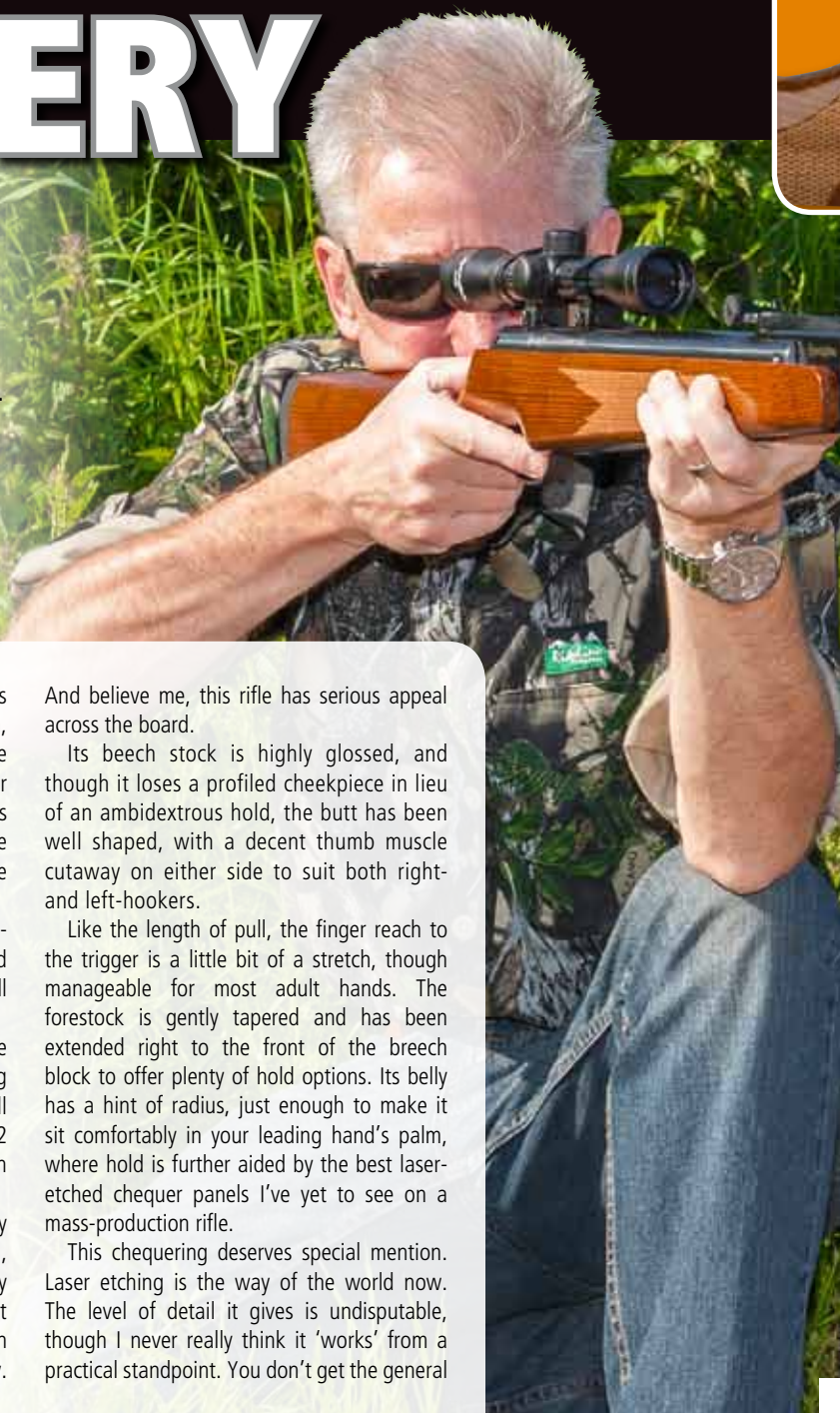


# Express DELIVERY

Though not perhaps so well known in airgun circles, the US arms legend Remington has shipped its new, full-powered break-barrel sporter to the UK. **Nigel Allen** assesses the new .177-only Express...



Seeing an air rifle with the Remington Arms company logo on it is a little impressive. As with so many 'big brand' airguns, though, it's not made in either of the gun giant's two US factories, but the Far East. However, it's testimony to the fact that the Orient *can* deliver a decent airgun and that rifles like this one end up carrying such famous marques. And I'll say right from the off that Remington's technical centre in Kentucky has clearly given its source a tight brief to work to – because the Remington Express is quite some air rifle...

The Express is so named because, in the States, it's sold as a 1,000fps-capable, .177 calibre air rifle – though, of course, its spring-powered action has been 'detuned' for the UK's 12ft/lb legal limit. That still equates to a velocity of over 800fps this side of the pond, mind you.

Given the UK's penchant for the .22 calibre, Remington's taken the bold step to keep UK-bound Express rifles '.177 only' – though having shot this rifle for quite a few weeks, my opinion is that it would sell equally as well in the larger calibre. However, even if you're a .22 stalwart, keep reading: if ever there was a rifle to make you switch calibres, this one's it!

It's a beautiful sporter, though it divulges its American influence by way of its sheer size. Everything's big – its overall length, length of pull, trigger reach and even its barrel. Thankfully, it's not overly weighty because of it, but I think chopping 75mm off the barrel (which wouldn't affect performance) and reducing the pull length by 20mm (which would improve handling) *would* bring a whole new market into play.

And believe me, this rifle has serious appeal across the board.

Its beech stock is highly glossed, and though it loses a profiled cheekpiece in lieu of an ambidextrous hold, the butt has been well shaped, with a decent thumb muscle cutaway on either side to suit both right- and left-hookers.

Like the length of pull, the finger reach to the trigger is a little bit of a stretch, though manageable for most adult hands. The forestock is gently tapered and has been extended right to the front of the breech block to offer plenty of hold options. Its belly has a hint of radius, just enough to make it sit comfortably in your leading hand's palm, where hold is further aided by the best laser-etched chequer panels I've yet to see on a mass-production rifle.

This chequering deserves special mention. Laser etching is the way of the world now. The level of detail it gives is undisputable, though I never really think it 'works' from a practical standpoint. You don't get the general

*It's a bit of a stretch to reach the trigger, but most adult hands will manage it*



*The extended forestock and its laser-etched chequer panels offer plenty of hold options*







*The Express comes complete with a Remy 4x32 scope and mounts*



*The rearsight is fully adjustable. There's also a green fibre-optic insert on either side...*

'roughness' afforded by hand-cut chequering. Yet the Remy's chequering provides 'proper' diamonds that are deeply cut – and as well as being very accurately applied, they do *really* add tactility.

I sincerely hope other stockmakers take note of what Remington has achieved, because these are outstanding – and their lighter, 'unfinished' look contrasts very well with the golden brown polyurethane coating on the rest of the stock. If this test rifle didn't have to go back, I'd be tempted to rub in some dark wood stain to protect the wood and give an alternative contrasting colour – though that's just a personal preference.

The Remington Express is one of the in-vogue 'combo' packages; it's supplied with a Remington 4x32 scope and mounts. This, I know, is popular with punters who can walk out of the shop with a ready-to-shoot package for their money which, in the case of this combo, is just £159.95.

For me, that makes it staggering value – though I've got to be honest and say that the scope would be the first thing I dumped! Why do I say that? Well, in the sub-£200 airgun market, having an inclusive scope deal is great – and I'll always take what I can get. But while the Remington scope – with its coin-adjustable turrets and Duplex-style crosshair – 'fits' the price bracket, the rifle simply doesn't.

You see, the Express is so far *above* being a £150 air rifle that a cheap-and-cheerful 4x32 – as capable as it is – actually seems a bit of a mismatch. With so much potential in your hands, you'll want to fit a better optic (and mounts) to the 140mm-long dovetails milled into the Express's cylinder; that I guarantee.

Ironically, you'd also be more than happy with the rifle's open sights, which sport up-to-the-minute fibre-optic inserts – red at the foresight, green either side of the rear's notch. The rearsight is fully adjustable, too, with numbered thumbwheels that click very positively and a vernier to assist lateral adjustment. Though they're made of synthetic, the quality



*...and a red one at the foresight*

of engineering – and thus accuracy – is outstanding. That said, I'd have preferred some form of skeletonised 'hood' over the foresight to both protect it and make the rifle a little more practical to cock.

Cocking effort is surprisingly easy for this rifle – so much so that it prompted me to get the chrono out. Sportsmarketing supplied a tin of 8.5-grain BS45 Black Pointed pellets with the test rifle, and with its black graphite coating, I expected this ammo to sail close to the wind, power-wise. However, it didn't, returning just 735fps, or 10.2ft/lb – not what I'd call 'Express'.

The chrono results really surprised me as the accuracy from this rifle/scope/pellet combo certainly hinted at something a bit more – and shot-to-shot consistency added to that feeling. I then played around with a few pellet varieties, conscious that the owner of a rifle in this price

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MODEL:	Remington Express
UK DISTRIBUTOR:	Sportsmarketing • www.sportsmk.co.uk
ACTION:	Break-barrel, spring and piston. Decockable
CALIBRE:	.177 only
OVERALL LENGTH:	1,155mm
BARREL LENGTH:	475mm
WEIGHT (INCL. SCOPE):	3.71kg (3.38kg unscoped)
TRIGGER:	Two-stage, adjustable
SAFETY:	Automatic, resettable
SIGHTS:	Fibre-optic opens, fully adjustable – plus Remington 4x32 scope and mounts
STOCK:	Beech sporter
LENGTH OF PULL:	375mm
TYPICAL POWER:	11+ft/lb
SRP:	£159.95 (including scope)

One of the best buys of 2014?

bracket probably wouldn't want to splash out a fortune on 'match-quality' ammo brands.

I found that the 4.52 (Large) version of the Defiant grouped amazingly well from the Remy's unchoked barrel – and the velocity of this 7.5-grain round was bang on the 12ft/lb limit, at 845fps. This made me wonder what the 5.1-grain, ultra-lightweight ThUnder BOLT might produce, given that springers tend to be more efficient with lighter-weight ammo.

As it turns out, power dropped, but only by a little – and I felt it quite fitting to see the UK-specified Remington clock up velocities in excess of 1,000fps! However, while that's an impressive stat, the accuracy wasn't as good. I think U-Bolts are best for lower-powered guns, which need 'more speed'. A thousand feet-per-second equates to around 680mph – and that's just too close to the sound barrier to make such a lightweight projectile 'stable' in flight in my opinion.

Where the Defiant was capable of sub-20mm groupings at 30 yards with the Express, the U-Bolts only managed that sort of accuracy at 15 yards. The BS45 Black Pointed were still capable of sub-30mm groups at 30 yards, and I'd certainly be happy to use both the BS45 and Defiant in a hunting scenario with the Express.

Part of the Remington's accuracy has to be attributable to its trigger – a two-stage unit that's on a par with the best continental springers out there. (Yes, I *did* just say that!) It's also adjustable – for pull pressure (on-gun, by way of a hole in the trigger guard) and second sear engagement (off-gun). I was more than happy with the ex-factory settings, however.

If you're okay with its gunfit, the Express isn't a hard rifle to shoot, though I'm convinced some shorter dimension as previously mentioned would make it more forgiving – I certainly called a few fliers

because of that long trigger reach.

If the trigger hadn't been as good, I think I may have struggled a lot more, too.

But its firing cycle is extremely pleasant, given the rifle's power.

The lock time is fast and snappy, without being uncontrollable and I reckon a tuned-up Express would be formidable! Let the rifle 'roll' in your shoulder, and you'll find your pellets landing exactly where you want them. The distributor wouldn't let me strip the test rifle, but it certainly felt like there were some synthetic parts inside that were contributing to a twang-free shot release.

My only concern, long-term, is the barrel lock-up. New, the ball-bearing *détente* arrangement is fine – but it might loosen-up in many years' time. Luckily, the breech block pivots around a bolt that can be




One way to adjust the two-stage trigger for pull pressure is via the hole in the guard






## ON TEST: REMINGTON EXPRESS




*The breech pivots around a bolt*



*The machined lead-in ensures a proper pellet seal*



*The innovative safety is a push-button...*



*... which can easily be reset!*

tightened to take up any wear – and I give credit to the Remington designers for the shape of their breech face. While it's angled, to avoid the skirt of the pellet being 'clipped' on closure, a breech lead-in has been machined parallel to the bore to ensure a proper fit (and, thus, a good seal between skirt and rifling). I suspect this is why the Defiant shot so well, actually.

With a very fine finish to the blued steel, I'd ordinarily sign off by saying that the new Remington Express is an absolutely superb rifle – except I've got to leave one, highly innovative feature to the end. Unusually, it's the safety catch!

Hunters will like the fact that the Express, being a springer, can be easily decocked to relieve tension off the coils. It's a feature many field shooters appreciate in a real-world environment. But Remington has gone a step further by uprating their push-button safety catch at the rear of the cylinder.

Normally, a push-button safety requires the rifle to be re-cocked once it's been disengaged. But the Express incorporates a lever which, when drawn back around 120 degrees, pulls the button back out to 'safe' again. This reset lever won't work unless the rifle's been cocked (thereby giving you the state of the action) and has to be returned 'forward' before you can once again disengage the safety. Simple – but oh-so clever, and practical to boot.

I can't ever recall wanting to wax lyrical about a safety catch (of all things), but I think it's very much a mark of the attention to detail that's been applied to the Remington Express. This really is quite some rifle for the money, and one of the best buys of 2014 for any discerning airgunner. ●