

THE THUNDER ROLLS!

The editor shoulders the remarkable Remington Thunderceptor HT

You know those sleek, classically-styled, sporters, so refined to the eye and understated in the hand? Well, you can forget all that old nonsense, because this is the Remington Thunderceptor HT – bonkers name, bonkers rifle. This gas-piston, break-barrel, adjustable-stocked rifle is just about as big, bold, brash and blatant as anything I've ever tested – and the purists are going to hate it.

That said, I'm a bit of a purist and I don't hate the Thunderceptor. In fact, the more I shoot it, the more it appeals to the kid I used to be, and I say that after just coming back from a four-hour session with this unique sporter, so I believe I'm qualified to make such claims. When I was a young 'un, I wanted a 'powerful' rifle that looked, felt and shot like it could do the business for me, and the Thunderceptor HT does all that and quite a bit more, as it happens.

FUNCTION OVER FORM

This is no compact sporter. It's a full-on, full-size outfit, an impressive 49 inches long, which weighs in at 8.1lbs with the included 3-9 x 50 zoom scope and one-piece Weaver/Picatinny mount. The visuals are dominated from both ends by the combination of 23 inches of shrouded barrel, and that match-type, ambidextrous butt

and its adjustable cheek piece. Between these two significant features there's a robust action that houses what we used to call a gas-ram, until Theoben's original patent ran out and so many companies developed their own versions and names for them.

For those who have embraced our sport within the last 20 minutes or so, a gas-ram acts in a similar way to a spring-piston, only without the spring. Instead, an inert gas, usually nitrogen, will be contained

in a sealed chamber and it's the compression of that gas that provides the 'spring' power. The characteristics of a gas-ram are unique to the system, and in my own crude terms, I'd liken the felt recoil to a 'push', rather than a 'kick', although such distinctions really don't matter in the overall scheme of things. These airguns recoil; that's what matters, and you'll need to manage that recoil through a consistent hold. More of this later.

SCOPE AND MOUNT SUPPLIED

The Thunderceptor comes with a sturdy 3-9 x 50 scope and a one-piece mount designed to mate securely with the Picatinny/Weaver adaptor, which itself clamps to the rifle's standard 11mm dovetails. This means you can take off the supplied Weaver system and go with standard mounts, should you prefer, and the resultant lowering of the scope height can be accommodated in seconds by doing the same to the rifle's cheek piece.

The importance of that cheek piece adjustment can't be overstated and more and more rifles, within the world of airguns and outside it, are being supplied with this feature as standard. It's been a long time coming, but I'm really starting to believe that the importance of gun fit and eye-scope alignment is finally beginning to be realised.

The scope has a 'mil dot style' reticle, where the dots extend through the majority of the cross hair. That's a good system, too, and I found it extremely handy during my test.

OVER THE CHRONO

In its high-power configuration, the Remington Thunderceptor HT is claimed to produce 23ft.lbs. in .22. I'll believe that when I see it, but there's no doubt that this rifle is

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Not a carbine, then.



The hefty, articulated cocking linkage should mean a lifetime of faultless service.



Cocking effort is minimal, thanks to the extra leverage.

REMINGTON THUNDERCEPTOR HT



The quality of the scope and mount is a positive surprise.



This is such a productive feature.

found in the same cabinet out-shot everything, but only by a couple of millimetres at 35 yards, and the trajectory of these 21 grain

when shooting from the bench. This really is so important, and it's yet another reason to have a rifle that fits as well as possible, because if you're straining in any way to get to grips with a rifle, that strain will produce tension and that tension always leads to inconsistency in the hold. Consistency is all when you're shooting a recoiling air rifle, and you'll only get that when you're relaxed. Mini-lecture over ... for now.

HOW IT SHOOTS

The Remington Thunderceptor HT is a 'punchy' rifle that feels constrained at sub-12 energy levels. It's easy to cock, thanks to the mechanical advantage of that

TECH SPEC

Distributor Remington Outdoor UK

Sportsmarketing 01206 795333

Model Thunderceptor HT outfit

Action Gas piston

Type Break-barrel, single-shot sporter

Stock Ambidextrous, black synthetic with adjustable cheek piece

Length 49 inches

Weight 8.1 lbs, including scope and mount supplied

Barrel length 17.5 inches, shrouded, with multi-baffle silencer system built in

Calibre .22 on test

Energy 11.6 ft.lbs.

Sights Supplied 3-9 x 50 scope and mount

RRP £249.99

designed to handle a muzzle energy that far exceeds the .22 test rifle's 11.6 ft.lbs. Using Air Arms Diabolo Field straight from the tin, I was impressed to clock a rock-steady, 11 f.p.s. variation from a baseline of 11.5 ft.lbs., to a

"That's why I nominate the Air Arms round head as my pellet of choice for this rifle"

settled 11.6, which remained as constant as makes no difference throughout the test.

I found that the Thunderceptor didn't like my stash of old Superdome pellets, or some ancient H&N FT Trophy I found when cleaning out my 'bits' cabinet. As far as pure accuracy goes, the 55 .22 Bisley Magnums I

heavyweights made rangefinding a little too critical for field use, in my opinion.

That's why I nominate the Air Arms Field round head as my pellet of choice for this rifle. I recorded sub-inch groups at 35 yards, after reacquainting myself with the proper recoiling rifle protocol of 'soft' hands and a relaxed stance, even

long, shrouded barrel. It's also quieter than I expected, thanks to the final five inches or so of that shroud, where a multi-baffle moderator has been installed.

I'd still prefer a shorter barrel, especially in this legal limit specification, but I can see why the high-power version would need the extra leverage.

The two-stage trigger is backed by an in-guard safety lever and has a 3.5lb pull, which the rifle's, commendably comprehensive, instruction booklet warns against adjusting. I left things as intended and developed a 'progressive pressure' trigger technique which served me extremely well, but if I owned a Thunderceptor I'd have the mechanism professionally fettled to lower its working pressure without reducing its safe handling.

VERDICT

At around £250, the Remington Thunderceptor HT outfit has to represent fair value for money, and if the barrel/shroud was shortened for the UK legal limit versions, I'm convinced that it would appeal to even more shooters than it does already.

It sells extremely well as it is, so maybe I'm letting the purist in me have too much influence.

I'm going to keep shooting the Thunderceptor after this test is finished, because I enjoy what it does and how it does it – and that's pretty much the point, isn't it? ■



Proper eye alignment dictates a good stance.

You get the rifle, 3-9 x 50 scope, one-piece mount and full instructions. It's a lot of gun for the money.

