

NEW 'MATIC

Phill Price is the first to get his hands on a new PCP from bargain airgun specialists SMK



I was impressed by the matt anodised metalwork.

SMK has carved out an important place in the UK airgun industry as a supplier of 'value for money' airguns and accessories. They're proud to be the first step into airgun sports for thousands of people, because they offer affordable products that allow newbies to have fun shooting, which when all's said and done should be what airguns are about. They offer a huge range of spring-powered guns alongside another power source that they've become synonymous with, which

is Co2. Our club has an enthusiastic Co2 following in both rifles and pistols and pretty much all of their guns come from SMK.

However, one area they've so far not touched, to my knowledge, is pre-charged pneumatics. These are complicated guns that need to be engineered to very high standards. Holding air at 200bar, (2900psi) is seriously scary, because a failure would be catastrophic, so we need to know that they've been engineered to the very highest degree and

survived the torture tests in the laboratory. We also need to know that our rifles have passed the Airgun Manufacturers Trade Association anti-tamper protocol. This ensures that nobody can mess about with the internals and make it illegal.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

SMK's M22 passed all the tests and now is ready to go to your local gun shop. My first impression was of a large gun, but I was deceived. The stock is a rather

light colour beech, and the full-length barrel shroud-cum-silencer adds to the visual mass. It's also slightly longer than average with a 14¾" pull length. However, once in the shoulder it feels like the medium-weight sporter that it really is. My test sample was a pre-production model so it's possible that there will be some final tweaks before they hit the shops.

In keeping with fashion, the stock is ambidextrous, with raised cheek pieces on both sides of the

I was glad to see a pressure gauge as standard.



"I was impressed and pleased to see that the M22 has a pressure gauge which is fitted to the end of the air reservoir

butt section. Behind this there's a ridged butt pad that's made from a harder material than I'm used to seeing. Adding some detail flourishes, the M22 has pressed chequering panels on the pistol grip and deep finger grooves in the side of the fore end that reminds me of an HW35. They add significant purchase to your grip and will be very welcome when stalking. Although the stock is rather plain I noted that the finish of the metalwork is of a higher standard than I would typically associate with this price level. It appears to be bead-blasted and then anodised black, with all the components matching nicely. Oddly, the cap at the back of the action appears to be clear anodised, as is the chunky bolt. This rides on a thick shaft that has a very substantial feel. Its action is pretty smooth for a rifle that hasn't been run in, so I'm optimistic that it will be even better with use.

CLEVER MAG'

My sample was in .22 and came equipped with an 11-shot rotary



The bolt shaft is very thick.

magazine (13 shots in .177) with an interesting indexing system. I'd never seen this type until just a few weeks ago when I saw a magazine fitted to a Kral PCP that works the same way, in principle. There's a large aperture into which you drop a pellet and then you rotate the cylinder anti-clockwise to reveal the next chamber, repeating the process until it's full. The novel part is, the spring is released by a probe as it loads the pellet into the barrel. As the probe is withdrawn, the cylinder rotates and aligns the next pellet with the barrel. I like this system because all the indexing parts are in the magazine, keeping the action as simple as a single-shot. I asked

the price of spare magazines but no information was available at the time of writing. The mag is mostly metal and looks quite substantial, cycling perfectly with the Remington Thunder Field Target Trophy pellets supplied, but was less happy with my standard test pellet, the Air Arms Diablo Field. The first few I tried were difficult to chamber, so I stopped testing with them.

I was impressed and pleased to see that the M22 has a pressure gauge which is fitted to the end of the air reservoir. I believe that all pre-charged pneumatics need one but it's quite a lot to ask of a gun

at this price. The reservoir is pretty large at 32mm in diameter and 490mm in length, which is probably because most of these guns will be sold in countries that don't suffer our power restriction and will be set up to offer much higher muzzle energy. These guns use up air very quickly, but for us this should mean lots of shots per fill, which is great. Filling is done with a typical two 'O' ring probe, which had a neat innovation I hadn't seen before. Instead of having a threaded section on which to fit an adaptor, it has the male fitting that's accepted by the widely popular Forster fitting. This makes great sense to me, and I think it's a step forward. The female port in the reservoir has nothing to cover it so care will be needed to ensure that it's spotlessly clean before inserting the probe.

As you can see, there's a lot to say about this interesting new rifle, which I simply couldn't cover in just one article, so I'll bring you my performance tests and conclusion in next month's mag. ■

TECH SPEC

Manufacturer	SMK
Web	www.sportsmk.co.uk
Tel	01206 795333
Type	Pre-charged pneumatic
Action	Magazine-fed, bolt-action
Length	1140mm (44¾")
Weight	3.5kg (7.7lbs)
Fill pressure	200bar
Trigger	Two-stage adjustable
Stock	Ambidextrous beech sporter
Calibres	.177 and .22

£399.95



The innovative magazine worked well.

The layout is the classic barrel-over-reservoir design that's so well proven.

"I like this system because all the indexing parts are in the magazine, keeping the action as simple as a single-shot"

