

STING LIKE A B!

Phill Price asks is this one of the most important airguns in the UK?

It might be a bit small, but it's still great fun for adults as well as youngsters.

When you ask local gun shop owners what they sell most of from day to day, the answer is always the same. Cheap, break-barrel springers. This is what most of the UK population owns as their first airgun. When you come from a shooting family and you walk into your local gun shop with a sensible budget, guess what he's going to offer you? Most often it will be an SMK B2.

There are many times in this world's history when the axiom of 'if it ain't broken, don't fix it' was true, and this is one of them. Most new airgunners need a simple gun and the B2 is easily understood and enjoyed. Because it uses so few moving parts, there's less likely to go wrong, especially if it's handled roughly, and poorly maintained. On the subject of maintenance, it's a gun that can

The synthetic camo stock is a little pale, but it's only there for good looks anyway.

The butt pad is hard plastic, which is a little slippery.

be serviced by anybody with a workshop and some mechanical skills.

GOOD TO BE BACK

It's been some time since I fired one of these, and from the first shot I could tell it had moved on. The internals appear to have been upgraded and the production engineering improved. The cocking action is much smoother than I remember and the firing cycle way more refined. I'd guess that a well-fitting spring guide has been adopted that helps to reduce the vibration that comes from the main spring, which in the past would have created quite some noise. These are impressive upgrades for any gun, let alone one that costs so little.

Using a pellet I hadn't seen before, the SMK Victory Shock, in .22, the B2 delivered an average of 460fps. With the pellet weighing 15.9 grains this calculates to 7½ ft.lbs. which is easily enough

power for some satisfying back garden plinking. Those tin cans will go spinning when hit by this little beauty. I was further impressed that the muzzle velocity varied just 7fps over 30 shots, which is good by any standard.

The Victory Shock is an interesting design. At first glance it

looks like a typical short-body roundhead, like the Remington Thunder Field Target Trophy, but it isn't. The dome is, in fact, more pointed, like a rifle bullet. When I've seen this tried in the past, the distance from the pellet's skirt to the driving band around the head was too short to allow the pellet to stabilise properly in the rifling, but with the Shock the distance has been maintained so I had high hopes for accuracy and low drag.

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It's clear that the gun's designer had youngsters in mind, because it's quite light at just 6lbs, even with the scope fitted. It also has a

properly is easier to control and more relaxing to use. Another important dimension is the distance from the pistol grip to the trigger blade. Smaller people have smaller hands and if they're forced to stretch too far to reach the trigger blade, again, control is lost.

PUT A SCOPE ON IT!

The gun comes fitted with adjustable open sights that benefit from fibre-optic inserts to make them bright and clear. Many people think it's vital that youngsters are taught to use them before progressing to a scope, but

Pressing the lock lever releases the barrel.

TECH SPEC

Importer www.sports-mk.co.uk

Tel 01206 795333

Model B2 Camo

Type Spring-piston

Action Break-barrel

Length 43" (109cm)

Weight 6lbs (2.72kg)

4 x 32 mil-dot scope and mounts
£39.99

Victory Shock pellets £5.99

RRP £74.95

I liked the little 4 x 32 scope supplied with the rifle.

I'm not one of them. Just about everybody uses a scope these days and I think they make learning to shoot much easier, so I say fit a scope from day one. SMK delivered my test gun with a cracking little 4 x 32 that's as light as a feather and sits low above the action for ease of use.

Because of the long barrel, cocking is very easy, once you've mastered the barrel lock. It's impressive indeed to find such an advanced feature on such a modestly priced rifle. This ensures that the barrel goes back to exactly the same place for every shot, and so improving accuracy. To open it, you press it forward and down and then push the barrel down. There's no need to bump the barrel free, as you do with most break-barrel springers. It sounds complicated, but you soon get the knack.

My final test was the most important one. Just how much fun could I have blasting a soup tin around my lawn? I set it out at 15 yards and didn't miss once as the B2 punched big, clean holes through the steel can. Now, that's proper fun, and I was holding the ideal gun for the job. Sure, it's a bit small for an adult, but in that situation it made no difference at all. There are many reasons why so many of these guns have been sold over the years, but the most important one is – they just deliver fun by the ton, and you can't ask for more than that. ■