

XPRESS YOURSELF

Phill Price shoots a break-barrel with an American feel

It's very interesting for me to watch from afar as America continues its growing love affair with airguns. It doesn't seem all that long ago that the Yanks thought airguns were just children's toys, not serious things at all. The typical American airgun was a low-powered cowboy replica that produced about 3 ft.lbs. firing lightweight steel BBs, not even

enough to knock over a steel baked bean can, but little by little they've come to see the virtues of European-style airguns with all the power and accuracy they offer.

Today they buy huge numbers of English and European spring-piston and pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) rifles. Because they have almost no restriction on the power they're allowed they can take advantage of the big-bores and high-power actions to hunt bigger animals than we do here, but like us, the vast majority of American shooters buy spring-piston, break-barrel sporters. For every high-end PCP supergun that's sold, 250 break-barrels cross the

shop counter. They're really the bread and butter of the industry and what the vast majority of people really need.

SIMPLY RIGHT

These guns are simple, reliable and affordable. For a very modest amount of money you get a properly built, reasonably accurate and powerful gun that will offer years of shooting fun, ideal for casual target shooting and close-range pest control.

The Remington Express XP follows the market trend of coming as a package that includes the rifle, silencer, scope and mounts. Anybody new to the sport can confidently walk into their local gun shop and buy this rifle knowing for sure that all the parts will work together with no

problems. The mounts fit the scope rail correctly and they're also the correct diameter for the scope's body tube. There's even a hex key in the box to bolt it all together. The silencer comes fitted so there's nothing to worry about there either.

VISUAL APPEAL

A huge part of the appeal of this rifle is that it's styled on one of the most popular centrefire rifles of all time, the Remington 700. Millions of American deer hunters own one or more of these fine rifles, so having familiar looks and feel makes perfect sense. The styling is slim and neat, which I find very appealing, and the butt section is very straight with no raised cheekpiece. As with the majority of rifles today it's ambidextrous yet



This isn't a rifle for small hands.



With the tab back, the safety is locked on.

"In fact, the cocking stroke was smooth and quiet straight from the box"

still offers a good fit and the deeply cut, sharp chequering panels are large, guaranteeing a positive hold.

The rifle hides its 8.8 lbs very well with a lively, pointable balance that reminded me of one of the favourite springers of my youth, the Feinwerkbau Sport. It's a handy gun that comes naturally to the shoulder and onto the aim with little conscious effort. Despite the lack of a cheekpiece there's reasonable support for your cheek on the stock because there's little drop to heel, just as you'd find with the Remington 700 this airgun is styled on.

What might be a little unusual to our eyes is the glossy finish. The Americans seem to like this, but we're more used to a matte look. The metalwork is matte as is the synthetic silencer. An unusual feature is the safety. This pops out automatically on the left side of the action as the rifle is cocked. It has a secondary lock that's engaged by a lever that rotates 180 degrees backwards when the safety is engaged. This, in effect, makes the safety safe; belt and braces. All the parts of the safety

are made from good, solid steel, I'm happy to report.

QUIET COCKING

Cocking the Express impressed me. I'd noted the articulated cocking linkage straight away which isn't always a good thing. Some rifles that have these exhibit strange clicks and clonks during the cocking cycle but the Express wasn't one of them. In fact, the cocking stroke was smooth and quiet straight from the box. The firing cycle was also smooth and quiet, something you could never have said about guns in this price range a few years ago. Remington clearly has fitted a well designed

spring guide that damps down cocking noise effectively and smoothes the firing cycle to a pleasing degree.

SILENCE PLEASE

There's always been a question about how effective a silencer is on spring/piston guns but on a quiet rifle like this I'm sure it does cut out some high-frequency noise. This silencer is made from a synthetic material and appears to be lightweight, exhibiting very little effect on the overall balance so I welcome it. It also makes a comfortable cocking aid, especially in the coldest weather. Gripping a cold steel barrel with a bare hand isn't pleasant.

SMK sent some of their .177 Black BS45 wadcutter pellets

which worked well in my test rifle. From a soft, rested position they consistently delivered 3/4" groups at 20 yards meaning that they'd make a good choice for rat and feral pigeon clearance duties. The flat-faced pellet will transmit maximum shock value to the quarry ensuring a clean kill.

I enjoyed this rifle and feel sure that it's going to be another big success for SMK. It offers great performance for a rifle in this price range and is a pleasure to use. ■

"the vast majority of American shooters buy spring-piston, break-barrel sporters"



SMK's own Black wadcutter pellets performed well.



The silencer is permanently fitted.



Off a rest, accuracy was as good as I'd hoped.

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer	Remington
Importer	SMK Ltd
Web	www.sportsmk.co.uk
Tel	01206 795333
Model	Express XP
Length	47.5"
Weight	8.8lbs
Safety	Automatic
Calibres	.177, .22
Scope	3-9 x 32 (includes mounts)

RRP £199.95