

... the more they stay the same – as Weihrauch launches its groundbreaking HW110

Well, who'd have imagined Weihrauch would produce a rifle with a polymer action block, instead of the solid metal masterpieces that made this world-renowned German company's name? Not me, that's for sure. So, this HW110 came as a bit of a shock, not least because it bucks the trend of Weihrauch sitting back and considering its next move, usually after its rivals have made theirs. This move seems to be a bold one, too, but is it really?

The polymer-framed Glock 17 pistol has been in service since 1982, and these days, practically the who's who of firearms manufacture includes polymer-framed guns in its catalogue. So, if polymer is good enough for the live-ammunition arms of Beretta, Heckler & Koch,

Walther, Smith & Wesson et al, surely the demands of a recoilless, precision pre-charged pneumatic air rifle won't find it wanting? Let's see.

AN OVERVIEW

The new Weihrauch HW110 bears more than a passing resemblance to the company's best-selling HW100, and it shares the basic operating features of that rifle, but the new 110 is priced at £645, a significant £100 less than the cheapest HW100. The 110 is a multi-shot sidelever sporter, although, as its name suggests, the 110 offers 10 shots from its removable, rotary magazine, rather than the 14 of the 100 series.

As far as I can tell, the 110's 16-inch barrel is identical to its stablemate, although I won't be able to confirm this, or much else as far as manufacturing information goes, until I speak directly

to the company owner, Hans Weihrauch, at the IWA show in Nuremberg next month.

This non-disclosure policy is a considered one because Weihrauch and its UK agents, Hull Cartridge, have asked me to field test this rifle purely on its own merit, rather than in comparison to my previous experiences of HW airguns. As a journalist, my natural inclination is to research the background of what I'm testing and to understand fully why something does what it does, but I fully understand Weihrauch's 'report purely on results' request, and it certainly cleared the decks for this one.

AMBI ACTION

The 110 is an ambidextrous rifle, and it can be ordered with the sidelever in right- or left-landed configuration, although the magazine release lever remains on the right-hand side of the action. It's back to the fully ambi' mode for the manual safety catch, or 'catches', which can be found

on both sides of that matte-black polymer block.

The barrel support band is also polymer, as is the trigger blade and guard, and the threaded muzzle wears a branded Weihrauch silencer as standard. A spare magazine is also supplied, along with the instruction manual and a hex wrench that fits the stock's fixing bolts. The non-removable air reservoir is charged via a plug-in adaptor through an inlet port in its front section, where the rifle's manometer (pressure gauge), is also housed. My initial tests on the .177 calibre HW110 show a return of 62 shots for each 200-bar charge, so I'd expect to add another 20 or so to that output for the .22 version.

AMBI STOCK

'Soft touch' stocks are becoming quite the thing these days and having handled pretty much all of them, I can



THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

see why. The HW110's woodwork is just that, hardwood, which is covered in a black, rubberised compound that promotes sure handling and protection from the elements. Yes, I like these stocks; they have the solidity and heft of timber – nothing 'boxy' about them - without the frailty of our beloved wood, and they'll hang on to a sling swivel screw with total security.

Weihrauch's stock designers have stuck to the basic lines of the non-thumbhole HW100, and although more classically-styled furniture would have set the 110 further apart from its older brother, there will be plenty of time for variations on the HW110 theme. Weihrauch rarely drops a model from its portfolio, and I already feel that this one will be here to stay. Let's see how it shoots.

ON THE RANGE

First job, mount a scope to the HW110's Picatinny/Weaver rails. This mounting system seems to be the way things are going these days, and again I can see the sense of that. These rails aren't the most elegant features on a rifle, and it could be argued that pre-charged airguns aren't exactly screaming for the total belt 'n' braces sight weld you get from them, but too much solidity is usually better than not enough, and the chunky look of the rail suits

the HW110 a treat.

Scope on, it's time to load the 10-shot magazine. To release the mag' from the rifle the sidelever has to be fully opened and the sprung magazine release catch lifted. The safety catch doesn't need to be applied before loading, but it's a good idea to get into the habit of doing it to provide an extra barrier in case of mishap. With the magazine in your hand, load pellets headfirst into the chambers with the small cut-out on the mag' perimeter – and watch something fascinating take place before your very eyes.

As you prod each pellet into its port, the squashy 'O' ring that encircles the magazine not only holds the pellets, but it also pulls them down into their chambers and clears their delicate skirts from the face of

the mag', thus avoiding jams, pellet damage, and the resultant inaccuracy this causes. So simple, and yet such a valuable asset for any autoloader.

THE TRIGGER

Another major asset that comes as standard with the HW110, is its quite excellent trigger. Two-stage and adjustable for let-off and pull-length, the 110's trigger is every bit as sweet, predictable and precise as the HW100's. That's some compliment, but this rifle deserves it because that trigger is such an aid to accurate shooting. Full marks to the Weihrauch team for this feature, then.

ACCURACY

Now, it's a raving certainty that Weihrauch wasn't going to release a new rifle that didn't shoot straight, and this one will match anything that carries the prestigious HW trademark. Yes, really - including the flagship HW100. I grabbed my 'test pellet box' containing the usual list of proven performers, and once again it was Air Arms Diabolo Field and JSB that took top spot. From my first zeroing session, I began to print out ten-shot clusters of pellets at 35 yards.

If I poked the tip of my forefinger into these groups, the target card would tear, and pushing the range back to 45 yards only allowed the second joint of >>



Give the magazine a little 'wobble' until the release catch drops to show everything's aligned.



Plug-in charging and that superb Weihrauch silencer come as standard.

Every inch a Weihrauch.

10 shots at 35 yards. Absolutely no argument there.



my finger in before the card ripped. Let's call those 45-yard groups 20mm diameter, although that's slightly generous. My finest effort earned me a 'cut-out-and-keep' group of 18mm at 50 yards, and that was with a scope of just 10x magnification. Strap a 24 x optic on that HW110 and I'd be confident of doing even better. Shoot straight? This new Weihrauch nails that one every time, but then what did we expect?

CONSISTENCY

I've seen it reported that the HW110 is regulated, but I'm sure it isn't. I believe this rifle runs the same, self-regulating firing valve as the HW100, or very near offer. A self-regulating valve, and most

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modern PCPs have a version of this at the heart of their actions, is not the same as having a separate regulator. For the record, I don't like regulators much, especially on legal limit hunting rifles that don't need their extra complication to outshoot me by miles.

Over the chrono', the .177 test rifle recorded an average shot-to-shot variation of just 11 f.p.s. for its first 50 shots, and that's all the consistency I need to calm my simple brain and get on with the job of pushing the potential of this remarkable rifle.

HANDLING

Everyone I showed the HW110 to liked its heft and balance, mainly because there wasn't a lot of heft in the first place, it should be noted. This rifle weighs just 8.5lbs, including scope, and for me that's a but light, but others will disagree. There's an optimum weight for sporters and it's, literally, a matter of balance between portability and pointability. What's effortless to

Shift the target back to 50 yards and, apart from a single flier, I'm happy.



carry may well 'twitch' off aim too easily when it's time to shoot, so lighter is by no means always better. That said, it's always easier to make a rifle heavier than it is to reduce its weight, so I'd say the 110 is about right for most people.

DISLIKES

I don't like the silver finish of the HW110's twin-sided safety-catch and magazine release lever. These look 'unfinished', or 'in the white' as techno bods would say, and I think they'd give the rifle more authority if they were black anodised. As ever, an adjustable butt pad would have been great to see, but the retro-fit option is there, and I'll be taking that when my own HW110 arrives.

My dislikes don't include the

polymer action block, though. In the deliberate absence of technical specification from Weihrauch, I've been doing some heavy research into the use of polymers in firearms manufacture. Some shooters love these polymer guns, some still don't, but the suitability of polymers as the framework for firearms is proven beyond doubt.

The precise formula that each manufacturer uses is as closely guarded as that of Coke, Pepsi and the KFC coating, but one fact has emerged; it's just wrong to refer to these guns as 'plastic'. Plastic refers to any material that can be moulded into shape, rather than a specific material. The polymers used in gun manufacture are usually considerably more expensive to produce than the steels and alloys they replace, and my sources tell me that polymers are only used where they do a better job.

INITIAL VERDICT

Yet again, until I'm able to get right

TECH SPEC

Model: HW110
Manufacturer: Weihrauch
Country of origin: Germany
Type: Pre-charged, multi-shot sporter
Calibre: .22, .177
Cocking: Side lever
Loading: Via removable, rotary 10-shot magazine
Trigger: 2-stage, adjustable
Stock type: Ambidextrous, soft-touch hardwood
Weight: 3.9kg (8.5lbs), scoped as shown
Length: 965mm (38 ins)
Barrel: 406mm (16 ins)
Fill pressure: 200 bar
Shots per charge: 60-plus in .177, 80-plus in .22 (estimated)
Variation over 50 shots: 11 fps for .177 on test
Average energy: 11.6 ft.lbs.
Contact: Hull Cartridge on 01482 342 571

RRP £645

into the unseen areas of the HW110 with those at the head of the company, I can't explain matters in more depth. For now, it's all about performance, and so far it's been exemplary. The rifle shoots extremely well; it's so quiet that pellet impact is the loudest part of the shooting cycle, and that trigger is a fine thing, indeed. The magazine is easy to use – just give it a back-forth 'shuffle' once loaded, until the mag' release lever drops to its starter position – and the whole rifle retains the true essence of Weihrauch solidity, polymer block and all.

I'm going to shoot the HW110 until I know its every quirk, foible and trait, and I'll report back next month. By then I'll have spoken to Hans Weihrauch and I should have the inside deal on this remarkable rifle. See you then. ■

Note how the pellet skirts sit well below the face of the magazine. Top snarl-up avoidance right there.

