

ADVANTAGE CO2

Phill Price tries a CO2-powered rifle from the masters of value



Above: Despite the light weight the CR600W felt steady on aim.

I sometimes think it's a shame that CO2 rifles don't get the credit they deserve. In many ways, they offer the advantages of a pre-charged pneumatic (PCP) rifle without the cost and hassle of a dive bottle or pump filling system. They're recoilless and with a sound moderator fitted, almost silent in use. Okay, they're not as powerful as top-class PCPs and ultimately probably not as accurate, but in many applications those things aren't the most important factors in your buying decision. A CO2 rifle can be light,

boast a multi-shot action and require almost no physical effort to shoot. They really do need to be considered on your shortlist of new plinking guns.

SWEET

Take the sweet little SMK CR600W on test. It's lightweight, well balanced, recoilless, quiet and very affordable. I've recently received a number of emails from readers who, because of age or disability, have found PCPs easier to enjoy than spring-powered guns.

They simply could not cock full-power springers any more, and were fed up with dealing with a recoiling gun's finicky nature. Hitting their target was what mattered and a recoilless gun made that happen for them. A CO2 rifle might have made that happen at a much lower cost.

TOP VALUE

What do you get from the CR600W for £180? A sleek,

wooden-stocked sporter with an action that has a single-shot tray and a multi-shot magazine, all cycled by a side-mounted bolt. Power is supplied by the ubiquitous 12 gramme CO2 capsule which lives in a tubular housing running parallel below the barrel. This has a novel set-up the likes of which I've never seen before. To 'gas-up' the action you unscrew the steel end cap and tip the rifle muzzle down, after which a long plastic spacer will fall out into your hand. Next, drop a CO2 capsule 'neck' down into the housing and then drop the spacer in behind. Screw the end cap on >>



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Below: Extra-high mounts are needed to get the scope above the rear sight.



Above: The muzzle weight is said to offer some noise suppression.



Above: The cross bolt safety is easy to use.

firmly (read 'as tight as hand pressure will allow') and after checking that there is no pellet in the barrel, point the rifle in a safe direction and pull the trigger. You might be disappointed to hear nothing but the hammer fall, but don't worry. Tighten the end cap again and repeat. You should get a satisfying blast of CO2 from the muzzle.

EXTRA SHOTS

For shooters on the move, the plastic spacer in the gas reservoir can be replaced with two unopened 12 gramme capsules, keeping them on hand when the first one fitted runs out. This adds greatly to the shot count. I tested the CR600W with one of the pellets supplied by SMK, the Remington Thunder Sniper Light, which weighs 14.4 grains. I hoped that this would give useful velocity, which it did. Average velocity on a 10°C day was 525 fps for 8.9ft.lbs.

of muzzle energy. However, when I tested the rifle for accuracy it couldn't quite match my old standby, the RWS Superdome. This pellet has been around a very long time, and I wonder if its dimensions are well matched for Far Eastern-made barrels that I guess are made to old-fashioned dimensions. Whatever, they gave a

neat ½" group at 20 yards, and many more expensive guns would be envious of that.

ENOUGH POWER

Nine ft.lbs. is plenty powerful enough for pest control duties around buildings, and I'd have no qualms about tackling rats and feral pigeons with this smart little rifle. The trigger's movement was quite long and lacked a defined

release point, but after a while I came to read it well enough. It's better than most guns at this price point and nothing that would put me off hitting my target.

VERY HIGH MOUNTS!

SMK supplied one of their 3-9 x 40 scopes in very high mounts, which were necessary because of

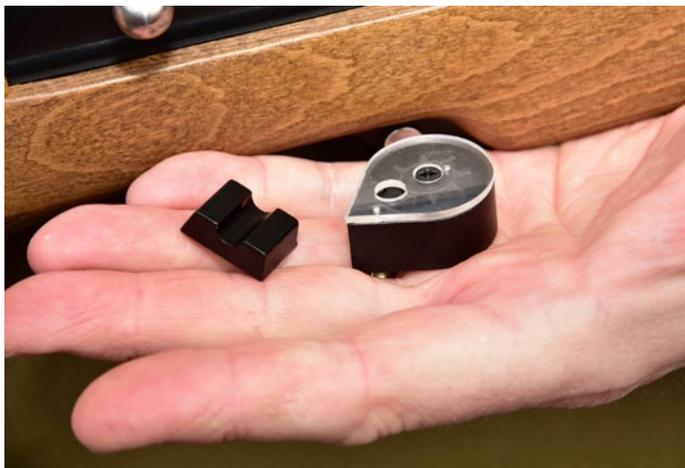
the stock's cheek piece. It is possible to see the open sights through the openings in the mounts, but only just, and I don't see their use as a practical option with the scope fitted.

I think this is a great little gun, well suited to back-garden plinking, especially for lightly-built shooters who don't want to wrestle

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the open sights fitted. The rear sight unit sits on top of the bridge that supports the barrel from the gas reservoir. This places it exactly where the objective bell sits, forcing the use of high mounts to clear it. If this gun were mine, I'd remove the open sights and use much lower scope mounts. This would improve the handling of the rifle and give a much better connection between my face and

a heavy rifle. I'd use lower mounts and add a proper silencer to make it nice and quiet so as not to annoy my neighbours. It's great value for money and fun to shoot, to boot, so why not consider a CO2 rifle on your next purchase? ■



Above: A single-shot tray and a magazine are included.

Below: The plastic spacer can be replaced with extra capsules if you like.



TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: SMK
Web: www.sportsmk.co.uk
Tel: 01206 795333
Model: CR600W
Action: Bolt-action
Power source: CO2
Length: 37"
Weight: 4.7lbs
Trigger: Adjustable
Calibres: .177 and .22
RRP: £179.95
3-9x32 scope: £36.99
Mounts: £11.99

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