many compact, lightweight hunting rifles out there, especially ones that fold up small enough to put in a small rucksack. Now there's a new addition to the family in the form of this O.D Green model.

The law

There's always misinformation floating around on social media claiming this style of rifle isn't legal. Do you really think that a company as big as BRK would produce a rifle that wasn't UK-legal? The main confusion seems to be the actual length of the rifle when folded and the barrel length itself, so here is an excerpt from a statement issued by BRK on the matter:

"Brocock confirms that the Brocock Pathfinder XR conforms with the UK Firearms Act 1968 in that

it is an air weapon and is exempt from defining gun length as specified under Section 5 (1) (aba).

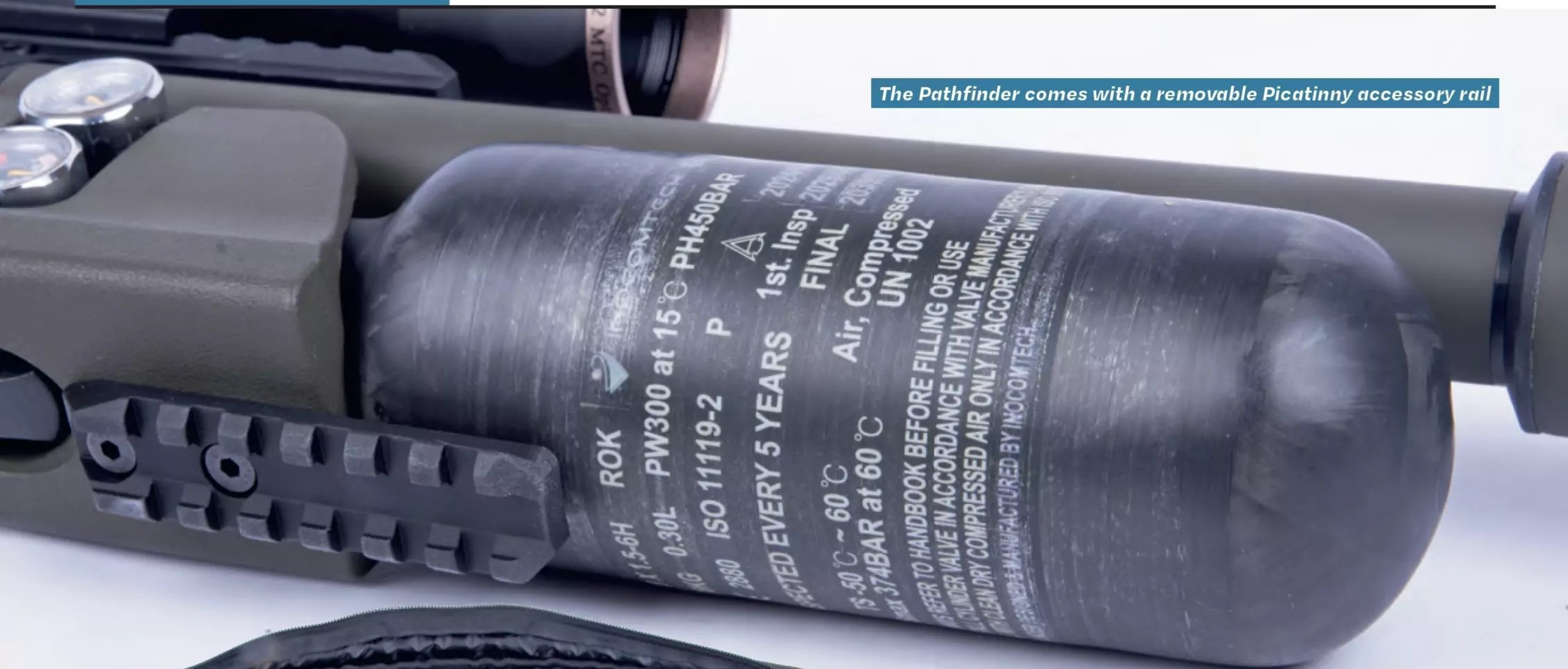
Brocock also defines the Brocock Pathfinder XR as "an air rifle, which does not exceed a muzzle energy of 12ft/lbs and is therefore not classified as especially dangerous and is exempt from the need for a Section 1 licence under the Firearms Act 1968".

So, it is, in fact, a legal airgun, even if the barrel is only 256mm long.

High or low

As you would expect, a rifle of this quality requires the very best regulator, and just like its other PCP rifles, BRK has installed a HUMA unit which is linked to a floating hammer system. There is also a variable power dial on the right-hand side of the action, which allows you to dial the power down – handy for shooting at close quarters in your back garden, or within the confines of a small barn when ratting.

The Pathfinder comes with a removable Picatinny accessory rail



The airgun fits nicely into the spacious bag

This regulator also comes into its own in the FAC versions, which are available in .177 (18ft/lbs), .22 (27ft/lbs), and .25 (30ft/lbs).

Keeping things compact

The Pathfinder XR O.D Green is a full-power, UK-legal sub-12ft/lbs air rifle, which follows a similar concept to the hugely successful Ranger XR predecessor, but with a little more beef to it and a much higher shot count thanks to the 300cc carbon Kevlar bottle.

At present, this rifle is only available as a kit, which includes a rather nifty carry bag that also has back straps, so it can be used as a rucksack. Also included is a colour-coordinated BRK MF-121 silencer, which really does quieten things down, and together with the fully shrouded barrel, it makes it whisper quiet.



I'VE HAD THIS LITTLE GEM OUT ON THE RANGE DURING A COUPLE OF DAY SESSIONS... IT HASN'T MISSED A BEAT, AND AS YOU WOULD IMAGINE, IT IS INSANELY ACCURATE.

DAVE BARHAM

Weighing in at just 6.4lbs, it's one of the lightest hunting rifles on the market and is already a massive hit with hunters.

To collapse the stock, you simply grab hold of it near the joint and lift it upwards to release the mechanism. You can then fold the stock to the left so that it butts up against the main body of the rifle. To open it out again, simply push the stock to the right until the locking mechanism clicks and locks it all into place. It's absolutely rock-solid, which I know has been a concern with many other folding stock rifles from other manufacturers. There's absolutely no play in it once folded out.

You can extend or reduce the length of pull by depressing the small lever housed inside the skeleton butt section, then slide the butt in or out to your desired length. I must make a point of noting that the butt pad itself is made from a rubberised material, with horizontal grooves cut into it for added support. It just adds that extra feeling of solidness when the rifle is shouldered, no matter what you happen to be wearing.

As far as the polymer stock goes, I really like the AK pistol grip, as not only does it look the part, but it also adds a different dimension to the handling.

Slick and effective

If you like your side-lever rifles, then you're going to love this one. It has been



Both gauges are clear and very easy to read



Here you can see the dial used to adjust the power output



Detail of the manual safety catch and trigger



Detail of the excellent side-lever

ergonomically designed and uses a relatively short stroke, with minimal effort to cock the rifle. It features a machined aluminium drop-down handle, which sits really well between your thumb and forefinger when cocking. I particularly like the way that they have drilled it out to reduce weight and also add some grip for use in wet weather.

Brocock's new self-indexing magazines are also superb, and you get 11 shots in .22 and 13 shots in .177. They're the flip-up cover version and are extremely easy to load. Just turn the inner of the magazine all the way clockwise and then drop a pellet in to hold it in place. Next, fill the remaining holes with pellets, and then flip the lid back over, and you're done. The magazine

The magazine is inserted from the right



Simply press the lever to adjust the rifle's length of pull



The BRK MF-121 silencer is very effective

You get a long-reach Foster connector with the Pathfinder

inserts from right to left, and it's magnetic, so it clicks into place and stays there. This rifle also comes supplied with a single-shot tray.

When it comes to filling the 300cc bottle, the Pathfinder utilises BRK's long-reach, quick-fill Foster connector, and the fill port is cleverly housed underneath the main body of the rifle, beneath a magnetic fill port cap that simply pulls off.

The controls

The Pathfinder XR features BRK's classic two-stage adjustable trigger unit, which can be adjusted for pull weight, length of stage, and blade position. The rifle sent to me for test had a reasonably short first stage set, coming to an abrupt halt as it reached the second stage, which then took very little effort to pull. It's clean, crisp, and very easy to get used to – as you would expect from a BRK unit. The blade is gently curved, and the pad of your finger sits very comfortably on it.

There is a manual safety switch housed inside the trigger guard, immediately in front of the trigger. As far as pull weight goes, it's just over 1lb straight from the factory, according to my scales.

Mount up

This rifle comes supplied with a two-piece Picatinny scope rail, with 50mm at the rear and 145mm at the front. The magazine sits a couple of millimetres underneath the base of the rails, so you can use a single-piece mount if needs be, but more importantly, you can put a thermal or a night-vision unit on top with no problems. There's another 75mm Picatinny rail underneath the bottle on the fore-end to attach a bipod, and this can easily be removed if needed.

In the field

This is another one of those wonderful rifles that I'm really struggling to put down, and it really is such great fun to shoot. Because it's such a small, compact unit, the balance point is extended to a 'palm' rather than a single point, and it just feels great to shoot in all manner of positions. The fact that you can adjust the length of pull via the extendable butt section means that this really is a "one size fits all" rifle, with a wide range of adjustment for all body sizes.

I've had this little gem out on the range during a couple of day sessions, coupled with three evenings at one of my rat permissions. It hasn't missed a beat, and as you would imagine, it is insanely accurate.

In the end, what you're paying for here is exceptional quality and performance. Everything about the Pathfinder XR screams quality and purpose. If you're a hunter, like me, then you're going to love the Pathfinder.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: BRK Pathfinder XR O.D Green

Type: PCP

Calibre: .177 and .22 (.25 FAC)

Barrel Length: 256mm (10.1")

Overall Length: 416mm to 616mm (18.5" to 25.5")

Weight: 6.4lbs (2.9kg)

Energy: 11.5ft/lbs

Shot Capacity: Approx 220 in .22 and 200 in .177

Variation (10 shots): 7fps

Price: £1,449.99

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TIME TO GO *Wild?*

Mark Camoccio puts the Rainson Wild Plus to the test, showcasing its build quality, accuracy, and innovative design



Rainson is a relatively new name on the scene and is a subsidiary of Armakon Defence, based in Turkey.

All of their PCP airguns feature a side-lever action and offer variations on the tactical/bullpup style.

Model selection

UK distributors, Anglo Spanish Imports (ASI), are understandably selective as to which models they bring in for the UK, but interest seems to be growing. The Rainson Edge models have been around for a while, but on test here is one of the latest—the Wild Plus. The standard Wild comes with a cylinder as part of the configuration, but my Wild Plus comes with a sizeable carbon-fibre buddy bottle up front. At the time of this test, this airgun retails for a shade over £850, so it isn't exactly cheap. That said, considering the extensive spec sheet on offer, this price doesn't look overblown.

Well appointed

We're looking at a tactical-style rifle with a side-lever-operated, bullpup configuration. An adjustable butt and cheekpiece are listed, along with a manual safety, two-stage adjustable trigger, dual regulator system, power adjuster, AR-style grip, and three manometers. The gun comes well protected in its packaging, and we also get a filling adaptor, three magazines, a silencer, and even some spare O-rings and seals. No instructions are included, but you are referred to the Rainson website for a download. It all looks

well-made and feels sturdy, so first impressions are a definite thumbs-up.

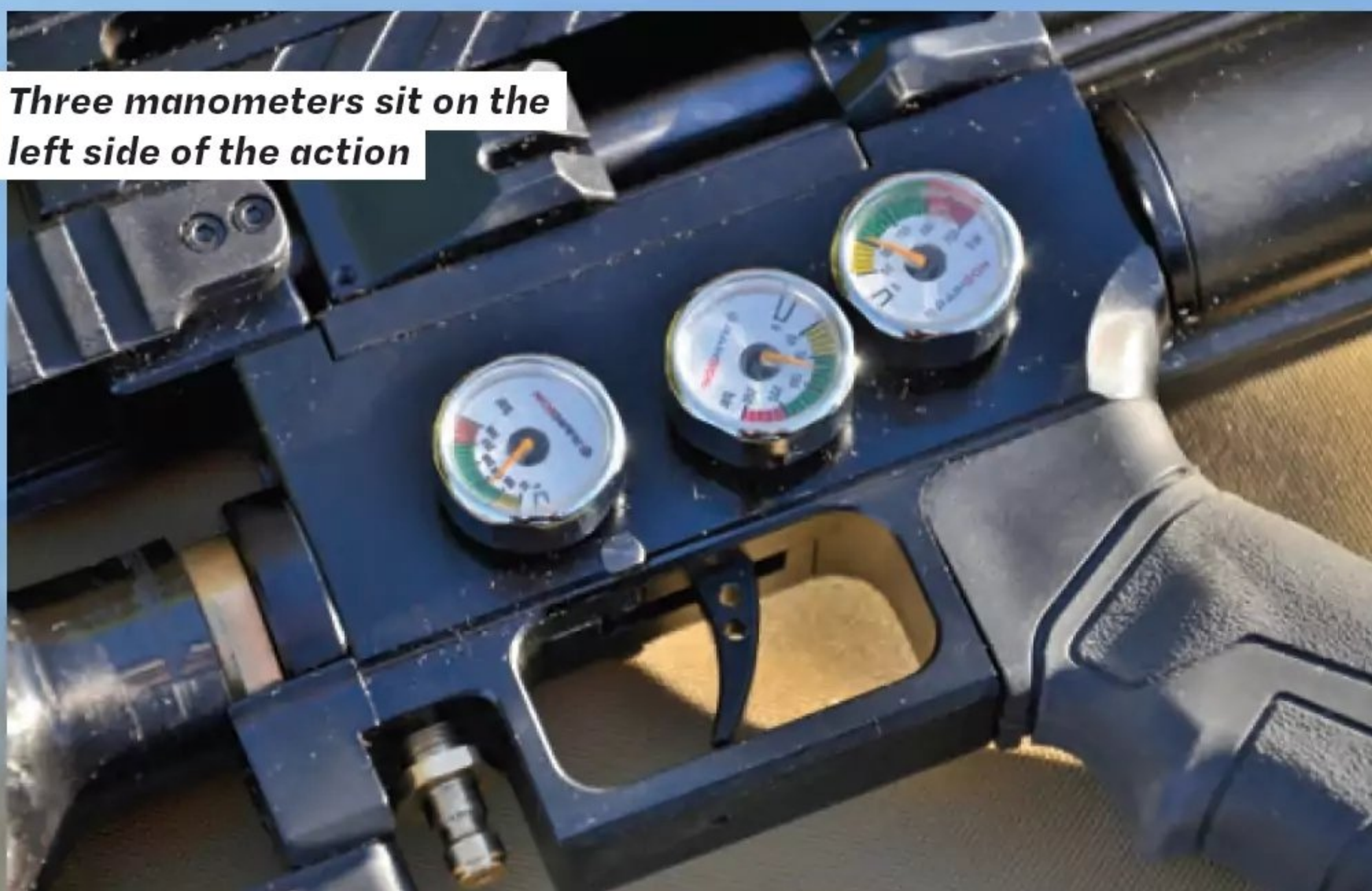
Gauge the response

So, why three manometers? That's a good question. With the Wild Plus, Rainson is offering an alternative to the likes of Daystate and FX, with their tactical, tweakable models primarily aimed at the high-power FAC market. The Wild Plus utilises a dual regulator system, and here the three side-mounted gauges keep tabs for the user. The left-side manometer shows residual main bottle pressure, the middle gauge shows the first regulator pressure, and the right-hand gauge monitors the second regulator pressure. With an FAC specification, it can sometimes be preferable to have the bottle feed the first regulator (set to a higher pressure), which then, in turn, feeds the second regulator (set to a lower pressure). By doing so, the system can be more efficient and experience less working stress in certain scenarios. In sub-12ft/lbs, the dual-reg approach isn't so relevant, but the hardware is here nonetheless for those who wish to experiment.

Filling regime

The fill pressure is specified as a maximum of 250bar, and whilst that certainly makes sense when dealing with FAC power levels, for sub-12ft/lbs, as per my test gun, I'm reliably informed by ASI that 200bar is perfectly adequate. Of course, the shot count is directly linked to fill pressure,

Three manometers sit on the left side of the action



The carbon-fibre bottle and one of the many Picatinny rails



so expect far more at the higher figure. Rainson fits this model with a fairly standard Foster filling valve; the brass protrusion just forward of the angular trigger guard. Whilst the requisite snap-on, spring-loaded adaptor piece was supplied, it wasn't needed, since my bottle's airline snapped straight on. Hooray! Civilized and easy charging.

The Wild Plus can be used as a multi-shot or single-shot, and with three cassette magazines included, hunters are well catered for. The mags offer 12 shots in .22 (on test), 14 in .177, or 10 if you opt for .25 calibre. Filling them is simple and conventional. First, wind the cover anti-clockwise in the direction of the arrow, all the way around against spring pressure. Next, insert the first pellet head-first, blocking the back of the hole as you do so, and then move the cover slowly back clockwise, filling each chamber.

Final tweaks

Our final consideration regarding preparation at this stage is getting the stock elements to fit. This can all be done without firing a shot. The Wild Plus sports a pleasingly soft rubber butt pad, and by tweaking the retaining screw on the right side, the pad can be shifted forwards or backwards, effectively setting the length of pull to suit. Surprisingly, it doesn't adjust for height, but given that the synthetic cheekpiece does, via its raiser-bar, this is no big deal. Suffice it to say, I achieved satisfactory results on test, with a well-supported sight picture, despite the Wild creating a high sightline.

Handling and feel

Shoulder the Wild Plus and you'll soon know whether the underside Picatinny accessory rail is a bonus or an irritation in the aim. This depends on where your leading hand falls up front. It's great to have the option for add-ons, but if you do need to remove it (via two screws), there are two small rails, one on either side, just ready and waiting. As for gripping the carbon-fibre buddy bottle, this material is somewhat warmer than steel, so it works well. I love the soft rubber pistol grip, and the contours are spot-on.

The bullpup configuration gives a 'planted' feel with the action centralised, and that's a big part of the appeal for many. Factor in a pleasingly light, adjustable, two-stage trigger,



Detail of the intermount system used, which results in a high sightline



Detail of the adjustable butt and cheek section



Side-lever operation is very much in vogue



The Rainson Wild Plus follows the modern blueprint for a tactical-style airgun

The Wild Plus comes complete with a filling adaptor, three mags, and some spare seals



and we're off to a great start. With three magazines included, it seems a shame not to utilise them, but for those who wish to single-load, fear not, as the breech block has been designed to be wide enough to allow for this. There's no tray, but I have to say, I didn't miss one. Cycling the side-lever requires little effort, but just occasionally it proved a little sticky with certain pellets when magazine-fed, yet smooth as silk in single-shot mode. So, be selective with your ammunition, as the correct pellet choice can so often make a big difference.

Chrono corner

Fill pressure-wise, for the record, I stayed at 200bar. Now, given that there's a power adjuster located on



A chunky and weighty silencer is also part of the deal



Note the Foster-style filling adaptor



The fairly wide breech allows for direct single-shot loading without the need for a tray



An incremental power adjuster is always welcome, bringing further versatility

the left side of the breech, I thought I would see what it does before running a consistency check. With the power level set to max, my test rifle produced around 10 to 10.5ft/lbs depending on the pellet. Set midway, it produced 7.4ft/lbs, and the low-power setting dropped this to around 7ft/lbs. Just being able to wind down power like this is great for informal plinking or practice, and low power, of course, means many more shots per fill.

OK, back to high power. Remember, this model comes with a regulated action, so it's the consistency we're looking for at this stage. I decided to monitor the first 100 shots using Wasp pellets, which yielded an average of around 10ft/lbs and a total spread of just 13fps—an excellent and entirely realistic result using unprepared pellets straight from the tin. JSB Jumbos tweaked the power up to 10.5ft/lbs, but the action could be set higher if need be. For



The butt is adjustable for length of pull but not height

the record, after 100 shots, the residual main bottle pressure was 140bar.

Moderator?

In terms of muzzle report, the Wild Plus isn't overly noisy as standard, but it does come supplied with a chunky silencer in the box, so I was itching to see it in place. It simply screws onto the $\frac{1}{2}$ " UNF thread at the front, but be warned—at a hefty 10oz, this moderator adds significant weight and, unsurprisingly, alters the balance. No doubt it stabilises the muzzle, but the desired weight distribution, in my experience, is very personal

to the shooter. I like weight up front, but many don't. Having the option to experiment, though, is a big plus.

As far as downrange performance with and without the moddy in place, I detected little difference in terms of accuracy. The initial results were fairly average using JSB Jumbo .22 ammunition, with $\frac{3}{4}$ " groups over 30 yards. However, as is so often the case with airguns, this Rainson proved a little pellet-fussy. Stumbling across some Crosman Premier Ultra Magnum pellets, I suddenly closed groupings down to sub- $\frac{1}{2}$ " at 30 yards and $\frac{3}{4}$ " over my 38-yard range. Very usable indeed and satisfying in such a compact sporter.

Verdict

Overall, quite encouraging, as the Rainson Wild Plus proved to be both a pleasure to shoot and a solid performer. Yes, the dual regulator system is primarily aimed at the FAC sector of the market and is not so relevant in sub-12ft/lbs, but Rainson's slick presentation, sturdy build, and extensive features list, not to mention all those goodies included in the box, make for a highly appealing airgun. Price-wise, we're talking mid-market, and there are cheaper options out there, but for lovers of this style of rifle, the Wild Plus ticks all the right boxes.



An AR-style grip is utilised, made from pleasingly soft rubber

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Rainson Wild Plus

Type: PCP

Calibre: .22 on test, .177 and .25 available

Barrel Length: 23.25"

Overall Length: 30.75" to 31.5"

Energy: 10ft/lbs on max setting

Price: £855 (guide)

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Our team offers advice on all the latest knives and tools



Sharpen like a pro

➤ **While most people can adequately sharpen their knives with their chosen tool, the vast majority do not fully finish the process and therefore don't get the very best from their knife.**

Stropping is the final step in properly sharpening a blade, and it has a significant effect on the finished edge.

Sharpening

The process of sharpening a knife brings the two edge surfaces closer to each other by working each side of the blade against the sharpening tool. Material is removed from each side by contact with the tool, which is usually stone or metal. During this process, a burr is formed at the very edge of the blade, and this has a detrimental effect on its sharpness.

What is a burr?

A burr is a tiny turned-over edge on a freshly sharpened blade, and if you magnified it, the burr would be seen as a tiny, ultra-thin, wire-like line attached to the edge. If the burr is large enough, you can

feel it when you carefully draw your fingernail down the side of the blade, towards the edge. Burrs also occur if a sharp, fine blade is used particularly hard and its edge becomes 'folded over.' It is important to remove burrs from your blade if you want to cut smoothly and efficiently, and this is where the strop comes in.

Stropping

After you have sharpened a blade, it is very important to finish the process with stropping. A strop is a leather strap, belt, or pad that you

draw the blade across, in a stroking action, with the sharpened surface of the blade flat against the leather. This action bends the burr back and forth against the leather, breaking it free. The remaining edge is now paper-thin and extremely sharp, and it will now cut much more cleanly.

Types of strop

There are a few different types of strop available, and when used correctly, they all work well. Hanging strops, such as the Rite Edge Hanging Razor Strop,

are flexible strips of leather featuring a ring at the top for attaching to a wall-mounted hook and a handle at the bottom to hold and tension the strop during use. This type can often be used on both sides, and they tend to be longer than other types, allowing you to use longer strokes.

Paddle strops consist of a wooden paddle with leather affixed to each side, typically with one side being rougher than the other. The Casström Paddle Strop is a good size, with a well-designed and sized handle that keeps your hand away from the blade being worked. Rigid strops like these tend to be shorter, but they allow you to apply more pressure to the blade during use.

Field strops are smaller than other types, often pocket-sized and just a few inches long, without a handle. They typically feature two sides with different levels of leather roughness, making them portable and ideal for knife maintenance in the field.

Casström's stropping pastes are available in various grits: coarse, medium, and fine





The simplest strop is just an old leather belt, with an exposed leather grain on the back. You can attach it to a wall by the buckle on a hook, hold the loose end, and use the belt to strop your knife.

Strop pastes

Strop paste is an abrasive compound that enhances the effect of a strop, and when a small amount is applied to the leather, it helps to remove burrs while also improving the finish achieved on the blade.

Casström's stropping pastes are available in various grits: coarse, medium, and fine. The coarse paste, containing aluminium oxide, is designed to remove burrs and provide a 'pre-polish.' The medium paste, also formulated with aluminium oxide, delivers an improved polish while removing finer burrs. Finally, the fine paste, made with chromium oxide, is used to fully refine and polish the blade to a bright, mirror-like finish.

A small amount of paste is rubbed onto a leather

strop before you start, and the action of stropping distributes it across the surface. If there is an excessive build-up of paste, you can remove it using the spine of an old knife.

How to strop

To use a strop, place the sharpened edge of the knife against the leather and pull it along the strop in the direction of the spine (i.e., draw the blade backwards, away from the edge). Repeating this process approximately 20 times, alternating sides after each stroke, is usually sufficient to achieve the desired results. If you are using a double-sided strop, perform the process twice—first on the rougher side and then on the finer side.

It is important to control the length of your stroke, remembering that you are handling a very sharp knife. If you have ever seen a barber sharpening a cut-throat razor, they use long sweeping strokes, and doing this safely takes years of practice. You

must resist the temptation to strop quickly and instead focus on doing it slowly, effectively, and safely.

Checking the results

As you strop your knife, the sharpened edge will become highly polished, which is a good indicator that you are doing it right. The whole sharpened edge should develop a mirror-like shine. If parts of it are not as highly polished, this indicates that you don't have the whole surface in contact with the strop. If this happens, simply alter the angle of the blade slightly.

When testing the blade by cutting something, you should notice it gliding through the material much more smoothly, without any

drag. A badly burred blade will drag and may even snag slightly on whatever you are cutting, but once stropped, it will glide through with almost no resistance.

Ongoing care

Once a knife has been properly sharpened and stropped, it will have reached its maximum sharpness and should only require occasional stropping, rather than frequent resharpening, to maintain its edge. This reduces the loss of metal associated with sharpening. Stropping the blade after use with just a few strokes across the leather is a surprisingly easy way to keep it in excellent condition.

MARK UNDERWOOD

STROPPING SUPPLIES

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Casström Field Strop: £16.95

Casström Stropping Pastes: £6.35 each

Contact: Casström UK - www.casstrom.co.uk

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5

OF THE BEST FOXING RIFLES

Chris Parkin does a roundup of
some decent rifles for foxing



BERGARA B14 CREST CARBON

PRICE: £1,915

CONTACT: EDGAR BROTHERS - WWW.EDGARBROTHERS.COM

The B14 Crest Carbon is the lightest Bergara available, and in the short 20" Cure Carbon barrel format, it is a superbly light and handy rifle to carry on a regular basis for urgent fox shooting at closer ranges. It's not a multi-round tack driver for range use, and like any carbon-barrelled gun, it is subject to the material's fundamental thermal limitations, but as a true hunting tool, it is hard to resist. The twin-lug, 90-degree lift, Remington-inspired action has survived for over 60 years and offers light, fast operation with

a detachable AICS-type magazine. The bolt handle shape and size ensure it is hard to jam the action, and ejection is ensured too. A Picatinny rail enables straightforward optical or digital night vision fitting, and of course, the rifle is threaded for a moderator to keep the noise down at night. The single-stage trigger breaks crisply at 780g on a rifle that weighs 2.9kg. The stock has a reasonably tall Monté-Carlo cheekpiece that provides good scope alignment, as well as QD sling anchor points and a regular stud for a bipod. In

fairness, this Bergara won't cross over as a long-range precision rifle, but the weight savings of the carbon stock and barrel make this a true hunting tool capable of handling foxes at the realistic ranges most are actually shot at. This visually attractive rifle combines modern design with excellent handling dynamics, all at what appears to be a very modest asking price. For greater precision and reliable thermal performance over more than three rounds, the steel-barrelled option would be my preferred choice. It's cheaper too, at £1,630.





CZ 600 ALPHA

PRICE: £1,279

CONTACT: SPORTSMAN GUN CENTRE - WWW.SPORTSMANGUNCENTRE.CO.UK

Many shooters have cut their teeth on CZ rimfires and centrefires, and there's no doubt that the venerable 527 was a fox shooter's delight.

However, the launch of the 600 marked the introduction of a completely fresh design that uses a three-lug bolt and features an aluminium receiver with integral Picatinny scope bases. The cold hammer-forged barrel features a 15x1 muzzle thread and it is clamped into the receiver, meaning it can be replaced in the long term. The semi-controlled feed bolt face shows a sprung ejector pin that holds the case in

place during extraction, yet it's still flung clear of the gun by manual ejection force, which is dependent on bolt speed. CZ's detachable magazine holds five rounds in two columns, and it can be top-loaded in or out of the gun. There is a locking catch on the underside to prevent accidental loss. The two-position safety catch plunger locks the bolt, and there's a manual unlocking button too. One of the boldest steps was the inclusion of a weight-adjustable trigger with detents/stages, allowing you to accurately return to your preferred setting at any time. The stock itself is

a stiff, injection-moulded unit with consistent action-to-inlet fit, ensuring no bedding stress. The Alpha's 18mm diameter barrel is slightly heavier than the other sporter setups in the range and features a fast 1:7 twist rate, allowing the use of 77gr or heavier bullets for long-range precision, while still performing reliably with 55gr foxing ammunition. In fairness, the lighter-barrelled Ergo with its thumbhole stock or the American with its delightful walnut finish are both excellent foxing choices, but I chose the Alpha specifically for its barrel's technical details.





HOWA 1500 SYNTHETIC

PRICE: £789.98

CONTACT: HIGHLAND OUTDOORS - WWW.HIGHLANDOUTDOORS.CO.UK

The Howa 1500 has been a reliable, fuss-free, entry-level rifle for over 15 years, and it embodies the concept of keeping things simple. By offering multiple stock and chassis options, as well as different chamberings, the modular brand allows users to tailor their rifle exactly as needed, with a price to match. The standard sporter in .223, for example, features a light 15.7mm barrel profile with a 1:8 twist rate to stabilise bullets up to 77gr. The barrel is 22" long, making it well-suited as a range rifle with adequate velocities and

extended-distance potential for corvids, yet it weighs just 2.3kg. It features a floorplate magazine system that holds five rounds, plus one in the chamber, and the design means it cannot be lost in the dark, unlike a detachable mag. Another advantage of the floorplate magazine is that it can be loaded through the ejection port. It will also single-feed, enabling quick follow-up shots. The twin-lug bolt offers smooth operation, with strong extraction and assured ejection from the modestly sized bolt handle that's ideal for a true sporting

rifle. The addition of a Picatinny rail enables versatile optical mounting and space for those who want to swap from day to night gear. The rifle is, of course, screwcut for a moderator. The HACT trigger is pretty good, with adjustable pull weight, and the three-position safety locks the bolt closed when applied. Overall, the no-frills Howa shows no weaknesses, has a logical specification, and won't break the bank. It's not hard to see why it has lasted almost two decades. My regular pest control partner uses this rifle, and it never lets him down.





SAUER 100 KEEPER

PRICE: £1,559

CONTACT: BLASER GROUP - WWW.BLASER-GROUP.COM

I often quote the Sauer 100 as the benchmark rifle against which I compare all others, and it's not just about precision. Although the 100 is accurate, it also combines superb ergonomics and handling dynamics, all at a realistic price accessible to many shooters. The rifle features a 20" cold hammer-forged barrel that's 17mm in diameter and screwcut for a moderator, while the Keeper, which is a UK-specific version, adds fluting and Cerakote for weight-saving and visual

character. The action will accept separate bases or a Picatinny rail, and the barrel truly free-floats within the polymer stock's fore-end. Sling studs are fitted, there's moulded chequering for grip, and you get a decent length of pull at 14". The detachable polymer magazine is silent in operation and holds four rounds. In addition to all these key features, the Sauer has a three-position safety catch and one of the best bolts in the business. It is a push-feed with a single ejector

plunger, and the three lugs offer a 60-degree lift to cock and open. I have used and relied on a Keeper for five years, pairing it with 55gr V-Max and 50gr CX Hornady ammunition to dispatch more foxes and rabbits than I can remember. It has also consistently delivered the precision needed to tackle wily corvids at longer ranges. What sets this rifle apart is that every time I use it, I grow to appreciate its character even more. Considering the wide range of guns I have access to, that is a particularly bold statement.





SCHMEISSER SP15 LMR

PRICE: £2,050

CONTACT: EDGAR BROTHERS - WWW.EDGARBROTHERS.COM

If you fancy a straight-pull, AR-15-style foxing rifle, there are some compromises, but accuracy and precision aren't among them with the Schmeisser. It features a slick action and, although not as quiet as a bolt-action rifle, it offers higher-capacity magazines and is inherently designed to accommodate accessories while enduring rough handling without losing zero. There is a Picatinny rail on top for your optics, multiple fore-end anchor points, and a free-floating barrel within the stiff aluminium fore-end that is immune to any undesired contact or pressure.

Want to shoot from a tripod? The Schmeisser is perfect. Want a spare magazine in the stock? Again, this is your rifle. The AR-15 grip options are endless, and the straight-pull action will allow very fast backup shots when needed. The rifle is accurate and equipped with a fast 1:9 twist Walther barrel, making it more capable than many sporting rifles when using heavy bullets weighing up to 69gr. It is also threaded for a moderator. Straight-pulls always seem to polarise opinion, but if you get one that works with a smooth action and strong extraction, like the Schmeisser, you won't

be left struggling in the dark, and it will happily cross over as a daylight fast-fire competitive range gun too. The trigger is a two-stage unit, delivering 95% crisp operation once the second stage is engaged—a thoroughly practical design with a 1700g (57oz) pull weight, ideal for cold, gloved hands. The large hammer within ensures the firing pin and primers get a good thump, boosting reliability. Extraction and ejection proved reliable, with the latter demonstrating remarkable enthusiasm in fast-fire conditions. I was a sceptic, but this rifle has warmed me to the AR concept's benefits.





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Thermal spotters have become so feature-filled, and it's great to see that handy, compact monoculars aren't being left behind. Nocpix's Lumi H35R features a 35mm objective lens and a 640x512 sensor with a 12-micron pitch. The NETD rating is sub-18mK for naturalised thermal gradients on screen, and the unit retains a 50Hz refresh rate for smooth image rendering.

Capped lens

The lens cap fits into the objective lens body, and it stays in position when stored. When removed, it hangs from a cord and magnetically attaches to either side of the Lumi's body. Image focus is handled via a 48mm serrated rubber collar surrounding the objective lens. It's well-weighted, offering delicate, detailed focal control of the f/0.9 lens, yet it's never accidentally nudged out of position. The unit's armoured body features triangular patterning to aid grip, and it is IP67-rated. The laser rangefinder's optics are effective up to 800m (or yards) and sit beneath the objective, providing accuracy of $\pm 1\text{m}$.

Eyepiece

The eyepiece features a 41mm rubber collar to ensure crisp screen focus. This runs from ± 5 dioptres for your eyes, with a 10mm exit pupil. The winged rubber shroud around it can be folded down or up to minimise external light leakage and rotated to

suit left or right-eye use. I preferred to fold it down completely, as I use monoculars with both eyes, and I appreciated that once folded, it stayed securely in place without springing open. 25mm of eye relief is provided, and I found it forgiving and capable when wearing glasses.

Lens grinding

One of my pet peeves with electronic items is the casual disregard shown for the optical lenses, which are still required, but the Lumi's ocular lens seemed to be well-ground. Poor lenses only offer a very small sweet spot for focus, and if your eye drifts from it (still within the exit pupil), you end up chasing focus until you realise it's because you're not in the sweet spot. The lenses on this Nocpix are among the better ones, offering a generally comfortable and accessible viewing experience. All the icons along the top of the internal 1024x768px AMOLED display appear sharp, with no spherical distortion. The magnification and remaining battery power are notably prominent.

Hanging around

This is a compact and secure unit that's easy to slip inside the neckline or chest of clothing when not in use, and there are bilateral anchor points for the included neck sling below the eyepiece. The lower, red-highlighted button is a quick-release latch for the battery compartment, and it is probably

Here you can see the buttons that run along the top of the unit



The unit comes with a protective carry case, a charger, and three batteries



HUNTING *Companion*

Chris Parkin puts the Nocpix Lumi H35R through its paces to see how this compact thermal monocular performs in the field



the fastest I have ever used for quick battery swaps. It's also secure and can't be accidentally cross-threaded in a hurry. It doesn't even matter which way around the battery is inserted, as the electronics can invert. Nocpix supplies three 18650 batteries as well as a USB-compatible charger. This is a great move because it avoids the excessive cost of proprietary battery units (which are often just a housing for a standard cell anyway), and with a quick-swap facility, it's a real bonus feature. The latch and hinged door are aluminium and feel secure and durable in use. A battery swap honestly takes less than five seconds.

Tripod mounting

The underside of the unit shows a ¼" UNC thread for tripod mounting, and all the control buttons are lined up on top of the Lumi. From front to back, the first button is power on/off, and holding this activates the internal screen after three seconds, with the full image displayed after nine seconds. A quick press switches off the display to conserve battery and prevent light from spilling onto your face. Holding it down longer activates the three-second shutdown warning. Button number two controls magnification and the laser rangefinder. A short press will scroll through 5x, 10x, and 20x digital zoom beyond the 2.5x native optical magnification. A longer press turns on the laser rangefinder, which gives constant readouts every second until another long press switches it off. So bear this in mind in terms of battery usage.

Button three

The third button initiates the primary menu with a short press. Further combinations of button presses (button two up, button four down, button three to select) let you scroll through multiple colour palettes—white, black, red (indicating hot), crimson, viridian, and violet. I stayed in the first three modes, as I think white is the most intuitive, black is the most relaxing with the smoothest topography and landscape texture, and red helps in the latter stages of separation when multiple targets are in close proximity. I never used the others, but Nocpix suggests that red and green monochrome create less



The lens cap clicks into the collar and stays in position



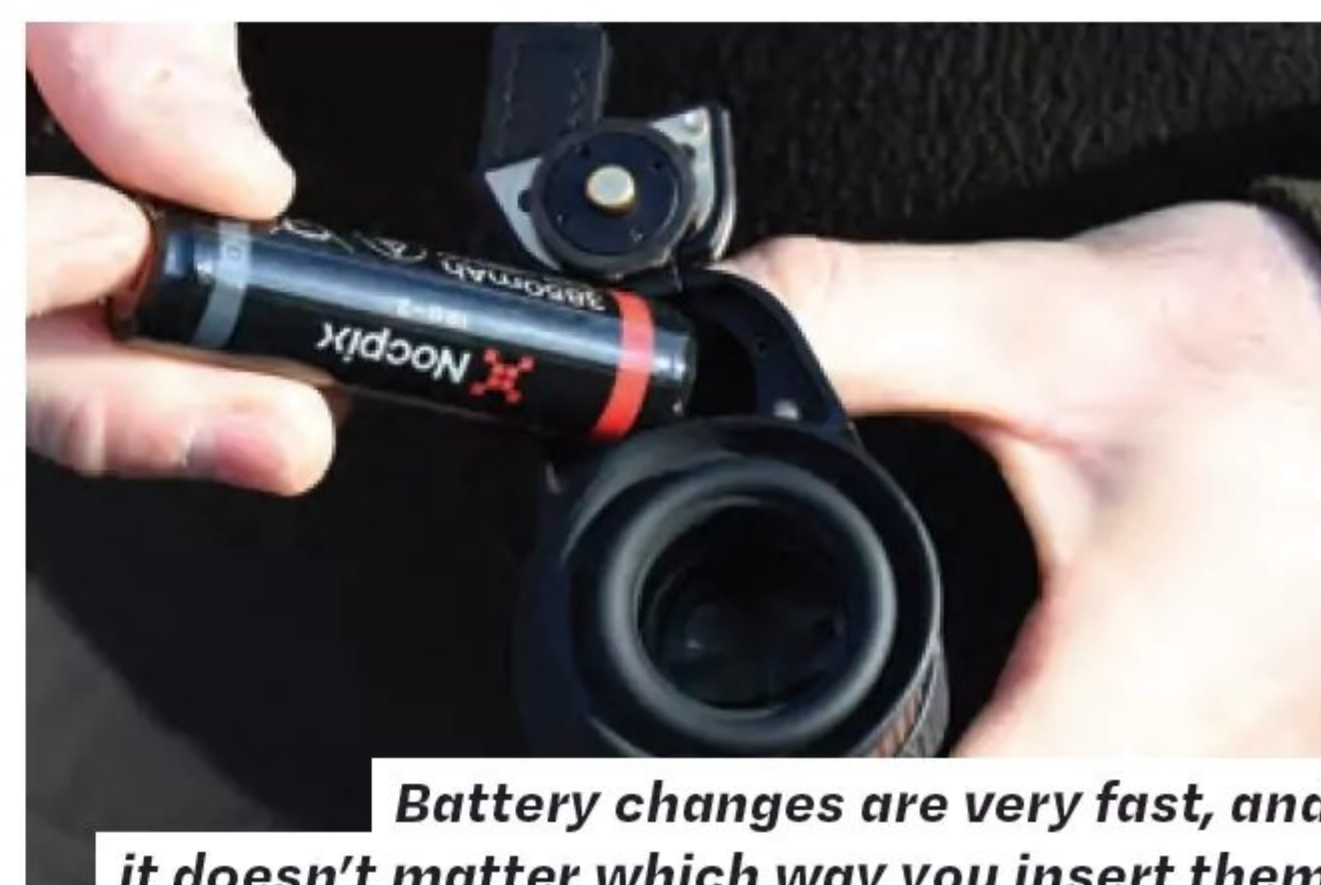
When not in use, the lens cap remains magnetically attached to the side



Keep your thumb clear of the rangefinder's optics when focusing



The eye shield can be rotated and folded flat



Battery changes are very fast, and it doesn't matter which way you insert them



THIS IS A COMPACT AND SECURE UNIT THAT'S EASY TO SLIP INSIDE THE NECKLINE OR CHEST OF CLOTHING WHEN NOT IN USE, AND THERE ARE BILATERAL ANCHOR POINTS FOR THE INCLUDED NECK SLING BELOW THE EYEPIECE. "

eye strain, although they show less detail. The primary menu includes 10-stage controls for brightness, contrast, and overall scene type, generated by AI processing software.

Printed manual

I like a decent printed manual, but unfortunately, while the Nocpix menu gets you started, it contains very little text and relies mainly on pictographic icons for navigation. I was able to figure it out, as I have used many similar units

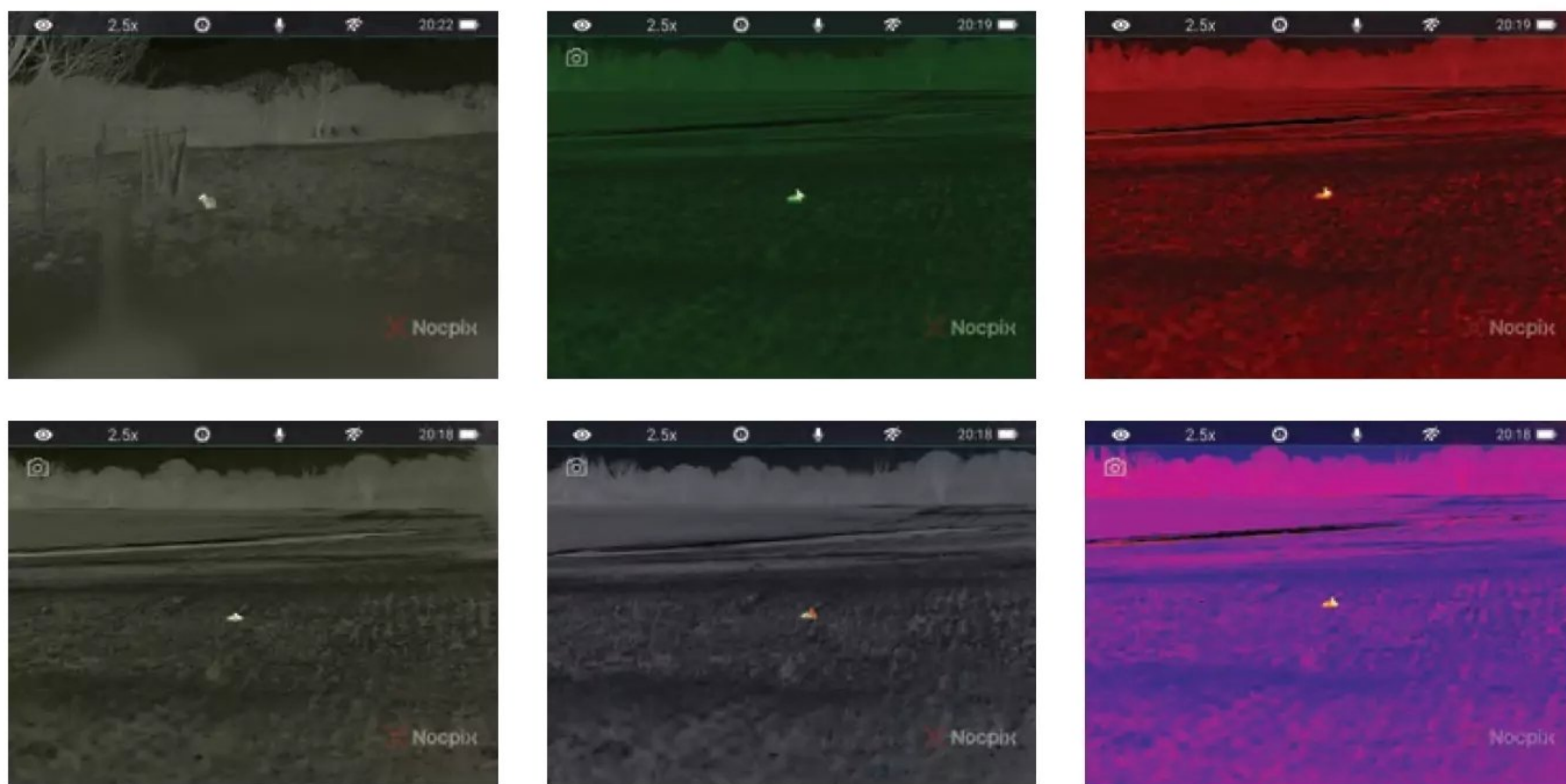
that all offer comparable electronic functionality, but it might be better if you didn't have to resort to an app for everything. Some shooters just want to buy a thermal spotting tool and not a new hobby. They might not be familiar with the menu functions.

Video/photo

The rearmost button, number four, controls the photo and video functions. Short presses take pictures, and a longer 1.5-second press starts



A stationary fox at 25m (screenshot from video)



The various colour palettes on offer

video recording with sound. The internal storage capacity is 32GB, and you can either plug a USB-C cable in to offload your content or connect it to the app via Wi-Fi.

Reliability

Once installed on my iPhone, the Nocpix app connected reliably to the unit, allowing me to easily download the video and photo files. I generally prefer a separate microSD card for ease of access and digital security, but I suppose every additional opening on the case can affect the cost and weatherproofing of the unit.

Battery life

It is suggested that each battery should provide 4.5 hours of life, and although this depends on your Wi-Fi and laser usage, as well as the

screen brightness, I didn't struggle on my usual three-to-four-hour outings. It's great to have backups in your warm pockets, and using 18650 batteries also ensures compatibility with many other night vision and thermal tools.

I found the Lumi easy to control once I learned the button control 'language.' The secondary, detailed menu, accessed with a long press on the third button, allows you to explore deeper, less frequently required functions like 'Ultra Clear' mode, Wi-Fi, image hue, microphone, automated or manual screen calibration, and the image gallery for playback. The 'Settings' menu allows for time/date alterations, language selection, metres or yards, electronic image stabilisation, and finally, the firmware version and factory restore.

Logical layout

I liked the menu's logical order in terms of the likelihood of needing to adjust certain functions, and the menus were simple, with just up/down and select options. I also liked that if you entered the wrong menu, you could go back instantly with the on/off button, and nothing ever electronically crashed. The menus stayed active for about seven seconds without additional control inputs, so you never got stuck in the wrong place. I never had to remove the battery and restart the unit to resolve this type of issue, which I have experienced many times with other products.

Compact tool

The Lumi weighs just 385g and measures 147×47×74mm, making it easy to store, and I like the fact that you also receive a compact, protective Cordura case and an additional shoulder strap. Having the unit immediately on hand enabled me to quickly scan any environment with minimal noise and physical movement. However, when I wanted a closer look, to zoom in, focus, or film, both hands were needed for stability while pressing buttons that weren't individually distinguishable, requiring me to count along from the front. Remember to keep your thumb out of the way of the laser too, because when focusing, it can block the lens.

I appreciated the Lumi as a hunting companion. I still prefer to watch quarry moving and reacting for identification rather than just relying on ultimate image resolution alone. The Lumi seems to strike a very good balance between these factors at a reasonable cost, and subtle details like high-quality ocular lenses stand out to me. The maximum detection range is rated at 1,800m, and I certainly don't feel I missed out on detecting any quarry. With decent identification capability at 300 to 350m, particularly if the animal was moving, the 10mm exit pupil felt relaxed and immersive, thanks to its better-than-average ocular lens.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

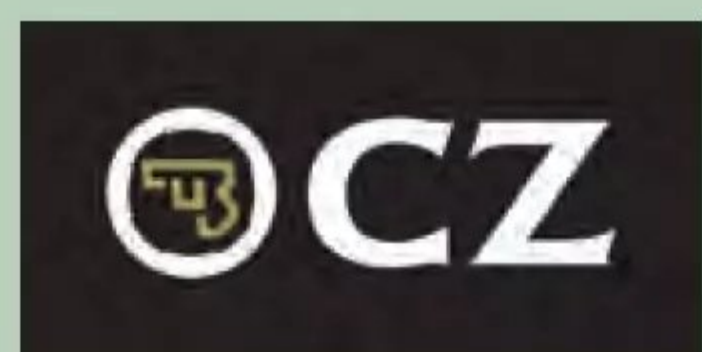
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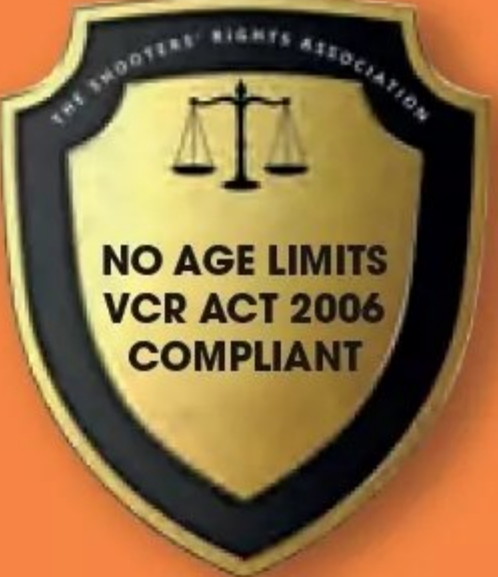
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GM03.25/16

The M4 Impact is the latest premium airgun from FX and, although visually quite similar to the previous M3, it has a few key differences.

The Extended rifle arrives in a deluxe hard case, and I was pleased to see that it fits inside without the need to remove the supplied moderator. There's space for a generously sized scope, and there is a $\frac{1}{2}$ " thread at the muzzle of the compound barrel structure (which uses a liner within the barrel and outer 28mm diameter shroud). This is how FX is able to offer shooters multiple twist rates for their chosen projectile. The liner in the airgun on test is a Superior Heavy STX unit intended for weighty pellets and slugs. With a length of 800mm, the barrel offers enviable space for all that expanding air to drive the projectile. The entire barrel unit can be removed from the rifle and swapped over for different lengths and twist rates if desired. It also allows, in conjunction with changing the magazine and probe, the delivery of a variety of calibre options—.177, .22, .25, .30, and .35—to fulfil your desires for hunting or competition use on targets. Personally, I prefer FAC airguns of .22 or .25 calibre, as I feel these are most appropriate for UK shooters.

Bullpup

The Impact is a bullpup design, where the barrel extends from the muzzle almost all the way back to your shoulder, with just enough space for a butt pad and magazine. This is good, as a longer barrel gives more power and efficiency.

FX has now beefed up the aluminium receiver's top strap, which has a flush 11mm dovetail to which the detachable Picatinny rail clamps in four places. This is advertised as enabling a greater range of scope movement to suit your optics' eye relief. That said, it clamps securely and has little need to be adjusted. The Picatinny rail itself provides ample space.

Back to front

The black, hard-anodised receiver/stock features a cheekpiece that's bolted in position. In use, it is comfortable and offers good scope alignment with medium-height rings above the Picatinny rail. At the very rear, the curved, hard polymer recoil pad offers 27mm of vertical adjustment via a locking screw on the right side.

Working forwards, the rotary magazine slots into the right side of the receiver when the cocking lever is pulled back. The mag is loaded by rotating the locking clasp, removing the clear cover, and then rotating the inner drum to compress the spring. This locks the first pellet in place and allows you to fill up the rest of the slots. Next, re-fit the clear cover, rotate the clasp, and insert the magazine back into the rifle.



**A 15mm group at 50m.
The FX was pumping out
55.4ft/lbs with a 33.95gr pellet**

Power and **PRECISION**

Chris Parkin explores the capabilities of the new FX Impact M4 Extended (FAC)



Closing the cocking lever allows the probe to push a pellet through the mag and into the breech. Each time you cycle the action, the magazine rotor will progress one place and offer a new pellet. When you run out, the rotor will prevent the bolt from closing.

Reg and trigger

The regulator pressure gauge is positioned underneath the butt, and it's an uprated Brass piston AMP unit capable of working up to 170bar. There is now a larger 75cc power plenum chamber ahead of this to further smooth out airflow.

The AR-15-type grip has been slightly enlarged and shows a rubberised, ambidextrous palm swell for tactile security when handling the gun. The new adjustable Quick Set Trigger tunes to single or two-stage settings with adjustable weight, plus the position of the 9mm wide blade can also be adjusted. The test rifle arrived with a two-stage setting, breaking at 620g (20oz), and the pull was crisp and predictable. Also, the trigger guard provides enough space for a gloved finger.

As supplied, the length of pull was 355mm (14"), with a 72mm reach from the throat of the vertical pistol grip to the blade.

Full of air

The cocking lever sits on the right-hand side, above the trigger, and it is very smooth and light to operate. It can be swapped to the left side of the rifle for left-handed shooters, although the magazine will only fit on the right side. The cocking handle is 14mm in diameter and 50mm tall, so it's easy to grasp

quickly. All trigger adjustments are accessible via a slot in the underside of the integral trigger guard, and the capped Foster filling connector is proud on the underside. These are reliable and don't leak.

The carbon-fibre buddy bottle is removable, and this one is 580cc and can be filled to 250bar. There's a pressure gauge on the right-hand side of the action and a 35mm long section of Picatinny rail in front of it for a compact bipod clamp. Twin side-mounted Picatinny rails enable accessory mounting, and the valve adjuster screw is nestled below these, just above the bottle. Both the Macro and Micro power adjusters are situated on the left side of the rifle.

Power vs precision

Given the Superior Heavy STX liner, I decided to try the gun with some 33.95gr JSB pellets. Scope mounting was simple, and head alignment from stock to ocular body was linear without any discomfort. The cheekpiece rollover pad is polymer, which prevents it from drawing heat from your face. In sub-zero conditions, along with the rubber grip, this made the gun very pleasant to use.

Loading the magazine is easier now because it features a stronger spring and five dimples in the rotor, which makes compressing that spring far easier. The magazine is now 14.7mm thick, with an internal capacity for projectiles measuring 12.1mm in length.

The initial power output from the box was 79 ft/lbs, with the pellet travelling at 1024fps. I shot two magazines (50 shots) through the gun to lead-line the barrel while I zeroed the rifle, then I did a 250bar



THE INITIAL POWER OUTPUT FROM THE BOX WAS 79FT/LBS, WITH THE PELLET TRAVELLING AT 1024FPS."



The Impact M4 Extended (FAC) is one of the latest airguns from FX



There is a lot to look at here!
Note the bottle fill pressure-gauge



There is an 11mm dovetail rail and a
Picatinny rail for scope mounting



There is a new, larger AR-15
compatible grip. Note the magazine
and the power plenum



Detail of the underside
regulator pressure gauge



The new magazine is a lot easier to
fill, with five recesses for better grip



The new Quick Set Trigger offers broad adjustment



(Above) You will need to tune the M4, and you will need a chronograph to do it

(Left) The 75cc power plenum smoothed out the airflow for very fast reloads

(Right) The side-lever was very smooth and fast, and it can be swapped to the left side of the action if needed



This sound moderator is included



refill before I started tuning. FX recommends that users keep the projectile speed between 850 and 950fps, and I have generally found this to be the case with rifles in the past.

During use, I adjusted the valve and observed both the muzzle report and projectile speed decrease as I shot subsequent groups. I topped up the buddy bottle every 50 shots. The adjuster valve is deeply nestled between the bottle and shroud, but it is smooth to rotate and has circumferential grooves to illustrate its position.

The groups shot at 50m tightened up significantly as I approached 900fps, and as I got to 860, the occasional flyers seemed to vanish. At this point, the FX was delivering 55 ft/lbs consistently, with five-round groups at 50m measuring below 16mm. The extreme spread was 9fps.

Minor details

Up until this point, I had left the 16-stage, left-side Macro adjuster on the maximum setting, and the Micro adjuster on four. This was to ensure that I was only altering one major variable (the valve) at a time. If I was keeping the gun long-term, I might test and tune multiple pellet types, but for the purposes of this review, I wanted to make sure the gun was delivering on target, rather than going on an endless tuning adventure. Once you have chosen your favourite projectile, the Macro Power adjuster allows immediate speed/energy control. I ran the gun as low as 7.4ft/lbs with a light pellet, but realistically, is anyone going to do this? Unlikely on such a large rifle.

Conclusion

The handling characteristics are undoubtedly better suited to benchrest shooting, tripod use, or the prone position rather than to a walking stalker. The rifle has no sling mounts, is long at 1120mm (44"), and weighs 3.4kg (7.4lbs) without the scope. The height of the rifle is also significant on a vertically stacked build like this.

Companies like Saber Tactical make additional Picatinny rail extensions for bipod mounting, and I would suggest this is a wise purchase, as although the carbon-fibre bottle can be a supporting member from a rest bag—or you can add a bottle clamp for bipod mounting—I'm always cautious of using high-pressure valve assemblies as stress-bearing members. I will also say the long, compound barrel structure is susceptible to slight zero shift if bumped during handling, but the rifle will certainly deliver the projectiles where you want them, as long as you want to keep up with the tuning and maintenance as part of your hobby, not just the shooting.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: FX Impact M4 Extended (FAC)

Type: PCP

Calibre: .25 on test, .177, .22, .30, .35 also available

Barrel Length: 800mm

Overall Length: 1120mm/44"

Weight: 3.4kg/7.4lbs

Energy: 79ft/lbs (as tested here in .25 cal)

Price: £2001.99

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RELOADING BASICS

Mark Underwood shares some essential tips for consistent bullet seating



When it comes to reloading, bullets are a bit like kids; if you start them off right, upright, and centred, they will go forward straight and true. The significance of properly aligning your bullets in the cases before seating them is often underestimated.

Concentricity

Concentricity is the quality or state of having a common centre, and in reloading, that means aligning the case mouth, the bullet, and the bore of the gun barrel as closely as possible with each other. If these components all share a common centre, then the bullet will stabilise and travel far more consistently and effectively.

Take a seat

Depending on how you sequence your reloading, you can either have your primed and powder-charged cases sitting in the reloading tray and then place a bullet on top of each one before moving them one at a time to the press, or you can place a bullet into the case mouth when each case is sitting in the press. Either way, it is worth taking a second or two to actually position each bullet consistently and straight in the case mouth. With presses where the bullet seating die is located at the back, requiring you to

reach around, it can be challenging to position the bullets consistently and accurately. Bullet feed dies help, and they will actually improve consistency. On single-stage presses, you can easily take each case and introduce the bullet into the mouth correctly before you put it in the shell holder.

Sitting comfortably?

When a bullet is put into a case's mouth, it is important that it is straight and

vertical, with the sides of the bullet parallel to the sides of the case. It is also worthwhile pushing the bullet into the case as much as you can so that it doesn't topple or move before seating starts. This is much easier with bullets that have bevelled or boat-tail bases, as their slimmer rear allows them to enter the case with minimal effort.

Flat-based bullets are harder to start into the case mouth because they are that much wider at the rear than boat-tail bullets, but it is still possible to start them into the case correctly.

With straight-walled cases, you can apply a slight flare to the case mouth to widen it, making it easier to position the bullets correctly. The flare must then be removed when the bullet is seated or when a crimp is applied. It is important that the base of the bullet is not damaged by applying too much force when you are trying to start it into the case's mouth. Soft, lead bullets are very easy to damage when you are trying to start them into the case, making a flare particularly important.

Assisted alignment

There are dies that can help with starting and aligning bullets correctly. Bullet feed dies automatically

Placing each bullet individually on a case in the press ensures it is straight



Straight-walled cases can be flared to help lead bullets to sit and start straight



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



drop a bullet into each case on a progressive or turret press with every cycle of the handle. This automation ensures greater consistency, as each bullet is securely held and precisely placed into the case through a straight-sided, precision-engineered cavity within the die.

There are also bullet seating dies with a side window in the die body, allowing you to insert a bullet, which is then held straight and positioned directly above the case mouth. When the ram of the die is raised, the case rises to 'collect' the bullet before pressing it against the seating stem and securing it within the case. Because the bullet is already inside the die and held securely, it is started into the case very straight and consistently.

Consistency

Consistency is vital in reloading, and when it comes to starting bullets in the

case, this is particularly important. Positioning all bullets straight and true is obviously the best option, but if that is not possible, it is actually better for them to all have the same degree of 'wonkiness' than to have some wonky and some straight. Such is the nature of consistency.

Bearing surfaces

Some types of bullets have very short bearing surfaces, particularly those with both boat-tails and longer ogives, and they are harder to start into the case mouth straight. The amount of surface available to engage with the case and align with it can be so short that they tend to lean and even seat out of line.

Correcting

If you are unable to start your bullets off consistently, and so have poor concentricity, there are tools that

can help to correct the problem afterwards. Concentricity tools work by measuring the amount of deviation from the centre and then pushing bullets into line with the centreline of the case. They have a noticeable effect on the quality of your ammunition and are worth using to monitor and improve the performance of even your best ammunition.

Conclusion

The process of simply positioning a bullet in a case mouth is not something that generally gets a lot of consideration, but it is well worth doing right. Taking just a few seconds to stand the bullet upright in the case will make a difference to your ammunition's performance. Going even further, by checking and correcting concentricity, does take a little bit more time, but it can yield good results and is well worth the effort. If your reloading setup does the bullet placement for you, this will give you the consistency you need, but it can still be worth checking and correcting ammunition produced this way. Investing this extra time, getting your bullets positioned correctly in the case mouths before they are seated, is definitely time well spent.



IF YOUR RELOADING SETUP DOES THE BULLET PLACEMENT FOR YOU, THIS WILL GIVE YOU THE CONSISTENCY YOU NEED, BUT IT CAN STILL BE WORTH CHECKING AND CORRECTING AMMUNITION PRODUCED THIS WAY."

MARK UNDERWOOD

Loading trays are OK, but getting the bullets to all sit straight is not easy



Concentricity tools help to iron out bullet alignment issues





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S650	£1,979.95 Inc. VAT	640×512, 12µm	≤18mK	50mm F0.9	≥6h	2600m 
S650D	£2,519.95 Inc. VAT	640×512, 12µm	≤18mK	25-50mm F0.9-F1.1	≥6h	2600m 



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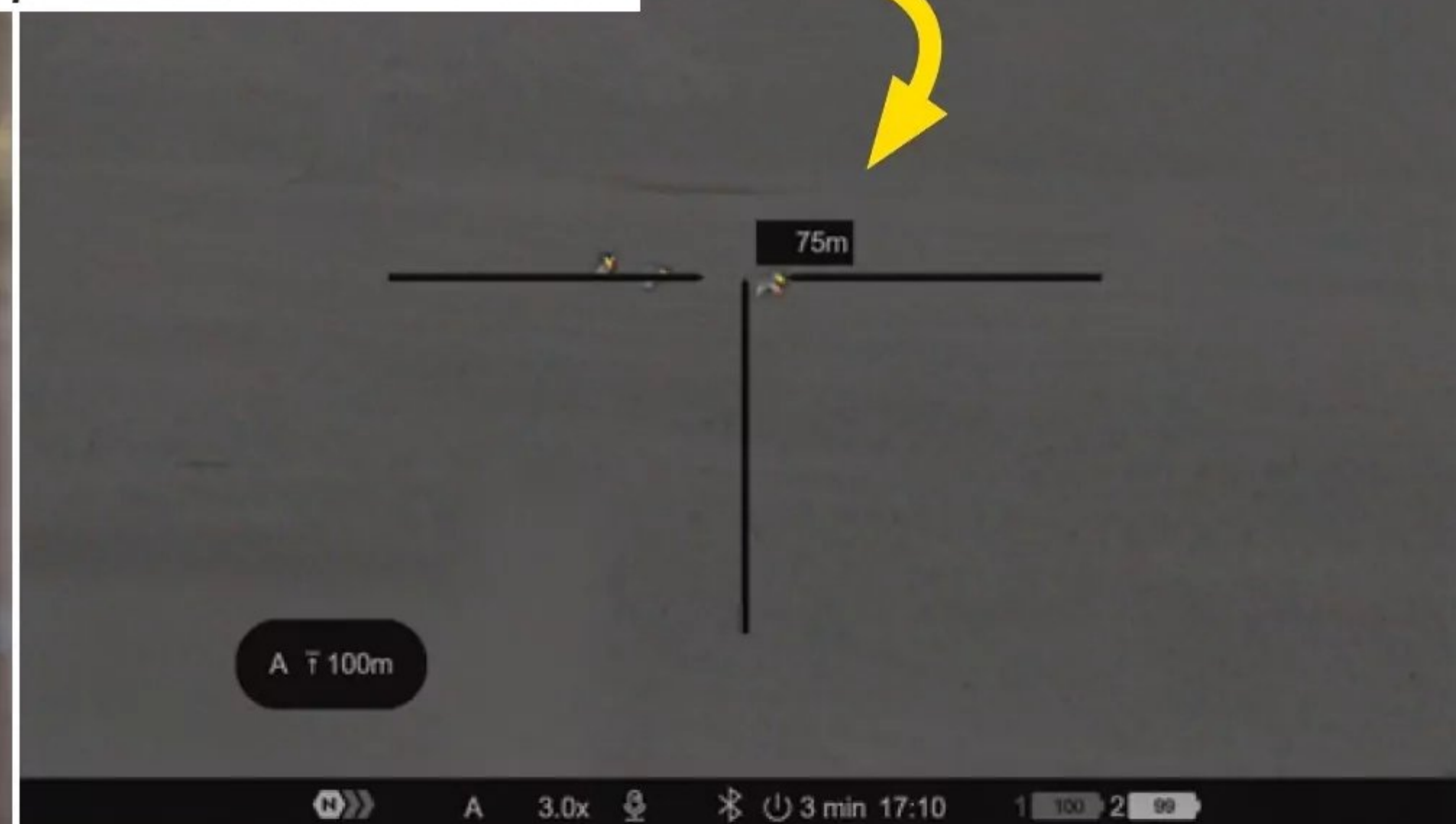
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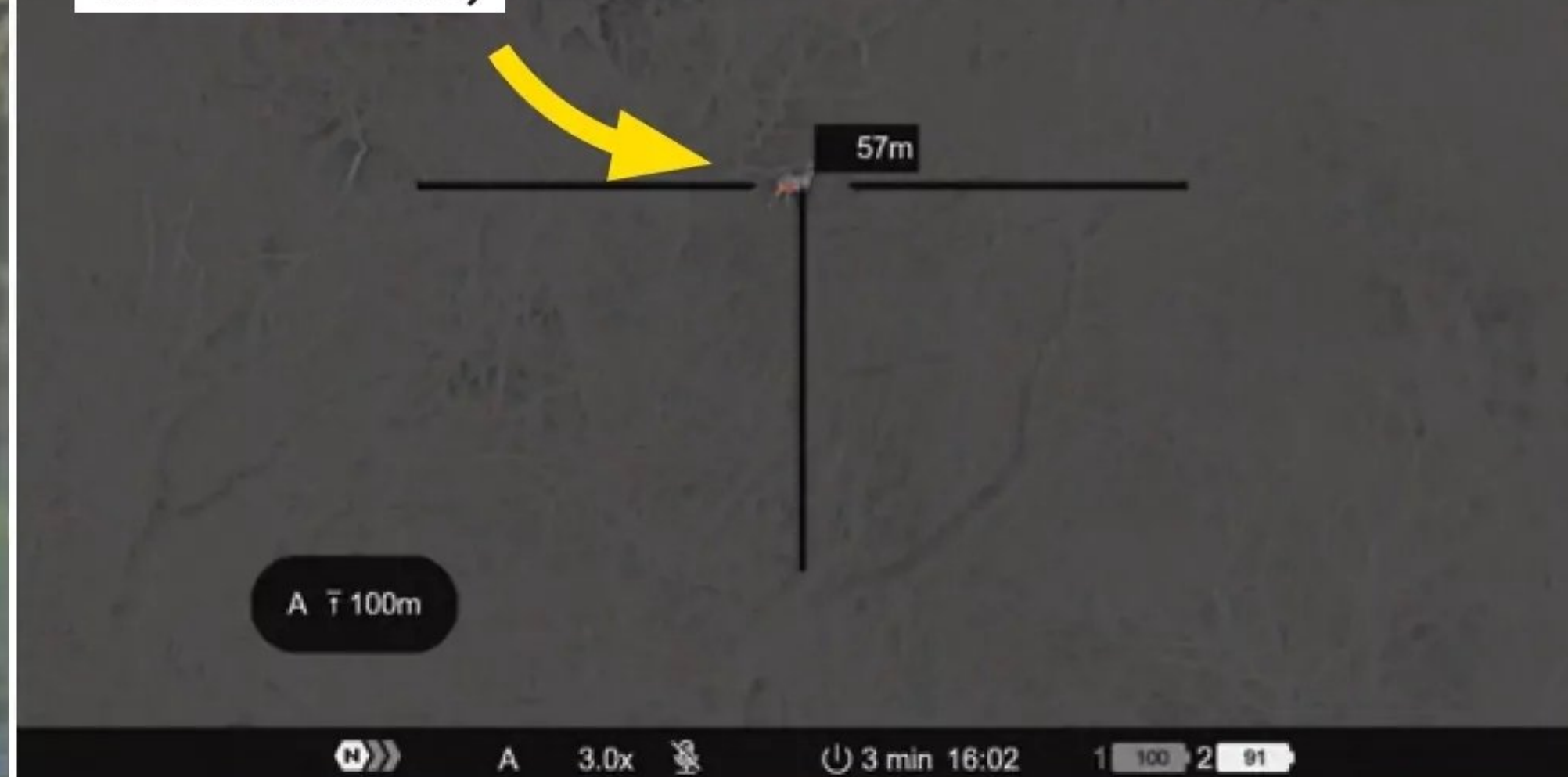
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The XP60 picked up these foxes in dense fog at over 100m, outreaching the laser rangefinder, which only penetrated 75m into the murk!



With no ballistic profile installed, only the range is shown (though here the rangefinder is registering the tree rather than the deer behind it)



Big Deal

Jules Whicker checks out Pulsar's latest laser-rangefinding thermal riflescopes – they're bigger, but are they better?

I should have seen this coming. After setting a new standard for thermal performance with the oversized sensors in their 1024×768 Thermion 2 LRF XL50 rifle scope and the 1280×1024 Merger LRF XT50 biocular, Pulsar's next logical step was to introduce a larger lens. Enter the new "60-series" scopes: the XG60, XP60, and XL60 (no XT60 yet). The model being tested here is the XP60, but this review will primarily highlight the advantages of the larger 60mm lens over the 50mm version, as well as the unique strengths of each of the three new 60mm models. As a result, I'll be skipping over many of the features

that make all Thermions so rewarding to use, including the programmable ballistic compensator that has transformed the LRF models into supreme wildlife-management tools.

Lens design and mounting

Let's look at the lens first. Sensor-for-sensor, it gives all the 60-series Thermions a higher base magnification than their 50-series counterparts: 4x vs. 3x for the XG, 3x vs. 2x for the XP, and 2.5x vs. 1.75x for the XL. The second major benefit is an extra 15mm of eye relief, for a total of 65mm. This combines with a wider/taller eye box to bring the kind of ergonomic

benefits that translate into smooth, comfortable, and consistent shooting.

Visually, the new series is immediately recognisable by the way the objective housing steps up to accommodate the increased lens diameter. For a moment, I wished Pulsar had scaled up the entire objective bell for a sleeker appearance. But then I considered the unnecessary redesign that would require, the extra weight it would add, and the need for higher mounts to clear the barrel—along with all the resulting costs, delays, and issues with comb contact that would entail! As it happens, mounting the XP60 on a flat-topped tactical arm, such



The range can also be dialled in using the encoder wheel. Note the secondary aim point below the main crosshair and the corresponding holdover numbers

as my Tikka TACT-A1, did require taller mounts than I've used on 50-series scopes, but it has an adjustable cheekpiece, and I've got a box full of mounts for such occasions. In any case, it's not an issue that would arise with any of my conventional hunting rifles.

Display technology and performance

The second penny that dropped was that Pulsar has also done some significant up-sizing at the other end of the scope, which now sports a 40mm ocular lens and houses an all-new 2560×2560 Micro-OLED display that gives the image processor a massive 5.8

million more pixels to play with! It also occupies more of the circular viewing area, filling it without distortion from side to side, and leaving a narrower black frame at the top and bottom. The result was an experience that felt both more immersive and easier on the eye. Saved videos and stills are captured in a larger format (1280×960) and stored on a generous 64GB of onboard memory.

A further benefit of the 2560×2560 display is more precise reticle adjustment, thanks to finer click values: from 1.25mm @ 100m at 32x in the XG60 model to 2mm @ 100m at 20x for the XL60. When humane kills at range are the goal, a precision reticle

is as important as a detailed image of the target, and even seemingly modest numerical increases can make a significant difference in the field.

Higher magnification compared to the 50 series does reduce the overall click range, but the XG60, XP60, and XL60 still provide 2,000mm, 2,840mm, and 3,200mm of adjustment per axis at 100m—more than sufficient for any properly mounted scope. It's also worth noting that, unlike a day scope (which performs best when its mechanical components are optically centred), you can use the full range of adjustment on a digital scope without putting it under any strain, and that on an LRF Thermion,



the on-board ballistic compensator will take care of the supplementary adjustments required for each shot.

The price you pay for higher base magnification is a reduction in the field of view. Across the 60 series, this amounts to about 16% to 17% horizontally, though the square format of the new Micro-OLED display actually increases the vertical FOV. In a thermal spotter, I will favour the field of view over magnification every time. However, the tables are turned in a rifle scope, where the target has already been acquired, and magnification aids both definitive identification and precise shot placement.

A final surprise with the 60 series is how little the new hardware at the front and rear has impacted the scopes' overall dimensions and weight, adding just 16mm in length, scarcely anything in width or height, and a mere 170g (6oz) in heft. Meanwhile, the main tube is still compatible with standard 30mm mounts, and it provides a comfortable 63mm and 60mm of tube forward and aft of the saddle,

respectively. This means a degree of positional versatility that nicely complements the generous eye box.

All in all, the 60-series brings plenty to the table: higher base magnification, sharper reticle precision, a better viewing experience, more flexible mounting options, and a more forgiving eye box for faster and more comfortable target acquisition and aiming. Whether it's worth it to you might depend on the model you're eyeing. The premium for an XL60 over an XL50 is just £100, while the equivalent XP and XG models come in at £190 and £290 more, respectively. Honestly, given that I was expecting a steeper price jump across the board, I wouldn't even see the XG's increase as a dealbreaker.

NETD and sensor sensitivity

Now let's look at the pros and cons of the three models in the 60 series. The XG60 leads on price and base magnification. Yet the XP60 has its own strengths: offering 42% more field of view and scoring well in a key area we haven't mentioned yet—bad-

weather performance. This edge is due to the XG and XL sensors using 12-micron pixels, which are less sensitive than the 17-micron pixels in the XP's sensor. This difference is visible in their respective NETD scores: <25mK (XP), <35mK (XL), and <40mK (XG). The XL beats the XG by having 156% more pixels to capture photons, but it still can't match the advantage conferred by the larger pixels, which enables the XP to outperform the others in high-humidity conditions, which dampens temperature differences.

An important development is that Pulsar now reports two NETD scores: true NETD and 'system NETD' (sNETD). True NETD represents the baseline sensitivity of the thermal sensor, while sNETD is a measure of the thermal profile of the image after it has been processed by the hardware and firmware in the device. The more processing you do, the lower you can push the number, and in a competitive market sector, NETD gets pushed and marketed hard. The problem is that making the device work harder consumes more

The XP60's increased 65mm of eye relief gives additional flexibility when seeking a mounting solution



The Thermion has focusing knobs on both sides and a reversible lens cover, facilitating ambidextrous operation



60mm optics and a higher-definition display are accommodated by a bigger ocular bell with a superbly generous eye box



Thomas Jacks' picture effectively contrasts the lens diameters of the XP50 (L) and its new big brother, the XP60 (R)

power, adds latency, and can create an increasingly fictional image.

Pulsar does things differently. Having previously quoted only true NETD figures, by introducing sNETD into their data sheets, they're simultaneously aligning with broader market practices and challenging competitors to reveal their true sensor performance rather than relying on system-optimised results.

The respective differences between the NETD and sNETD scores—7mK (XP), 15mK (XL), and 20mK (XG)—thus indicate the amount of "post-production" work each device is doing to achieve comparable sNETD results from each sensor type. Additionally, the fact that the final number for the XP remains lower (<18mK) than for the XG and XL (<20mK) suggests that Pulsar knew when to stop, prioritising the truthfulness of the image over pushing the XG and XL into a realm of splodginess and latency for the sake of a marketing claim.

As for the XL, its big sensor gives you the widest FOV in the range,

and although it has the lowest magnification range of the three variants (2.5x-20x vs. 4x-32x for the XG and 3x-24x for the XP), this is comfortably offset by the fact that its far greater pixel count lets you use much more of the digital zoom before the image starts to pixelate.

Conclusion

Whichever model you choose, you'll get a solid set of accessories, including two high-capacity APS3 (3,200mAh) rechargeable batteries, a dual charging dock, and a high-quality USB-C cable to charge the Thermion's built-in 4,900mAh power pack. Smartly, even when an APS3 is installed, the system prioritises the onboard battery. The quoted run-time is seven hours, which is slightly less than the 50-series with an APS2, suggesting that the larger Micro-OLED display is hungrier than its predecessor. Also included in the durable Cordura storage case is a Bluetooth remote control, which can be attached with the included 3M Dual Lock strips, putting full control of the

scope right under your fingertips for fast, seamless operation. As for the rest of the controls—ambidextrous focus dials, encoder wheel, power, zoom, ranging, and imaging buttons—there's no change. So, if you're already familiar with the LRF Thermions, there's nothing new to learn.

The trouble with all this new technical information is it leaves no time to relate the pleasures of taking the XP50 afield. Suffice it to say, then, that it is an absolute treat to use, thanks to its combination of awesome imaging, an integrated 800m laser rangefinder, and a programmable ballistic compensator that provides swift and reliable target identification and acquisition, and precise and instantly applicable firing solutions on demand. In short, Pulsar has set a new standard. Again.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF XP60

Price: £4,489.95

Contact: Thomas Jacks – www.tj-fieldsports.co.uk



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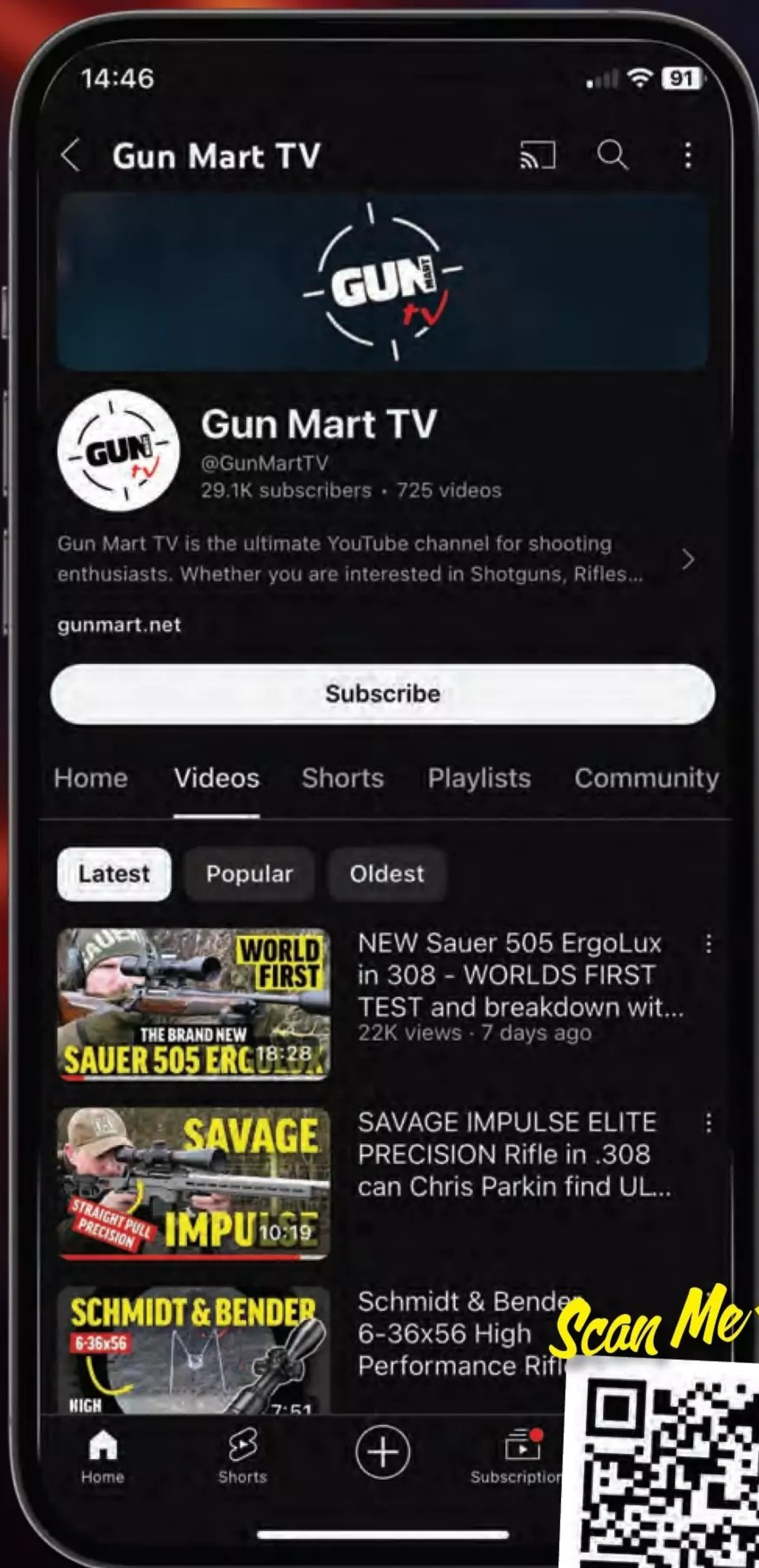
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Budget Friendly

Bruce Potts evaluates the Hatsan Escort Trio's performance, from field tests to the pattern boards

Sportsman Gun Centre now handles Hatsan shotguns, and these have always proved to be a popular choice in Britain as they cost a fraction of a similar-spec European semi-auto. The Escort range of pretty standard, no-frills, working-type semi-automatic shotguns are available in a range of calibres, including the 20-bore version we have on test. As expected from Hatsan, all manner of styles and configurations are available, from black, camo-clad, synthetic, and wood stock—the list goes on.

On test is the Escort Trio, a black synthetic model that's primarily designed for hunting, but it is also just as good for clays. It is immediately appealing, as it feels tough, rugged, and very light in the hand at just 2.8kg. It features a slender 20-bore gait and a 28" barrel with extended interchangeable chokes. All in all, it's a reliable semi-automatic, albeit with a finish that won't compete with the premium guns, but then it's a third of the price. The barrel is chambered for 3" cartridges, and its gas-operated system manages light and heavy loads well, while the synthetic stock provides good handling and less recoil.

Stock style

A shotgun, like a rifle, can literally fall down in terms of performance and appeal as soon as you pick it up, so the stock choice, materials, and configuration are crucial to performance and desirability. The Escort Trio, let's be honest, has a pretty standard, black-moulded synthetic stock, which is cheap to make yet provides superior weatherproofing compared to wood. The two halves are glued together, and the inner void is foam-filled to prevent that annoying echo some stocks have, which can allegedly 'spook' game in the field. It features a smooth, black surface but with the addition of profiled lines to add a bit of interest. The fore-end is slim and long at 11.5", with a slender, rounded underside, and features moulded chequering panels on both sides below the finger rail groove. Four slanted slots on both sides at the front ease the expulsion of the gas piston's gases during firing. Finally, the fore-end sits very nicely in a recess at the action end, and it can be removed via a large, knurled end cap. Noteworthy is the fact that there are no sling swivels.

A well-balanced and nicely finished 20-bore semi-automatic that promises plenty of fun for clay or vermin shooting

The buttstock has a small amount of cast and a shallow comb, which, on this 20-bore model, really gets the eye down and looking straight along the rib. Again, it shows moulded-in chequering, which is more for appearance than actual grip, but the recoil pad is very large, with the top section being double the thickness of the lower part. This pad is integrated into the stock and serves as an effective recoil reducer, although a semi-auto in 20-bore is not particularly harsh. The standard length of pull, at 14.5", is adequate.

Smooth bore

Hatsan barrels are made from nickel-chrome molybdenum steel and finished internally with a white chrome bore, achieving a hard-wearing surface. The chambering on this model is magnum, so it is capable of shooting 3" (76mm) magnum 20-bore cartridges. The gun is proofed for steel shot, but you can only use the chokes up to modified (½ choke).

The barrel is 28" long, with other lengths available on request. The rib is ventilated, with nine evenly spaced vents to cool the barrel and raise the 7mm rib with its serrated top. There is a single red bead up front for eye alignment. The overall finish is very smooth, with a matte black bluing that is practical and glare-free.

The shotgun is supplied with five chokes: full, improved modified, modified, improved cylinder, and cylinder. Each one is 2.75" in length, with 0.75" extending beyond the muzzle. This extended portion is heavily knurled, allowing them to be easily screwed in and out by hand without the need for a choke key.

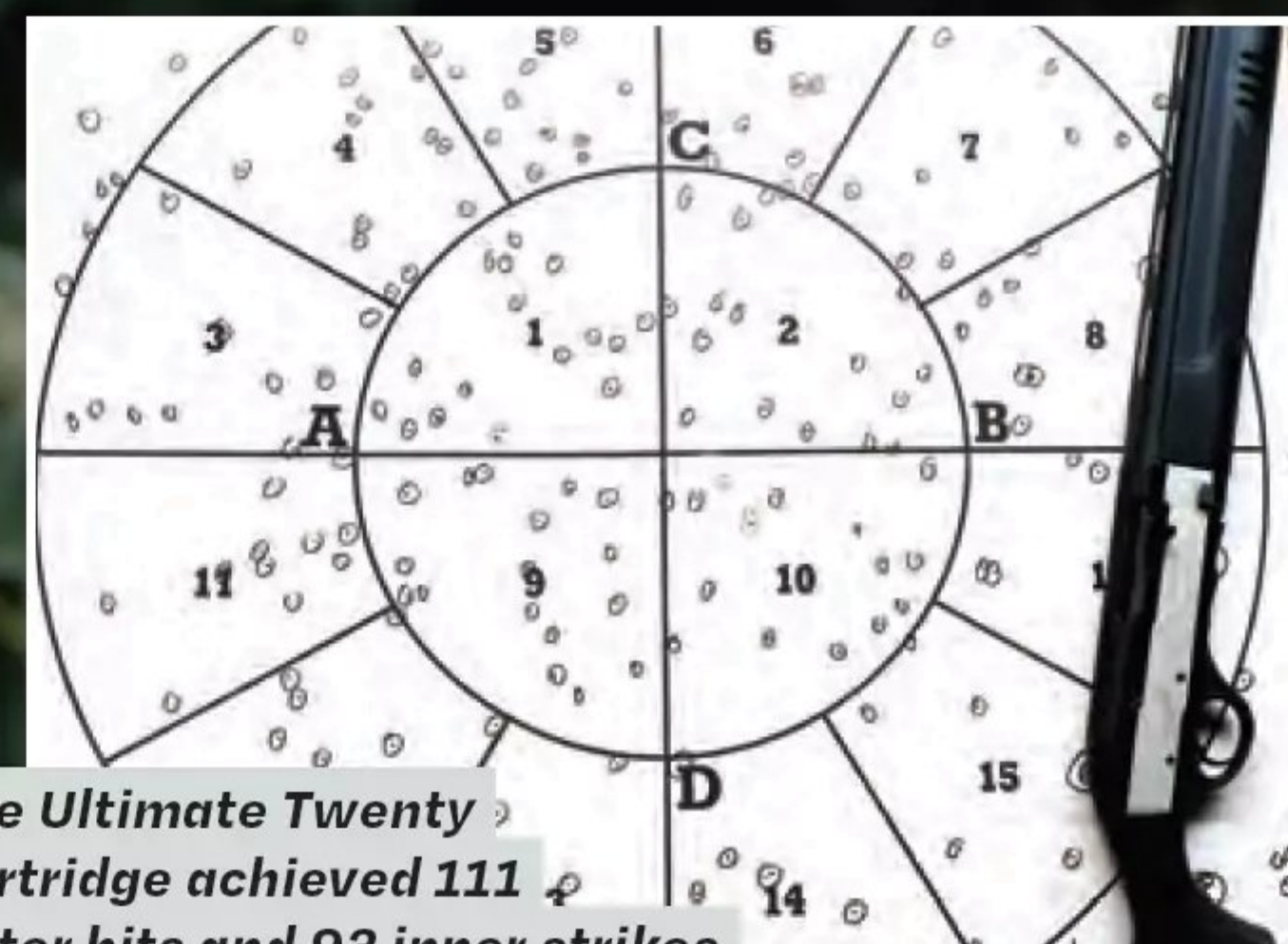
Action, trigger, and safety

Keeping with the scale of the 20-bore cartridge, the whole action is made from aircraft-grade aluminium, combining strength and lightness, which makes the whole Trio feel feather-like in the hand but not flimsy.

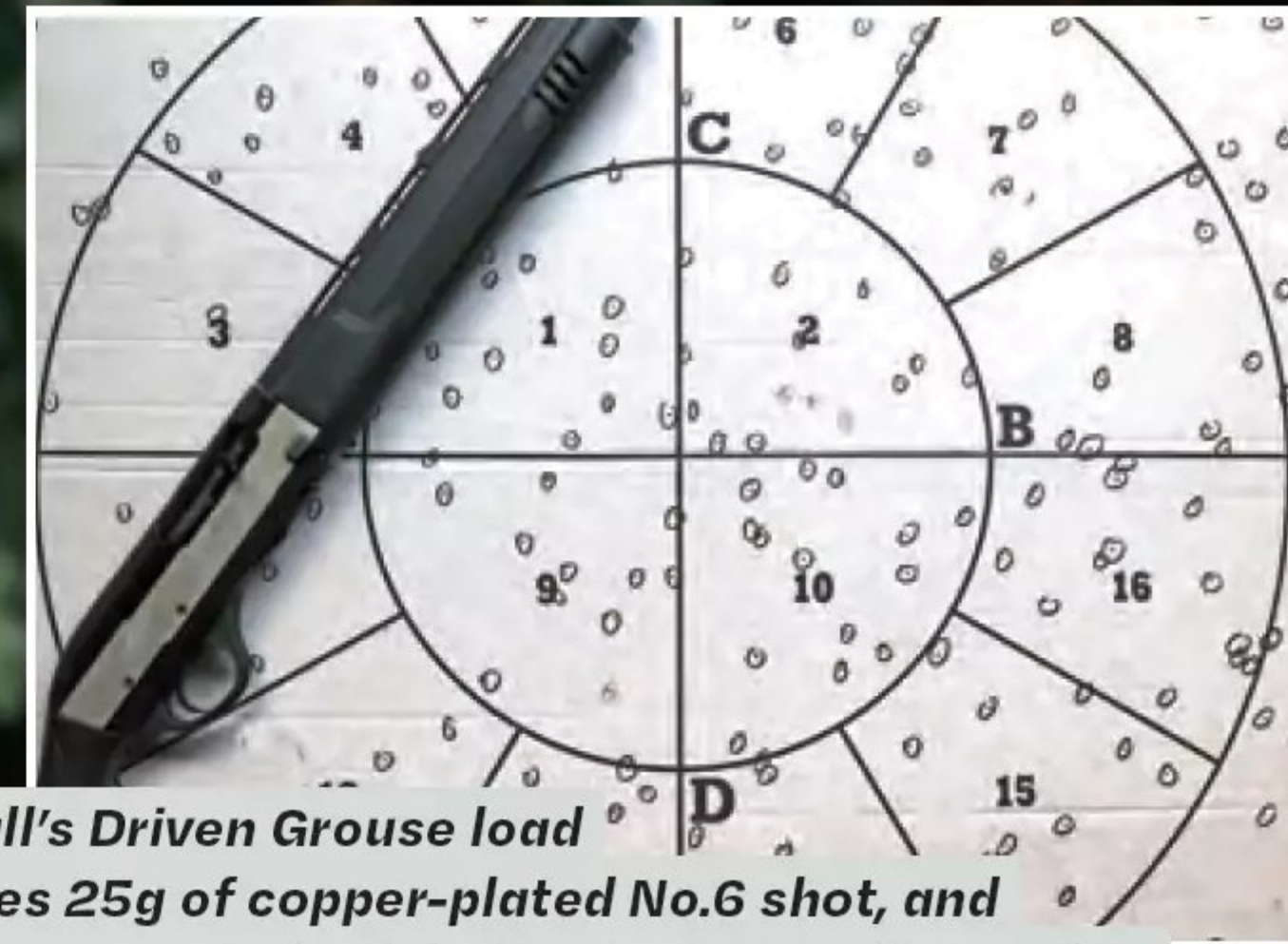
The receiver shows an interesting two-tone effect, with the top and bottom half featuring a satin black anodised finish to complement the barrel, whilst the mid-section is brushed aluminium, displaying some machined scroll engraving and model details. It breaks up what would otherwise be an all-black shotgun. Up



The distinctive finish on the Trio's receiver makes this shotgun stand out



The Ultimate Twenty cartridge achieved 111 outer hits and 93 inner strikes



Hull's Driven Grouse load uses 25g of copper-plated No.6 shot, and it managed a healthy total of 197 pellet strikes



With a total of 242 pellet strikes, Eley's VIP load is ideal for pigeon, game, and vermin



THIS HATSAN IS ONE OF THOSE SHOTGUNS THAT HAS NO REAL NICHE, AS IT SUITS BEGINNERS, THOSE WHO ARE RECOIL-SENSITIVE, ROUGH SHOOTERS, AND THOSE AFTER GAME OR CLAYS."

BRUCE POTTS



A really good, soft, recoil-reducing rubber butt pad is fitted



Five extended chokes are provided, and they are easily changed by hand



The bolt release is integrated into the cartridge carrier. Note the magazine cut-off button

top, you have 11mm dovetail rails cut fore and aft for the attachment of a red dot sight.

The right side of the receiver features a magazine cut-off button, and when this is depressed while the Hatsan is loaded, it locks back the bolt so a round can be removed. It also blocks another cartridge from the magazine entering the carrier. To shoot again, pop a round back in, and then release the catch to reload.

Instead of using a separate button for the bolt release, like on most semi-autos, the system is built into the cartridge carrier, which is also known as the shell lifter or elevator. So, to release the bolt, you simply push the centre of the carrier. This section lifts freely, releasing the bolt. Due to the gun being chambered in 20-bore, the loading port is pretty slim, making it a bit tight for larger thumbs, but it's manageable.

The trigger fits nicely into the generously sized guard, and the grooved lower half of the blade gives a little more purchase. The trigger's pull was heavy, coming in at nearly 7lbs, but this was not noticeable during testing. The safety, as in most semis, is a simple cross-bolt design behind the trigger blade, which blocks its movement.

The bolt handle is slim and not serrated. The bolt has a single extractor claw on the right-hand side, and the case is ejected by a small dimple on the inner side wall of the receiver that catches the case's rim and ejects it freely.

Gas, gas, gas!

The gas system operates in a fairly standard manner, with gases from the fired cartridge venting down from the bore through ports into the barrel union lug, which secures the barrel to the magazine tube. This gas drives the floating stainless steel piston rearward, engaging the bolt's twin action bars so the bolt reciprocates, ejects a case, and reloads in the blink of an eye.

The system is easy to maintain, and it will deliver reliable performance if kept clean. Neglecting this area can often result in problems.

Field test

I installed the ½ choke for the pattern board tests at 30 yards and evaluated a range of cartridges.

Firstly, I have to say that the recoil was negligible with all the rounds, and I had no hang-

ups at all, which was a good start. The shotgun performed reliably with loads ranging from 24g (Hull's Pro Twenty) to 28g (Hull's Ultimate Twenty). As expected, Hull's Subsonic (23g, No.7.5) cartridges struggled to cycle fully.

The Pro Twenty produced evenly spread and dense patterns, with 105 strikes in the inner 15" sectors and the remaining 159 around the periphery, giving a total shot count of 264.

Next, Eley's VIP cartridges (28g | No.6 | fibre) proved ideal for pigeons, game, and vermin. They functioned very well in the Trio's action and produced a good pattern down range, with a total pellet count of 242. There were 99 inners and 143 outers.

Hull's Driven Grouse load is another great all-rounder for any game (25g | No.6 | fibre), and it produced a healthy total of 197 pellet strikes, with 62 inner hits and 135 outer impacts within 30". It's a good, hard-hitting load that's easy on the shoulder, and it always produces a decent pattern.

Finally, the Ultimate Twenty load (28g | No.5.5) achieved 111 outer hits and 93 inner strikes, and despite the larger pellet size, I had a nice pattern with this Trio. I find this cartridge always brings home the rabbits, and it's especially good for squirrels in trees.

Conclusion

This Hatsan is one of those shotguns that has no real niche, as it suits beginners, those who are recoil-sensitive, rough shooters, and those after game or clays. The price point is also attractive, and as the tests prove, it performs well on the pattern boards.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Hatsan Escort Trio

Calibre: 20-bore

Barrel Length: 28"

Overall Length: 49.5"

Weight: 2.875kg

Length of Pull: 14.5"

Chokes: Five supplied (cylinder to full)

Price: £405.99

Contact: Sportsman Gun Centre - www.sportsmanguncentre.co.uk

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CUT ABOVE THE REST

BRUCE POTTS BREAKS DOWN THE SPECS AND PERFORMANCE OF HULL'S PRO ONE CARTRIDGES, EXPLAINING WHAT MAKES THEM A SHOOTER'S FAVOURITE

It's always nice to have a go-to cartridge, whether for a rifle or shotgun, that you know will perform when you need it. This ensures all that's on your mind while out shooting is concentrating on the actual shooting element, not whether the pattern is good/bad, the recoil excessive, or the barrel is being fouled excessively.

Hull produces a really good range of shooter-friendly cartridges, making it pretty easy to choose the right cartridge for your shooting discipline, as they have cartridges tailored for all eventualities.

Their Pro range of cartridges is renowned for delivering exceptionally smooth and consistent ballistics over long ranges, while also ensuring excellent patterns downrange. The cartridges include the Pro Piston (tested previously), the Pro One DTL 300, Pro Fibre, Pro Steel, and Pro Twenty, three of which my son and I use regularly.

Today, we have the Pro One on test, and this is aimed primarily at competitive clay shooters. It is both a high-performance cartridge and one that also exhibits very mild recoil, making it ideal for long days and repeated shooting sessions on clays.

Lots of options

The Pro One is only available in 12-bore with a plastic wad. The dimensions include a 70mm case length and a 12mm high brass head, and the burnt-red-coloured casing is adorned with gold lettering and shows a perfectly uniform six-star crimp. You have the choice of either 24g or 28g (on test) loadings of lead shot, with the former reaching



1,500fps and the latter 1,475fps at the muzzle. The 24g load is available in No.7, 7.5, or 9 shot sizes, while the larger 28g payload is offered in No.8 as well, which is very popular for many disciplines.

I like to think of shot sizes in real dimensions, much like a rifle bullet, and as such, the 7, 7.5, 8, and 9 shot sizes measure 2.4mm, 2.3mm, 2.2mm, and 2.0mm in diameter respectively. It's also very handy to visualise the total pellet count, or average, that each size and weight Pro One provides. These counts are 301, 338, and 540 pellets for the 24g loadings with their 7, 7.5, and 9 shot sizes. The larger 28g loading ups the pellet count to 352, 394, 448, and a whopping 630 for the respective 7, 7.5, 8, and 9 shot sizes.

Size does matter, as a cartridge hits and kills with a combination of volume of shot, density, and striking ability. The Pro One 28g loading in No.7.5 shot size has an energy figure at the muzzle of 1.6 ft/lbs compared to the No.9 shot at 0.92 ft/lbs. Stretch that to 40 yards, and the No.7.5 drops to 0.73 ft/lbs, while the No.9 falls to a scant 0.38 ft/lbs. However, the combination of pellets striking the target en masse is what kills. If you look at the pellets individually, they are competition-grade hardened shot with a uniform surface and no visible deformations.



Detailed view of the 12mm brass head and the primer



Wad and powder

Internally, the plastic wad has a cushioned rear section with a collapsible honeycomb midriff, similar to Hull's Sovereign cartridges, and four individual petals in the shot cup, keeping the pellets uniform as they pass through the barrel. This design also helps to stop distortion of the pellets after the initial powder ignition, as the concertina section/honeycomb flexes to absorb some of the energy. This feature also helps to reduce the amount of recoil.

As for the powder, you get a green/olive mix that delivers very uniform ballistics downrange, which is why the Pro One range is so popular. It achieves a respectable 1,475fps at the muzzle, and as we have seen, the energy levels are quite acceptable to break clays, whether they are fast crossers or long-range risers.

Pattern test

I set up the pattern boards at 30 yards, and I installed the $\frac{1}{2}$ choke into my Browning

Shadow shotgun. During testing, I have to say that the recoil, as advertised, was indeed very mild, especially for a 28g loading. Also, the amount of fouling in the barrel was minimal, which is always a good sign of correct combustion.

With the $\frac{1}{2}$ choke, we had a lovely, dense pattern consisting of 287 No.7.5 pellets. These were distributed with 157 outer strikes and a healthy 130 inner hits. There were no holes for clays to slip through, and the low recoil made these cartridges easy on the shoulder—so a great start.

Switching to the $\frac{1}{4}$ choke, we recorded 92 inner hits with a dense and even spread within the 15" diameter, whilst the remaining 119 pellets hit around the 30" periphery.

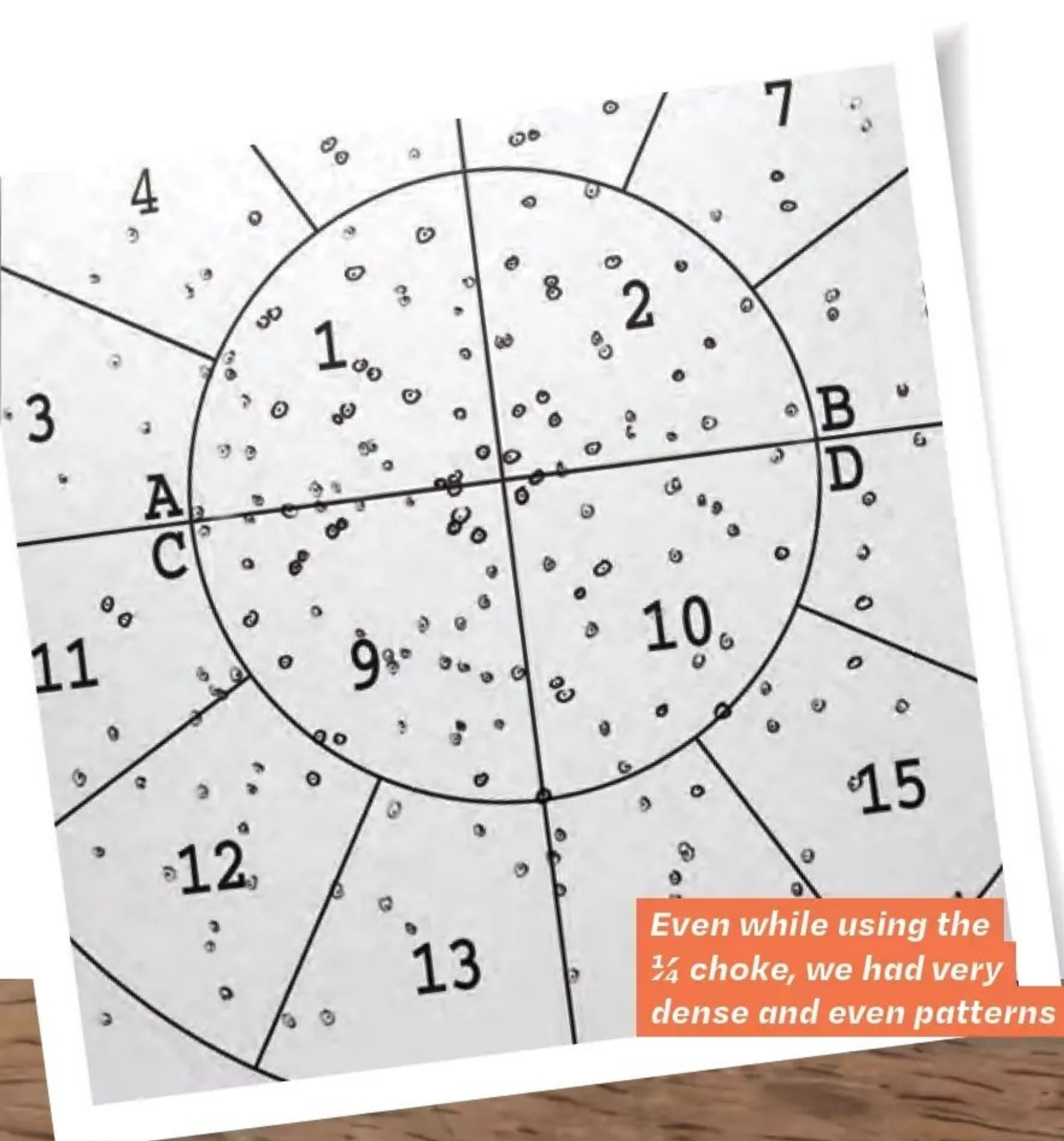
My son also shot some clays on a sporting clay layout, and those dense, even patterns really 'smoked' the clays after multiple strikes, even the very fast crossers.

Conclusions

Just another really proficient 12-bore cartridge from Hull, offering mild recoil alongside excellent, hard-hitting, and consistently reliable performance downrange. It's no wonder it's the choice of champions across both domestic and international disciplines. Sensibly priced at just over a tenner for a box of 25, it's not only a great clay cartridge but also proved highly effective on the farm, swiftly dispatching several rabbits and fast-moving, resilient squirrels.

Contact:

Hull Cartridge - www.hullcartridge.co.uk





The silencer is currently supplied with a 12 gauge choke tube to fit one of the following choke systems:

Mobilchoke (Beretta, Benelli, Franchi, etc.)

Crio Plus (Benelli M2)

Invictor (Mossberg, older Winchesters, Weatherby)

Invictor Plus (Winchester, Browning)

Optima HP (Beretta)

Remington (870, 1100)

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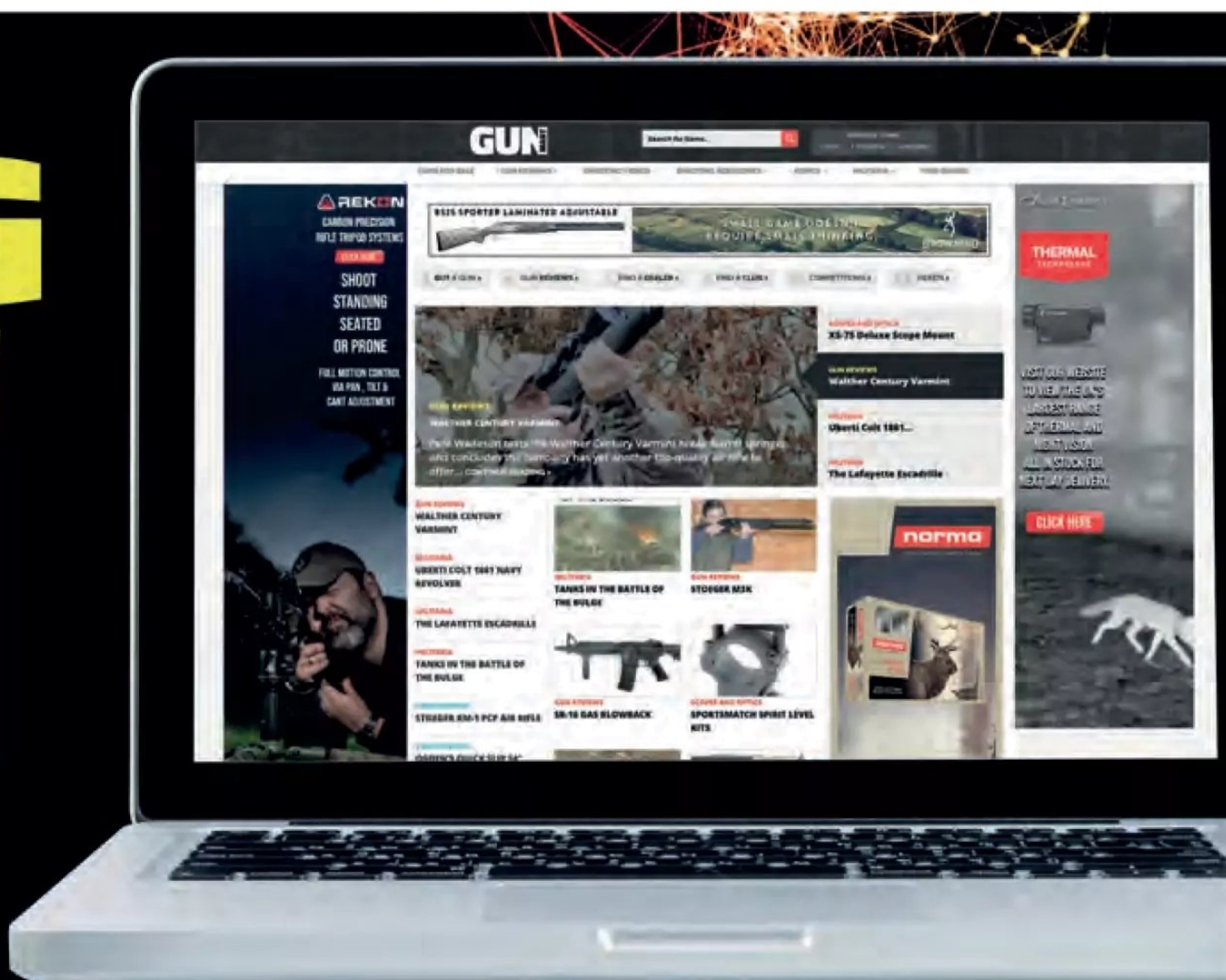
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Hard to PUT DOWN

Rob Speed tests the Fabarm Columba Palumbus and shares his verdict on this versatile semi-automatic shotgun

Over the past year, I have grown fond of semi-automatics; there's something deeply satisfying about loading, shooting, and, for me, often having that third shot! I have found them to be a handy tool in the pigeon/crow hide, because when using an over-and-under, you must either stand up over the netting to reload, potentially revealing your position, or risk scratching the gun while reloading discreetly in the hide. In contrast, a semi-auto allows for easy reloading while seated in the hide, offering a significant advantage. In use, a lighter-weight semi-auto allows me to get over the netting effortlessly to take those quick shots. Yes, controlling a lighter shotgun has taken quite some getting used to, but I am now seeing some great results.

A while back, I was very kindly sent a Fabarm XLR Columba Palumbus on a long-term loan. After using this gun numerous times out in the field, I now feel very confident in sharing my findings.

Fabarm was founded in 1900 and has been making over-and-under

shotguns in Italy ever since. Their older shotguns were very basic, made to a budget, and at the time were not a well-known name compared with other shotgun manufacturers. However, in 2011, Caesar Guerini bought a majority share in the company and made some major improvements. Fabarm has really made a name for itself over the past few years, introducing a number of great sporting and game guns, including a selection of semi-automatics. I would now say its name sits equal to some of the best value-for-money shotguns on the market.

In the box

I tried a Fabarm semi-automatic a few years ago, and I felt the recoil was quite fierce, so I was very sceptical when I received this one to have a go with. Without even altering the shims to get the perfect fit, I took the Columba Palumbus out to have a shot at some clays. If the recoil was excessive, it would be no use to me. I was very pleased that it was incredibly smooth to shoot and knew I was going to have a lot of fun with it.

Before I went on my next outing, I did change the shim to one of the others provided, as I like a high point of impact. This was very easy to do, and I think it is great to have this option because achieving a good gun fit is so important.

I had a thorough rummage through the contents of the canvas case and found a selection of three internal chokes and one external. The most important one for me was the half choke, which I installed right away. All the chokes have been overpressure tested to 1630bar and are suitable for high-performance steel shot. The extended choke that was provided with the gun had been specifically tuned for the use of steel shot loads. The similarly steel-proofed barrel has a 3" chamber.

I then picked up a little black box that contained two quick-release sling swivels, which are a great addition. I fitted a sling to the swivels and have used it every time I have been out rough shooting or wildfowling. The brilliance of this design is that I can use the sling to



"A GREAT SELECTION OF HIGH-VISIBILITY FIBRE OPTIC FRONT SIGHTS ARE ALSO PROVIDED"

ROB SPEED



Fabarm has done a good job with the styling on the Columba Palumbus

carry the gun on my shoulder, but if I want to take it off, it is simply removed by pressing two buttons.

A great selection of high-visibility fibre optic front sights was also provided, so I swapped to a smaller red sight that gave me a clearer focus on the target and not the end of the gun.

Mechanically, the Columba Palumbus is very well built. It is fitted with the revolutionary Pulse Piston System, which is simple and very effective at reducing felt recoil by progressively slowing the action with heavy loads. It contains fewer parts and is easy to clean, which in turn

makes it a highly reliable action. The bronze-coloured receiver has a great futuristic look, and the synthetic stock is coated with a soft-touch camo finish to create a rubberised feel.

The field test

The first time I shot the gun in the field was on a very windy day while decoying wood pigeons over a field of laid wheat. I struggled with the handling of the gun at the start of the day because the birds were extremely fast and therefore not the easiest targets. The gun weighs 7lbs 3oz, making it very light and fast handling. However,

I quickly realised that I could never shoot it in the same way as my usual over-and-under, so I began to handle it with the same technique that I adopted when shooting smaller gauges. It was quick and effortless to mount over the netting, and it has become a great companion for my hide shooting.

I have also been lucky enough to take it out wildfowling this season, creating some wonderful memories while shooting geese, ducks, and snipe. On all these trips, the rain and mud were relentless. I haven't been precious over the Columba Palumbus, and it has been used as a tool. But no matter





Here you can see the various components of the shotgun



This semi-auto functioned reliably with a selection of cartridges

how wet or dirty it got, it never failed. I haven't had a single malfunction. As a result, I now honestly believe and trust in the reliability of this gun.

Although I was initially worried about recoil, I have not found it to be a concern. The main cartridge I used included a 30g load of No.6 lead shot with a fibre wad, which cycled without fail. The recoil is smooth, and the second and third shots can be taken as quickly as you can pull the trigger. For geese, I used 3" high-performance steel cartridges (34g | No.3). These loads are known to have excessive recoil, but I found them smooth enough to fire through the Fabarm. I would happily recommend this gun to anyone who is recoil-sensitive like myself.

The one cartridge I hadn't tried was a 21g load, so I put them to the test. I

loaded three cartridges into the gun, and it cycled them perfectly. Fabarm has done a brilliant job with whatever makes this gun cycle as well as it does.

It is great that this shotgun is offered with a left-hand port option, as there are a lot of left-handed shooters, but very few semi-automatic options. I have shot several right-hand ported semi-automatics in the past, and the empty cartridge cases eject straight in front of your face, which can be distracting. However, the biggest issue has been that debris from the ejected cartridge occasionally blew back into my eyes, which is not only uncomfortable but dangerous as well.

My only criticism of the Columba Palumbus concerns the high-visibility filament at the back of the receiver. Not only do I feel it

is absolutely unnecessary, but I found when wildfowling in low light that it was hard to ignore. The last thing I want to do is have my focus on the back of the receiver and not the target. A black marker pen soon eliminated the problem.

Verdict

Fabarm has put a lot of thought into this model, and I think that will give people confidence when considering buying one. It is slightly heavier and has a chunkier profile than most other semi-automatics, which is a great advantage to me as I find it easier to control. It is also nice to be able to change the stock shims for a perfect fit.

I'm really pleased with how this shotgun has performed, as it has been reliable and comfortable to shoot. Plus, it looks great, is very competitively priced, and is backed with a three-year mechanical warranty. Pick one up the next time you visit a Fabarm stockist and then try to put it down!

The synthetic stock is coated with a soft-touch camo finish



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Fabarm XLR
Columba Palumbus

Calibre: 12-bore

Barrel Length: 30"

Weight: 7lbs 3oz

Length of Pull: 14 5/8"

Options: Left-handed and right-handed available

Price: From £1575

Contact: Anglo Italian Arms -
www.caesargueriniuk.com



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Designed to meet the needs of the UK market, the Blackthorn semi-automatic shotgun promises an unparalleled blend of performance, reliability, and aesthetic appeal. Featuring a 12G 3" chamber with a 28" barrel, Blackthorn uses a gas powered system and is offered in three distinct finishes, Black Synthetic, Bronze Synthetic, and Bronze Walnut.



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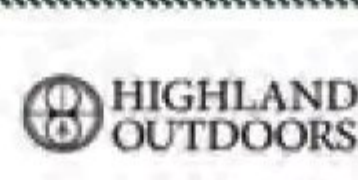
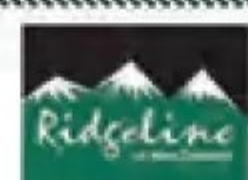
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RUGER OLD ARMY .44 stainless revolver. Second nitro proofed cylinder, very little use. Boxed excellent condition £750 ovno. Contact Box No: 5, contact vanessa. english@gunmart.co.uk or tel: 01206 506247

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7MM - 08 M595 Tikka wooden stock. Steiner Ranger 4-16 x 56, 30mm tube scope, with sound moderator Atec maxim and swing £600. Contact Box No:5, email vanessa.english@gunmart.co.uk or call 01206 506247.

ANTIQUES

BREN MK1 LIGHT MACHINE gun for sale with deactivation certificate POA Tel: 07939318364

FAIRBAIRN SYKES COMMANDO KNIFE 3rd pattern with sheath. William Rogers Sheffield. Great condition Tel: 0749504130320

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DENIX REPLICA 1873 COWBOY six shooter, the classic Army Peacemaker looks great in your office or den. The Single Action Army or "SAA" was made in several barrel lengths and each barrel length had a different name, this is the shortest barrel version at 4.75" long. This model has a gold and black colouring and has the body and barrel with decorative markings. macourt@sky.com

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DEACTIVATED .38 MK2 NO.1* Enfield Tankers Revolver. Top breaks, Barrel rotates and dry fires. 07495041303

BREN LIGHT MACHINE GUN WW2 for sale in excellent condition please contact me if interested. Tel: 07939318364

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