

The Diana Mauser K98
– a working replica.



MAKE MINE A MAUSER!

John Milewski reviews Diana's latest look back at a military classic

Military-style airguns have been popular with many collectors and shooters for decades. Just look at the selection of Co2-powered pistols there are to choose from. Air rifles, such as the Jackals from the 1970s, also have their fans and we now have another such rifle in the form of the Diana Model K98.

This newly-made, spring-powered air rifle is based on the legendary Mauser K98K, the German service rifle used during WW2. It is not an exact replica, but it's certainly close enough to arouse a lot of interest among collectors.

Indeed, I am indebted to Nick Stanning for allowing me to test his new acquisition.

AUTHENTIC

The most striking feature of the K98 is the almost full-length stock and military-style, wooden upper handguard. Diana have even replicated the bolt disassembly disc fitted to the butt, which is not required on an air rifle, but

demonstrates the effort that Diana have made. A side-mounted sling can be fixed in a similar manner to the original, although the sling mountings are modern copies rather than interchangeable originals.

Diana have used the action from their Model 460 and housed

it within a Mauser-style stock for this 'working replica'. The barrel is within a shroud and what would be a cleaning rod under the muzzle is the front of the rifle's cocking lever. It is naturally a lot wider than a cleaning rod, but doesn't look too much out of

when the action has been cocked. There is a further release catch situated by the sliding breech, which must be released when you return the smoothly moving cocking lever after cocking. A nice touch is the etched Mauser trademark on top of the air

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place. There is no dummy bolt handle, which would have added to overall authenticity, as would have a wing safety catch - after all, Diana's last attempt at replicating the Mauser had such a catch during the 1930s! The actual catch is located at the end of the air cylinder and sets automatically

cylinder, and the rifle comes equipped with quality open sights, including a hooded foresight.

HANDLING

When I picked up the rifle, my first impression was of a solidly-made, typically German product. At 9½lbs, it is a pound heavier than



This is the first Mauser-style air rifle that Diana have made since 1940.



Cocking effort was relatively easy.

the original K98 and a fraction of an inch longer at 44 inches. The reach-to-pull length, measured from the trigger blade to the centre of the butt pad is 13 1/8 inches, which is miniscule to someone of my frame, although authentic because the originals were equally short. The varnished stock finish can be slippery, and care must be taken to avoid dropping the rifle.

The tuning kit enabled consistent velocities around the 11 ft. lbs. mark to be achieved with RWS Hobbies, and after shooting a couple of cards indoors to zero the sights, it soon became apparent that the rifle is too big and powerful for the six-yard indoor range. I therefore set up a bell target with a 40mm kill at 20 yards and was able to hit it consistently from the standing

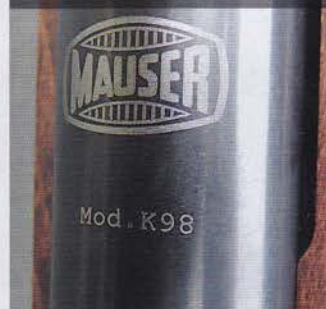
position. The pointed barleycorn foresight was easy to line up against a target, but was a little narrow within the wide 'U' notch of the rear sight. The rear sight is situated far enough away from the aiming eye to come into focus easily and it was pleasing to see traditional rather than fibre-optic sights on the K98.

I could not resist placing a tin can at 55 yards and firing at that from the standing position, and I achieved plenty of hits. The trajectory with H&N Trophies was flat enough to aim just under the top of the can in order to connect. A scope would undoubtedly improve accuracy, but it would also increase the all-up weight further still. This rifle is best shot over its excellent open sights and the only scope I would consider would be one that looked period

correct on a WW2 era rifle.

If I had one gripe, it would be the overall weight. I am no seven-stone weakling, but I became noticeably fatigued after just a short spell with the rifle. It is therefore best shot in small

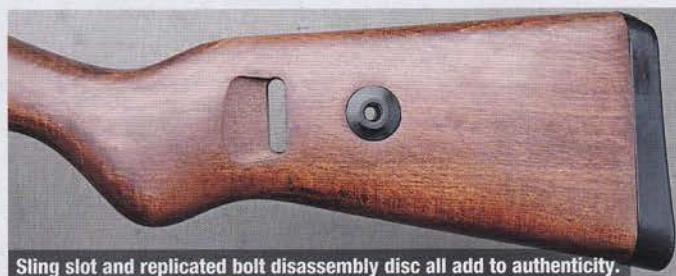
Cylinder markings add an air of authenticity.



strings, or you could always support yourself rather than free-stand. At least that solidity indicates that the rifle is made of quality steel and it should outlive its original owner by some margin.

The Diana K98 is not cheap at around £370, but it is a quality arm that will appeal to fans of classic military rifles. Unlike a deactivated or replica, the Diana is capable of long-range accuracy and I would like to see more similar rifles on the market. How about a Lee Enfield based on an existing design, BSA?

Thanks again to Nick Stanning for the loan of the test rifle. ■



Sling slot and replicated bolt disassembly disc all add to authenticity.



The cocking lever was very smooth to operate.



Overall presentation was very good, and superior to a plain card box.