



PERFORMANCE AIRGUNS SINCE 1890

– the one and only, for 125 years

DIANA airguns are legendary. Since the founders Jakob Mayer and Josef Grammelspacher started 125 years ago in Germany, the company has inspired generations of shooters with its ingenious products.

By converting Jakob and Josef's ideas into high-quality products without compromise, DIANA built up an excellent reputation and became synonymous with premium airguns.

The beginnings were humble. Certainly, Jakob and Josef could not have imagined what they were about to start when, back in 1890, they founded their company Mayer & Grammelspacher in Rastatt.

Planning to mass-produce components for the iron and metal industry, toolmaker Jakob

soon unveiled his first air pistol, in 1892.

It took nine more years, however, before he received the patent for a spring-loaded ball mechanism, which serves as a detent lock on barrel-locking guns. This turned out to be a bestseller, and since then this mechanism has not only appeared in millions of airguns but is still in common use.

Although Jakob and Josef were engineers, the latter seemed to have worked more on the financial side of the business while Jakob was responsible for the product

development and registered many patents over the years.

What's in a name?

At first the products were labelled with the trademark MGR for Mayer Grammelspacher Rastatt but that would soon change.

No records survived to tell when Josef left the company but it must have been around 1901. Four years later Jakob had an ingenious idea. He changed the trademark from MGR to the iconic DIANA, referring to the hunting goddess of the same name.

"We can only speculate why Jakob chose that famous image of Diana holding her air rifle aloft while standing on her discarded bow and arrow," said DIANA CEO Martin Zedler.

As it turned out, Jakob could not have done better because generations of hunters were to start their passion with a DIANA air rifle in their hands.

Ups and downs

But it was by no means a smooth path for DIANA, with several setbacks that were usually beyond its control. Production had to be

**DIANA**[®]

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suspended because of World War I, just when the company was flourishing with the production of several models of airguns and toy guns.

The latter were marketed under the trademark Eureka and included toy pistols or rifles that had cork or vacuum cups as ammunition.

Change for the better came in the 1920s. With the increasing popularity of airguns as a newly found leisure-time activity instead of the more military rifle shooting in the earlier years, customers not only changed but also became more numerous.

In fact, DIANA products became so well known that it already had an export quota of approximately 50 per cent at that time. In addition, the first air rifles for adults were developed to cater for all tastes and wallets – from

the DIANA model 25 costing 25 marks up to the high-end model LG 581 for 90 marks.

DIANA also expanded into other areas, such as pellets.

“A tin of the newly invented Diabolo pellets cost 3.40 marks at that time,” said Martin, “and they surely increased the accuracy in connection with rifled barrels.”

He regrets that there is no information left about the velocity of the airguns of that time. It is not mentioned in the catalogues and all the production documents were lost in the war.

With World War II on the horizon, the economic prospects of DIANA rapidly deteriorated again. Export in 28 countries was quickly prohibited due to political reasons.

The final straw came when civilian production was completely stopped in 1940. Instead DIANA

had to produce parts for Mauser in Oberndorf.

It comes as no surprise then, that after the end of World War II, DIANA was completely dismantled. All the production machines, tools, construction plans, even spare parts, and of course, the brand DIANA were sold to the London-based Millard Bros.

The British company soon began producing the first Scottish DIANAs in a newly built factory near Glasgow. Interestingly, apart from being produced in Scotland, everything else remained German, even the names of the different DIANA models.

New beginnings

Because there was nothing left, the Mayer family had to start from scratch again – which they did as soon as the Allied Control

Council gave them the permission to do so.

With the name gone, the Mayer family stubbornly started selling air rifles with the name “Original”. It was explicitly forbidden to use the trademark DIANA in the Commonwealth. So the airguns were sold using names such Gecado, Condor or Firebird. Indeed Gecado in particular is, even today, well known in South Africa.

Soon the business was thriving again because the company stayed true to its philosophy to provide an excellent service and real innovations. Kurt Giss, the chief designer, played an important part in the revival after the war.

He developed a double-piston system at the end of the 1950s. The forward piston compresses the air for pellet propulsion while the second piston moved



backward, thereby eliminating the recoil.

The so-called Giss system resulted in the first recoilless match guns: the LP6 air pistol in 1960 and the LG60 air rifle in 1963. Indeed, both principles are still in evidence today.

Being true to its pledge to provide an outstanding service DIANA can, for example, still repair airguns that have been produced more than 50 years ago. In addition to that tradition of German engineering producing real innovations is still upheld.

Moving forward

It was only in 1983 when Millard Bros decided to sell its air rifle business that the family was able to buy the trademark DIANA again.

By then the restrictive German gun laws introduced at the beginning of the 1970s made business difficult again. However, since that time, DIANA has started to reinvent itself by introducing new models and optimising its productions processes.

In 1987 it developed its most powerful long-range airgun with fixed barrel and side-cocking system. Just one year later Silvia Sperber won the Olympic Gold Medal in Seoul by using a DIANA small-bore rifle and then, in 1992, the Model 54 – a

recoilless long-range air rifle with patented recoil system – was introduced, followed by the Model 350 Magnum eight years later, which is still one of the most powerful air rifles available.

Not content with the existing range of products, DIANA also ventured into the market of compressed air rifles in 2011. It was nothing less than entering a new era when DIANA presented the new PCP model 1000.

With its two-piece hunting stock, a 14-shot magazine as well as a single shot adaptor, you are totally equipped for successful hunting or field-target shooting. The 300 bar, steel cylinder also offers more than enough energy for longer periods of shooting.

Another milestone was the development of the 340 N-TEC. The DIANA engineers devised, together with a German specialist company, a gas spring instead of the traditional spiral steel spring.

The N-TEC piston provides less vibration, leading almost automatically to a greater accuracy. The 340 N-TEC offers a 10 per cent higher level of energy as well as a smoother cocking action.

Taking that idea further resulted in the 350 N-TEC Magnum. By combining the new, enhanced gas spring of the 340 N-TEC with the well-proven longer cylinder of the model 350 Magnum, DIANA engineers

successfully increased the performance of their bestselling air rifle, making it not only the most powerful model made by DIANA but also one of the most powerful air rifles in the world.

“It is not only about more power but also about greater accuracy, which could easily make the 350 N-TEC Magnum your favourite air rifle,” Martin added.

One and only

Even 125 years after its humble beginnings, DIANA is still an icon in the airgun market and has every reason to celebrate this special anniversary; hence an absolutely outstanding masterpiece of art was created: The One & Only.

It is a dream come true: Master engraver Josefine Gröbel successfully combined classical and modern elements of engraving into a perfect piece of art.

Diana is depicted on a precious inset plate of solid gold. Daring leaf arabesques and English swirls surround this mythical, graceful figure and create a beautiful and harmonious composition. Fine engraving on the sights and the anniversary logo “125 Years DIANA 1890 – 2015”, which is also worked from solid gold, make The One & Only true to its name.

The stock is also purely handcrafted from first-class Caucasian Walnut and has been given an outstanding appearance

by a premium hand-rubbed oil finish. It adds further to the unique looks of ‘The One & Only.’

This unique piece will now be auctioned off for a good cause.

Martin continued: “We decided to donate the proceeds to the Selous Elephant Emergency Programme (SEEP). The money will be used to buy the necessary equipment for the gamekeepers in the Selous Game Reserve, in Tanzania, to successfully fight the poachers.”

“The Selous has been especially hard hit by poaching and the current emergency programme, organised by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), helped in the last year to stabilise the elephant population.”

More information about the auction can be found on the DIANA website www.diana-airguns.de.

The success story of DIANA will continue, no doubt. Since last October DIANA has teamed up with German Sport Guns (GSG) to further expand the product range and ensure that the company’s philosophy of innovation is continued in the future. **GTW**

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