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The Weihrauch HW45 Silver Star is a whole handful of shooting potential.

TWINKLE TWINKLE - NOT SO - LITTLE STAR

The Weihrauch HW45 is 36 years old! Pete Evans gets acquainted with its Silver Star version

The HW45 is yet another paragon of collaborative working, the product of that long relationship between Weihrauch and Dr Robert Beeman. They say the path of true love never runs smooth, and neither did the development of the HW45, but through

perseverance, everything came together to give us a pistol that has become a worldwide bestseller. Before taking a look at the latest model, join me on a history lesson. Get out the mullet, ripped jeans, and neon colours – it's back to 1985!

HAT TRICK

Bolstered by the success of the HW80 and 77, it was time for Weihrauch to make it a hat-trick by creating a pistol. Not any old pistol, mind you, a big magnum power pistol that could challenge the mighty BSA Scorpion and the



With practice comes success - you can sense the achievement.

and the 'HW45' in Europe.

Initial prototypes from the Weihrauch factory were not met with favour from Beeman because the top slide was thought to be too deep. It transpired that the original design was intended to be more along the lines of the ubiquitous Colt 45 semi-automatic pistol, which by a strange quirk of fate was replaced by the Beretta in 1985 as the standard sidearm for the US Army.

There is nothing like a 3D representation, and bearing in mind this was the 1980s, Beeman made a plaster of Paris model of the intended design, to demonstrate to the factory exactly what was on his mind. Receiving the plaster cast, and noticing the void left within the model, the factory assumed that the intention was to make a single-stroke pneumatic, which of course was prophetic, for what was to come in the HW75 some years later.

The HW45 available today is very similar to the original models. There have been a few special

editions, but as with the majority of Weihrauch guns, the design essentials are established on introduction and rarely stray far from there.

BIG STAR

The 'Star', like most of the Weihrauch range is a big gun, weighing in at 1.2kg, with an overall length of 28cm – it's actually bigger than the Colt 45 from whence the inspiration was drawn. In this case, big size equates to big quality, with the whole of the pistol beautifully finished. It's not a cheap acquisition, but top quality for which most of us don't mind paying.

Sticking with the stats the pistol is available in .22, .177, and also special order in .20 for those who crave some individuality. Can't make your mind up? Those clever German boys have it covered, barrel changes are very easy to affect, and as there is no breech block they are pretty reasonable as well.

One of the defining features of these 'top of the

more gentle Webley Tempest. Once more, it was time for Dr Beeman to get his pencils out and start drawing up some designs for what was to be called the 'Beeman P1' in the US,

Release the over-lever here, but also can be used to prime the trigger for dry-firing.



The double-sided safety catch is a great feature.

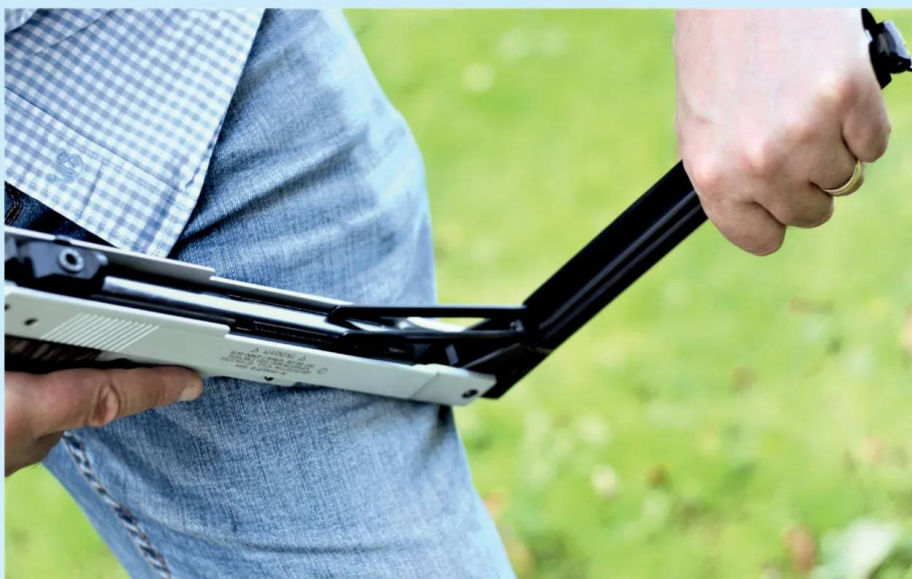
tree' models is the finish. Here, you see the Silver Star which has the silver coloured action, the Blackline has the black action, and the Bronze Star, yes, you've guessed it, the bronze action. All offer similar performance, but I'm sure people will have their individual colour preferences.

GET A GRIP

The second defining feature of this model is the grip, and what a grip it is! My best description is semi-anatomical, which by some clever trickery is ambidextrous. Formed from a grey laminate, it has all the flowing curves of an Italian sports car, and the comfort of your favourite armchair. It really is a triumph in design and engineering. Coloured laminates are currently in vogue, although I'm not sure they ever went away, anything in grey laminate is my personal favourite, whichever gun they adorn. Although it's all swirls and curves, the lower half features some stippling, for the lower three fingers and a smooth polished surface for the thumb and trigger finger, the top edge fitting seamlessly against the action. Secured by two hex head screws through the flat base of the grip, so there are no screws on show to spoil the overall effect.

TASTY TRIGGER

Weihrauch has built an enviable reputation on their benchmark Rekord trigger, and whilst this pistol doesn't a Rekord unit, it's counterpart as used here is excellent. Offering full adjustment with two grub screws through the trigger blade,



I prefer the 'over-the-hip' cocking technique.



Double cocking linkage and robust build quality throughout. It's a proper HW, no doubt about it.

there is also a third adjustment screw hidden inside the grip, for those who like tuning the triggers to the nth degree. As for me, I've left the adjustment as per factory settings, which I find more than adequate for my use. The blade itself is wide and ribbed, which only aids the overall feel of this impressive unit.

Matched to that trigger is a manual safety catch, which is easily flipped by a thumb and keeping with the ambidextrous theme, it's accessible from both sides of the grip. To enhance safety further there is a bear-trap

For short-range shooting, just go with the low-power mode.



device fitted so the gun can't be de-cocked.

There is one further interesting feature of this trigger, and that is the ability to dry-fire it, so you can practise trigger release without actually loading the gun – clever one, that. To use, pull the dummy hammer at the rear of the action – this will activate the trigger – now squeeze that trigger to your hearts content.

OVER-LEVER

Anyone familiar with the classic Webley pistols will be at home with the 'Star because they both have an over-lever-style cocking action. That's about as far as the similarities extend because the Weihrauch's barrel is fully enclosed inside the top slide, meaning that you can get a really good grip to complete the cocking stroke. Loading the pellet is direct to barrel, with plenty of room to insert the pellet before cocking, so you don't need to fuss about with pellets and a cocked action.

Cocking the gun also holds a couple of surprises, in that the gun has two power settings, a feature that used to be available only on the .177, but is now included across the board. Bring the slide back to 90 degrees and the piston engages on the first and lower power setting, continue to take the slide through its full arc and you are rewarded with full power – simple and works particularly well. Such flexibility could come into its own when using indoors over the winter months for those all-important practice sessions.

The pistols design is such that the piston moves toward the person on firing, which gives a realistic recoil characteristic as compared to a powder-burning handgun. I'm sure this has not gone unnoticed by our American friends, who I know prized the old Webleys for their similar manners.

SIGHTING OPTIONS

As standard, there are fibre-optic sights included. These offer a full range of adjustment

Tru-glo sights bring hi-viz efficiency as standard.



There's a dovetail rail for an optical or red-dot sight.

in all planes, but if you want something more exotic, such as a red dot or scope, the top slide has a generous length of rail inbuilt.

Being the simple man that I am, I've kept

Using my well established technique of over-thigh cocking – I should patent that – I was able to cock the pistol to high power without even a hint of sweat, which makes it accessible

"Such flexibility could come into its own when using indoors over the winter months"

mine with the open sights, which have proved themselves against that target favoured by back garden plinkers the world over – the tin can.

IN USE

We've covered the basic outline of this famous pistol, but how do things translate out on the garden range? Using JSB RS pellets in .177, weighing an average of 7.3 grains, I recorded an average of 2.9 ft.lbs, and 4.5 ft.lbs on low and high power respectively.

to youngsters on their first shooting steps. On firing, its very obvious that this is a spring pistol, although recoil is very manageable, with some mechanical noise evident.

Shooting a pistol is a very different experience to shooting a rifle, and really demands a lot of the user – a challenge to be sure, but ultimately worth it. I started by keeping the range relatively short, gaining confidence, until I was on the aforementioned tins at 25m. This style of shooting is where the pistol excels, offering superb fun for family and friends, and with the lower power it can be used with a safe back in small confines. Despite its high power, for a pistol, it will never be suitable for shooting vermin, and that goes for any hand-held pistol, this is a gun for a certain use, and that use is shooting inanimate targets.

Now the bit you're waiting for, is he going to strip it? After all, it is a new gun.

Well, life would be boring if I don't get my hex keys and punches out, so true to form, come back next month and we'll take a look what's happening inside the 'Star. ■

CONTACTS

Pistol as reviewed Weihrauch HW45 Silverline. Price £359.

Importers Hull Cartridge Ltd.
www.weihrauch.co.uk