



Slimline Tonic

Mark Camoccio finally gets to grips with an often overlooked Weihrauch HW57

As a manufacturer, there's no doubt that it can become a problem, just having too many models from which to choose; and if customers are confused about where a product fits in, and its uses, then it can be fatal. Weihrauch realised this at some point, and with several big hitters joining their stable, bland old-stagers such as their HW50 were soon

ABOVE: Fine balance and pedigree

overshadowed. Confusion over the HW85 eventually saw that model also quietly dropped, with the result that the current product line-up now looks far more focused and purposeful.

AFFINITY

I've always had an affinity with this top German brand, ever since using tuned and rebuilt versions of

their legendary HW77 in the early days of field target, and they rarely fail to impress. Yet one model has somehow managed to slip under the radar – the HW57.

SLIMLINE APPROACH

OK, part of the problem perhaps is the slightly vague profile. The cheek piece is fairly low and undefined,



RIGHT: OK, the cheek piece is rather vague



BELOW LEFT: Push button safety - it must be a Weihrauch

and the fore end is conventional, but get past that rather conservative styling, and this model has plenty to shout about. Firstly, at 7lbs in weight, the '57 is a slimline sporter that can be carried all day. Fixed barrel accuracy is always a selling point, but another key feature here is the rising breech block.

in the breech, which is machined metal rather than plastic, adding robustness and an air of quality invariably missing from its rivals.

SPECIFICATION

As for other features included there are; open sights, a quality, two-stage trigger, automatic safety catch,

BELOW RIGHT: The Rekord trigger - say no more

"what makes the HW57 unique is the small rising block in the breech, which is machined metal"

Over the years, I've shot and tested a variety of airguns, and this style of breech has featured before. However, what makes the HW57 unique is the small rising block

scope rails, and that chequered beech sporter stock.

So, we've established that the styling of the woodwork is less than exciting, but the quality of

BOTTOM RIGHT: Note the slimmed off fore end





ABOVE LEFT: Quality open sights are all part of the specification



ABOVE RIGHT: Neat laser-cut detailing on the stock

manufacture is extremely high. Admittedly, modern shallow chequering doesn't match the Weihrauchs of old, but times move on, and manufacturing processes have to adapt. As for finish overall, chemically blued and polished metalwork, and excellent wood-to-metal fit, is all that we have come to expect from this brand.

The open sights, fitted as standard, are nicely made, and the fully adjustable rear sight is particularly so. That said, a sporting rifle of this quality demands the fitting of glassware at some point, and here, whilst the rear sight is easily removed and unscrewed from the rails, the fore sight remains an integral part of the front assembly. Nay bother!

FIT AND FEEL

Shouldering the '57 feels good, and

BELOW LEFT: A rising breech block is incorporated

BELOW RIGHT: Plenty of grip where it matters

whilst the stock is an unchallenging compromise, it does mean that it's user-friendly, adaptable to a cross-section of users, from novice to expert alike. I love the small flat at the rear of the stock for the thumb-up hand grip, too.

To cock the mechanism, pull back the knurled, spring-loaded catch

about avoiding catching fingers in the breech. No such problem here, and the easiest routine is to close up the lever first, then load a pellet, and press the breech block down and closed. Weihrauch have designed the mechanism so that the block will not close until the lever is returned, in any case.

"be aware that the action will still fire if the breech block isn't properly closed. Be thorough each and every time"

at the end of the under-lever to release it. Pull the lever all the way down and back until the trigger and piston engage and set. This causes the small breech block to rise, allowing a pellet to be inserted into the exposed aperture. At this point, on an HW77/97 with an exposed breech, we would be concerned

Cocking effort is impressively low, but be aware that the action will still fire if the breech block isn't properly closed. Be thorough each and every time and you won't have a problem. I tested it intentionally, but it proves the point. The breech is chamfered, so some pellets are a fairly slack fit. It pays to keep the rifle tilting slightly





forward, to prevent pellets dropping out prematurely. One final small negative is that the fingers are a bit near the muzzle for comfort when cocking the action and connecting back the lever, so that's something else of which to be aware.

HARD HITTING

On test, my '57 was fairly noisy, with plenty of spring twang. However, recoil was mild, so as with any Weihrauchs, it has to be worth correctly lubricating and tuning the action to get the best from performance. Likewise, the quality Rekord trigger – take the time to adjust and set carefully.

As it stands, my testing revealed a willing accomplice to good shooting. Punchy, full-power energy over the chronograph is always encouraging for a hunting model, and with superb consistency using a variety of

ABOVE LEFT: That stylish rubber pad sets off the butt

ABOVE CENTRE: The spring-loaded lever catch is all very neat ...

ABOVE RIGHT: ... and very easy to operate

BELOW: This shows the arc of the cocking stroke

pellets, I was rapidly warming to the charms of the '57.

Accuracy-wise, three-quarter-inch groups centre-to-centre over 25 yards with Air Arms Diabolo Field, was a fair start, yet Weihrauch's own FT Exact Jumbo pellets slashed groups to sub-half inch. As always, do your homework, and you might be surprised, and after extensive trials here, it became clear that Webley Mosquitos were the perfect partner, with groups just over a quarter of an inch, again at 25 yards. Quite superb!

LEAN, MEAN ...

At some 21lbs lighter than the fixed barrel HW77/97 models, the HW57 is indeed a compact little power pack. All the usual Weihrauch build quality is here, and a quick check of the performance figures tells you all you need to know. A highly

capable hunting sporter/general purpose model, if ever I saw one. Just how did I overlook it for so long, I wonder? ■

SPECIFICATION

Model: HW57

Manufacturer: Weihrauch, Germany

Type: Under-lever, spring-piston powered

Calibre: .22 test/.177 available

Weight: 7lbs

Length: 40.25"

Barrel: 14.25", Weihrauch's own

Stock: Beech sporter

Trigger: 2-stage adjustable Rekord unit

Velocity/Energy: Over 10 shots using:

Weihrauch FT Exact Jumbo pellets / Webley Mosquito

High: 576 fps High: 610fps

Low: 567 Low: 604

Ave: 573 Ave: 608

Spread: 9 fps Spread: 6 fps

Energy: 11.6 ft.lbs.

Energy: 11.8 ft.lbs.

Contact: Hull Cartridge Co.

www.hullcartridge.co.uk

RRP: £318 approx

