

New Season New Rifle

Gary Chillingworth reveals a potential runner for the HFT springer rifle category - the Weihrauch HW97KT





Hello Everyone!

I must admit, this is a very strange article for me to write. Those of you who know me, or who have been unfortunate enough to read my poorly written drivel on a monthly basis, will know that I am an Air Arms man through and through. I'm a member of the AA team, and captain of their Springer team, so shooting and testing an HW97 from Weihrauch is like Paddington Bear eating jam sandwiches, or the Tetley Gaffer drinking a nice cup of coffee.

The thing is, though – and please don't tell Claire West the MD of Air Arms that I said this – the HW97 is an amazing rifle, and to be honest, it's every bit as good as a TX200HC ... but I never said that. OK?



ABOVE RIGHT: Well-balanced and easy to shoot in the standing position

The HW97 is the flagship of the Weihrauch springer range and it comes in a variety of flavours; obviously, you can get them in .177 and .22, and I have seen them in .20 and .25, and they come in both sub-12 ft.lbs. and FAC configurations. On top of this, you have the standard sporter stock and the thumbhole, and the actions come in blued metal or stainless. There is also a lovely laminate version that is well worth a look. So, basically, no matter what type of spring rifle you like, there is a '97 that will float your proverbial boat.

mad because a springer with a hair trigger is never a good thing!

When you cock the rifle for the first time, you realise that you need a fair bit of force to do so, and this is because of the fairly short under-lever, but it's not too bad, and most people should be able to cock the rifle with ease. Also, don't forget to push the button at the end of the lever to release it. I'm not telling you the details of how I know this is important, but it was a bit embarrassing.

NO ANTI-BEAR TRAP

The one thing that I found odd is the lack of an anti-bear trap on the outside of the rifle. Now, for those of you who don't know what a bear trap is, when you cock the gun, you pull back the piston from the loading port, which gives you access to the breech to enable

HEAVY BUT BALANCED

When you hold the HW97, you can feel that it is well built and heavy, but well balanced. I'm not sure if I would want to hump it around for miles on end, up hill and down dale, but I know of a few hunters who love the HW97. The trigger is very

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familiar because it is the same as on my HW98 – yes, I do actually own an HW springer, just don't tell Claire – and the Rekord trigger is one of the best. It has three levels of adjustability; you can adjust the first stage by adjusting a small flap; the weight of the trigger by the main screw; and then the break, by increasing or reducing the amount that the sears interact with each other, but trust me, don't go too

you to load a pellet into the barrel. The problem is, if you let go of the cocking lever or accidentally touch the trigger, the piston could fly forward and if your finger is in the loading port, goodbye fingers!

An anti-bear trap is a system that locks the piston back, and until it's pushed in, there is no way that the piston can fly forward. The '97 does not have an external system, although it does have an internal



LEFT: Another hero shot of the HW97







ABOVE LEFT: The simple safety catch gives a positive click and works well with the internal bear trap



LEFT: I love a gold trigger

RIGHT: You can load from either side



one, and apparently, it's not possible for the piston to slam forward if the cocking lever is released, or trigger pulled when the piston is in the rear position – even if the safety has been disengaged. However, as with all guns, when loading, hold the cocking lever until it is pushed forward and locked into place.

One thing I do love about this gun is the fact that it's fully ambidextrous and the loading port is accessible for both left- and right-handers.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The '97 in the thumbhole stock is a lovely-looking rifle

BELOW LEFT: Shooting up the peg is a skill and the linear recoil makes it easy

BELOW RIGHT: In the kneeling position, the fast shot cycle is certainly a boon

BOTTOM RIGHT: Shooting from the spider hand is not easy, but the fast HW97 makes it possible

Add to this the amazing stock, high quality engineering and blueing that is second to none, and you have a rifle that can win National, World and local events with ease.

Luckily, my good friend Alex Larkin who loaned me the HW97 gave it to me without a scope, and just as I was trying to decide what I was going to put on it, there was a knock at the door and a package from Optisan arrived. In it was the brand new CP 4-16 x 40 and that is

a perfect scope for this rifle. If you want to see a review on the CP, it's in my other article this month.

OFF TO THE RANGE

OK, so let's get this rifle on the range and see how it goes. Putting the scope on is nice and easy; I'm using a set of BKL medium mounts, and within just a few shots we are getting a good zero at 25 yards and all the pellets are hitting a nice tight group. In the past, I have shot an





HW77 and this seems very similar – from what I have been told, the HW97 and '77 are essentially the same rifle, but the HW77 comes with iron sights and a slightly lighter stock. The main thing that I am getting from the '97 is the speed of the shot cycle. Alex had told me that the internals were standard, apart from a TBT spring guide, and that the trigger had been adjusted and polished.

Now, as I am shooting this rifle, it's taking me a minute to get used to it, not because there is anything wrong with it, more the fact that I have spent the last five years shooting

ABOVE LEFT: Bill Jones receives his prize of an HW97 laminate from Chris Moore

ABOVE RIGHT: Alex Larkin, who very kindly loaned me the HW97

BELOW: Darren Lynn and his Synthetic HW97

an Air Arms TX200HC, with an aftermarket stock that I could rest on the ground and not worry about hold sensitivity because it weighs the same amount as a small van!

quite firmly and get good groups. After 10 to 15 shots at 25 yards I shot a ragged one-hole group and then when I pushed the distance out to 40 yards, my group was 13mm.

“there is absolutely no difference between this and the TX200HC in terms of accuracy”

The '97 has to be shot up the peg and from the shoulder because it's in a standard stock and has no additional weight added to it, but this rifle is certainly not hold-sensitive. I was able to grip the rifle

and on a windless day this is very good from the shoulder.

The thing is, though, shooting a rifle like this on the range is always going to be fun and fairly easy. I have a consistent place to lay, and the peg I am using doesn't move, so I think the only way that I can truly test this gun is in competition, and that is why on Sunday 29th January, I used it to shoot Round 4 of the Southern Hunters at Wendover, and you can read about my exploits on page 71 of this issue.

So, this month we have three intersecting articles; new gun, new scope and a competition review. There is no doubt that the HW97 is a great rifle and there is absolutely no difference between this and the TX200HC in terms of accuracy. I love them both, and if you are in the market for a new springer, try them out and it will come down to which one you like the most – but please remember #Don'tTellClaire!

If you have a '97 drop me an email at: garychillingworth36@gmail.com and let me know if there is anything you would like me to look at. ■

