

SYN WHILE YOU'RE WINNING

Phill Price tries the very latest CO2-powered multi-shot from SMK

From where I sit, there are two fast-growing trends in the lower end of the airgun market at the moment. The first is the 'tactical' trend, which seems to mean that if you can paint it black and add some visual suggestion of a military connection, you've made it tactical. I joked with a friend recently that it's only a matter of time until we see tactical underpants when he laughed and said, "Too late. They're already on sale from some American clothing manufacturers."

The other trend is for complete packages that deliver the rifle, scope and mounts, plus a few desirable accessories such as a bipod or a silencer. Shop owners tell me that these are popular because they take away lots of uncertainty for the new buyer. The one box contains everything they need, so they can buy without unnecessary stress.

Sportsmarketing clearly sees the same trends as I do because the snappily-named 'SYN XS78 Tactical Multishot CO2 Rifle' encompasses all the aforementioned characteristics in one neat bundle. At its heart is a simple bolt-action, CO2-powered rifle, enhanced by a clamp-on, 9-shot (in .22) magazine. On top, SMK provides a basic 4 x 32 scope with a duplex reticle. This has no parallax adjustment or illumination, which helps to keep the costs down. It's held in single-bolt rings that have thumb wheel fixings rather than socket head bolts. I think this is done to add to the tactical appeal.



It's a small, light gun, best suited to youngsters.

SYNTHETIC STOCK

The SYN part of the name refers to the synthetic thumbhole stock that has more swoops, curves, lumps and bumps than I've ever seen on one stock. There are even vent slots in the fore end that you'd have on a firearm to help the barrel cool from long strings of fire. Underneath the fore end there's a section of Weaver rail bolted on to accept accessories such as the folding aluminium

bipod supplied with the kit. This has legs that extend from 8" to 10" with a rather sudden action as you loosen the locking collars.

On top of the single-shot action there's a clamp-on magazine holder that's like none I've ever see before. It's made from a flexible synthetic material and clamps around the upper action and overlaps the loading port. It holds 9-shots in the .22 calibre that I was sent. Unlike most magazine systems I've seen, it's manually indexed so you need to lift the bolt and withdraw it, turn the magazine drum and then close the bolt. This is clearly much quicker and easier than single-loading pellets, but not as slick as auto-loading systems. Perhaps the most unusual feature of this rifle is the extraordinary »



This is a dramatic-looking rifle from any angle.

The magazine system clamps around the action.



'silencer' which is truly huge. It measures 11" long and 1¾" in diameter and has long deep cut-outs all around the muzzle end. It's moulded onto the barrel so I was unable to look inside to see how it works. The part that I thought would be the expansion chamber is 4" long, but I looked back from the muzzle and could see no ports that might allow high pressure gas to enter voids to decelerate the flow.

POWER

Power is supplied by two 12-gramme CO2 capsules loaded back-to-back in the cylinder beneath the barrel. This set-up should extend the number of shots per fill greatly, although not increase the power – as the chronograph showed me.

I tested the rifle on a pleasantly warm day so the power readings I got were probably as close to maximum as we're like to see from any

Interestingly, the bolt cocks on the forward stroke.

CO2-powered gun. I chose to use the Remington Thunder Field Target Trophy pellet which weighs 14.6 grains in the tin I have. Average velocity was 420 feet per second, which calculates to just over 5.7ft.lbs. – plenty of power for tin-can bashing in your back garden.

It was also accurate enough for casual target shooting and plinking at modest ranges. I was able to get 1" groups at 20 yards with the tripod supplied.

TRIGGER PERFORMANCE

As with most guns in this price range, the trigger was a controlling factor in accurate shooting. Although it was quite light for a gun in this class, it was long and difficult to predict, making consistent release challenging. The safety lever is on the front of the trigger guard on the right of the action. It appeals to me in that it disconnects the



Is that the biggest 'silencer' you've ever seen?



A short section of Weaver rail accepts the bipod supplied.



I was impressed by how the safety disconnects the trigger.

trigger blade from the action completely, which is more secure than just blocking a lever element.

This is certainly a dramatic-looking gun and with its modest price and light weight, I can see it appealing to youngsters with a yearning to be a sniper when they grow up. They could practise all the skills of shooting prone off a bipod, through a scope, and the recoilless nature of a CO2-powered action helps shot placement without needing to consider the complications of managing a spring-powered action. As a 'tactical package' there are few to compare. ■



TECH SPEC

Manufacturer: Sportsmarketing

Web: www.sportsmk.co.uk

Tel: 01206 795333

Model: SYN XS78

Type: 12-gramme CO2

Action: Bolt-action

Length: 40"

Weight: 7.6lbs

Trigger: Two-stage

Kit includes scope, mounts, silencer, magazine and bipod

RRP £299.95