

Pedigree Gun

Editor Matt is impressed by the DIANA STUTZEN MODEL 46 and its peerless pedigree

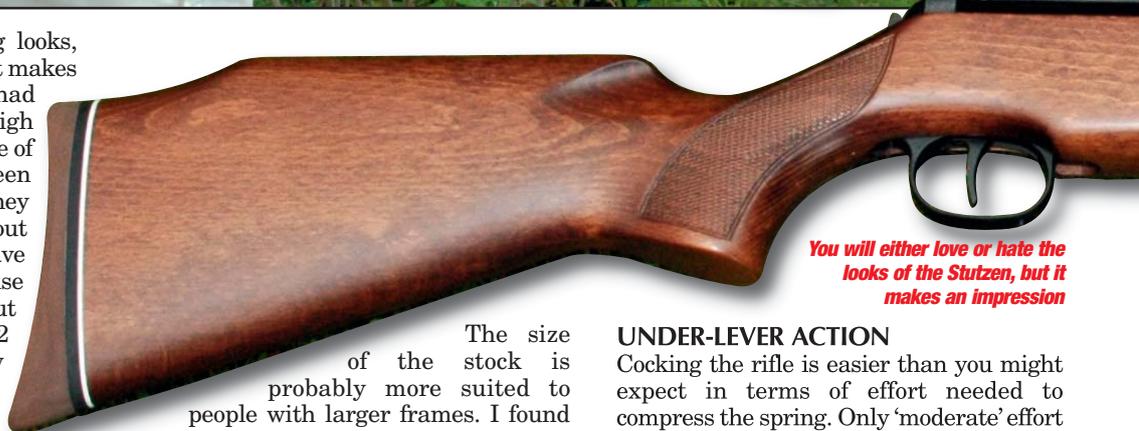


Love or hate its striking looks, the Stutzen is a rifle that makes an impression. I had monumentally high expectations of it because of its Diana pedigree. They've been making air rifles for 118 years, so they should know a thing or two about gunmaking. The reason they have stayed in the game so long is because they are good at what they do. But would the Stutzen Model 46 in .22 calibre live up to my impossibly high expectations?

The rifle may be an under-lever, like many other spring piston airguns, but what makes this rifle stand out from the crowd is its looks. Resembling a cross between a .303 Lee Enfield rifle - that your great grandfather may have carried in the trenches - and a full-bore hunting rifle, the Stutzen is certainly striking. Its styling is classic and timeless and if that isn't a reason to want one, I don't know what is.

Running the length of the rifle, the stock stops just short of the muzzle. This type of stock is known as a Mannlicher, named after the German gunmaking genius who invented it. The name 'Stutzen' comes from the German for 'support' and this name is given to this sort of rifle because the forestock appears to support the barrel.

A nice touch which gives the rifle a sporting look is the Schnabel tip and the Monte Carlo stock's raised cheek-piece. It's a beautifully sculpted piece of timber and the white spacer between the rubber butt pad and the stock is yet another stylish feature that makes model 46 stand out as a rifle of distinction.



You will either love or hate the looks of the Stutzen, but it makes an impression

The size of the stock is probably more suited to people with larger frames. I found it fitted me perfectly and, although it's heavy, the rifle is well balanced. With all that wood on the rifle, I expected it to be heavier, but weighing in at 3.63kg it isn't as heavy as you would expect. You would also expect the rifle to be heavier than a break-barrel springer because of the extra weight of the under-lever, but it isn't.

Being hidden within the stock, the underlever doesn't spoil the beautiful lines of the Stutzen. A large portion of the forestock is cut out to accommodate the cocking lever, which might explain why the Model 46 is relatively light.

UNDER-LEVER ACTION

Cocking the rifle is easier than you might expect in terms of effort needed to compress the spring. Only 'moderate' effort is needed to pull down the lever until the sear connects with the piston. The only thing that's hard about cocking the rifle is releasing the cocking lever from its

The spring-loaded ball-bearings that held the underlever in place were stiff at first, but then loosened off



retainer. The lever is held in place by two spring-loaded ball-bearings and to begin with they would not let go of the lever without a struggle. However, in time the catch loosened up and was much easier to operate.

The rifle cocked, you return the lever to its retainer and load the pellet by opening the transfer port. It's located between the piston chamber and the barrel and pops up when you press a button. The pellet is loaded directly into the barrel, not into the transfer port. There is no danger of putting the pellet into the transfer port as it's too small to accommodate a .22 pellet.

Access to the loading port is easy, but I found it difficult to get some pellets seated. After trying several brands, I found that Air Arms pellets were easiest to seat. RUAG, the distributors,

work up to about 15 metres, but beyond that you really need a telescopic sight to ensure accuracy. The reason being that a 2mm error at 10 metres translates into a much bigger error at 40 metres, which can lead to you missing the target. So, I removed the rearsight and fitted a BSA optic to the Stutzen's 11mm scope rail. The length of this rail gives plenty of adjustment for eye relief.

Having a raised cheek piece on the stock is good, especially if you have a scope mounted because it raises your head, making it easier to see through the scope.

The rearsight could be detached by removing a screw, which made fitting a scope much easier.

The rifle looked even better with the scope fitted, resembling a full-bore hunting rifle. It also performed very

Diana logo: Diana, the huntress, is shown throwing away her bow and arrow in favour of an air rifle – wise choice Di!



The Stutzen was remarkably easy to cock



The pop-up breech loading mechanism made the air rifle extremely safe and not having a break-barrel ensured the rifle remained accurate



say RWS Superdomes are the best pellet to use as they are slightly lighter than the Air Arms pellets, but I didn't have any at hand when I was testing the rifle. The transfer port just pushes shut and the rifle is ready to shoot.

What I like about this method of loading the rifle is that it's ultra safe. There's no chance of fingers becoming trapped in the remote chance that the cocking mechanism failed.

Another feature I like – and there are many – is the automatic safety catch, which is applied every time the rifle is cocked. You can release the safety or re-apply it via a button at the end of the compression cylinder.

OPEN SIGHTS

So the rifle was ready to shoot, and because the Stutzen comes with open sights, so I could try it straight from the box. The ramped foresight blade seemed a lot thicker than I am used to and I was doubtful how accurate the Stutzen was going to be with open sights, but after a few shots, my fears proved to be unfounded. At 10 and 20 metres the rifle was exceptionally accurate.

What aided this superb accuracy was the fully-adjustable rearsight. The elevation wheel was numbered and the windage adjustment had notches on, so the sights were easy to adjust.

Open sights are fine for short range

well, giving me tight groupings at 30m.

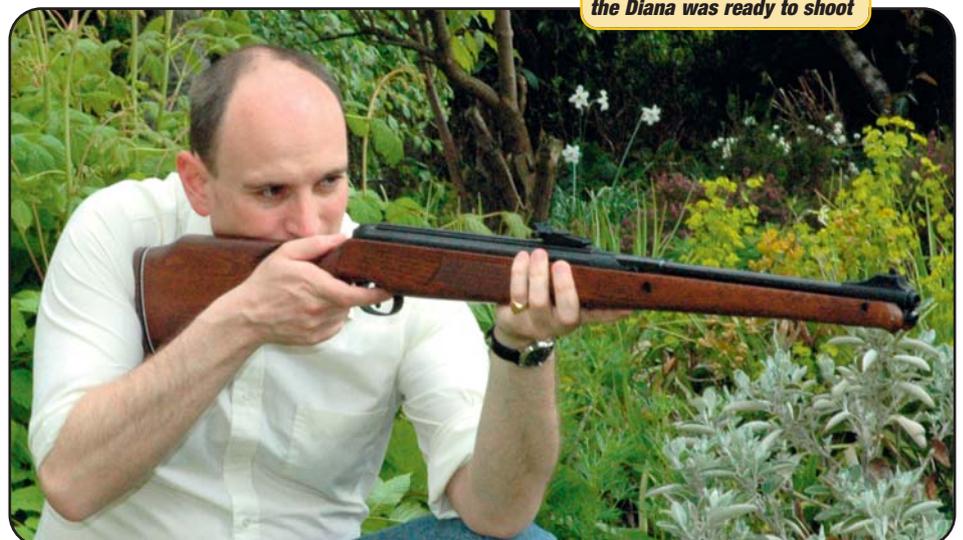
But what makes the Stutzen so accurate? Well, there's the high grade rifled barrel, but that accuracy also has something to do with the trigger. Its two stage adjustable trigger was crisp, there was no 'creep' or over-travel and it came to my forefinger easily. But there is one element of the rifle that I thought would affect the accuracy and that is the recoil.

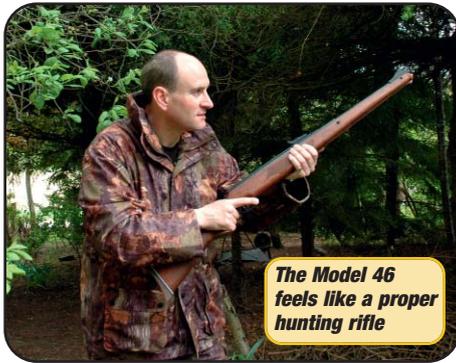
KICKING RIFLE

One of the first things you notice about the Stutzen is the 'kick'. I've said it looks like a



With the breech firmly closed, the Diana was ready to shoot





The Model 46 feels like a proper hunting rifle

Lee Enfield .303 and it kicks like one when fired. You have to 'shoot round' this recoil and I found that, as with any springer, if you keep your hold light, then the kick doesn't affect your aim too much. I actually liked the recoil; it made me feel I was shooting an extremely powerful rifle.

This recoil is a result of the large loading port. Because the port is so large to allow good access to the breech, the transfer of the air isn't as efficient as it might be. Consequently air pressure is lost and to make up for this, the Stutzen has to have a beefy spring and piston and the 'substantial' recoil generated by these large components is what gives the Diana its hefty 'kick'.

But apart from kicking like a mule, the Diana was incredibly refined. When cocking it there was no graunchiness, only a slight wheeze you get on most spring piston rifles when the spring is being compressed in the cylinder. And there were other touches that gave the impression this Diana Stutzen was worthy of the illustrious

name it bears. The picture of Diana the huntress near the breech re-assured you that Diana was proud to declare this rifle was one of theirs.

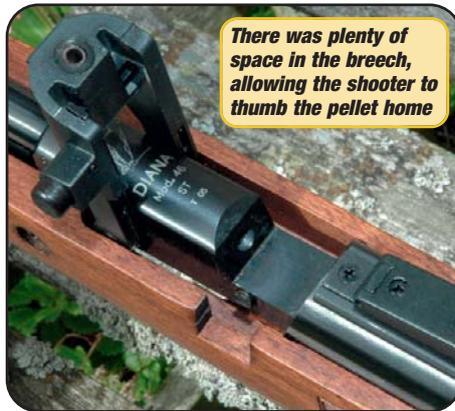
There is no denying this rifle stands out. Its unique stock makes it a bit special. You can imagine your mates being impressed as you pull the Stutzen from your gun slip. There is something about it that seems timeless, which makes this rifle a classic.

But it's not only the Stutzen's Mannlicher stock that makes it such a notable rifle. It's accurate, powerful and is equally at home plinking targets in your back garden, or hunting in the field. So it's a good general purpose hunting rifle. The only quarry the Stutzen might not be good for is rats. The reason being that the Stutzen is a long rifle and would be unwieldy in somewhere like a farm building. That said, the Model 46 is solidly built, so it

could stand being handled around a farmyard.

Even though a large slot has been cut out of the stock to make room for the cocking handle, the actual amount of tinker that removed from the stock is comparatively small. This shows how little 'play' Diana expect from their cocking lever and how confident the gunmakers are that their components will not wear adversely. If you look at the spring-loaded ball-bearings, you will see there are two each side of the lever to keep it in place. On many underlever rifles there is one ball-bearing to keep the cocking in place. Again this is evidence of the quality of workmanship.

So, did the Stutzen live up to my sky-high expectations? I can say it definitely did. It may be a little costly, but then this is a rifle of distinction and I would say the quality remains long after the price is forgotten. ☺



There was plenty of space in the breech, allowing the shooter to thumb the pellet home

DIANA STUTZEN MODEL 46 FACTS

DISTRIBUTOR: RUAG
CONTACT: 01579 362319
ENQUIRIES@ RUAG.CO.UK
ACTION: UNDERLEVER SPRING PISTON
CALIBRE: .177 AND .22
STOCK: BEECH
SIGHTS: OPEN SIGHTS ADJUSTABLE AT REAR FOR WINDAGE AND ELEVATION WITH 11MM SCOPE DOVETAIL RAIL
O/A LENGTH: 103.5CMS
BARREL LENGTH: 35.6CMS
WEIGHT: 3.63KG
POWER: 11+FT.IBS.
COCKING EFFORT: MEDIUM
PRICE: £420



This is a well balanced and good looking rifle that anyone would be proud to own