

MAGNUM OPUS

Editor Matt Clark tests the new Diana LP8 air pistol and finds the legend lives on



If you look in John Atkins' 'Airgun Collection' Diana air pistols feature regularly as collectors' pieces. So you would be forgiven for thinking that the prestigious German gunmakers were consigned to the history books as far as air pistols are concerned. But we can assure you the legend lives on with their latest air pistol, the Magnum LP8. It represents everything that has made Diana famous – build quality, accuracy and elegance.

It would be fair to say that the styling of the Magnum is not particularly new or groundbreaking. With the overhang at the rear of the pistol grip – accommodating the spring – and the long barrel, the styling is typical of a spring-piston air pistol design from the late sixties and early seventies. But this is no bad thing. The design may be a classic, but it works and that's why many modern air pistols are shaped this way. You only have to look at a modern PCP precision target pistol, like the Steyr LP50, to see that it still has the overhang on the anatomical grip at the rear. That is because it makes the pistol more stable by giving it better weight distribution.

Even though the LP8 is, like most German airguns, fairly weighty, when you hold the pistol on target you are hardly aware of its heft. That's because it is so well balanced. The barrel weight compensator makes it easy to hold the pistol on target. Balance is more important on a pistol than on a rifle because with a pistol the shooter hasn't got a butt to help hold the gun steady. A pistol has to feel right in the hand and be easy to hold on target; otherwise your shots will go all over

the place. The only way to achieve accuracy is to make the pistol an extension of your arm.

SETTING THE SIGHTS HIGH

Another thing that helps make a pistol accurate are good sights. The LP8 comes with fully-adjustable Tru-Glo open sights. I'm a big fan of open sights. It means you can use the pistol straight out of the box and at the close ranges pistols are used at, they are perfectly adequate.

A large screw at the side of the rear sights adjusts the windage and a smaller screw to the front of the sights adjusts the elevation.

Having to get a screw driver out every time you want to make a slight adjustment to the sight is a bit of a chore, but once set up the way you like them, there is no need to adjust them. Another thing that aids accuracy is the long sight base, 42.5cm to be precise.

However, if you prefer some more sophisticated sights, then a red dot sight can be easily attached to the integral scope rail. The rail runs the full length of the action, so you have 16cm worth of rail to place the sights exactly where they feel comfortable to you.

DIANA LP8 AIR PISTOL



FIG 1



FIG 2



FIG 3



FIG 4

FIG 1: This is the LP8 at the start of the cocking stroke... **FIG 2:** ...and this is it when it is fully cocked. Just be careful of the foresight when cocking **FIG 3:** The Diana has a nice solid lock-up as you would expect with a Diana **FIG 4:** The trigger is adjustable via a discrete screw in the trigger guard

The grip fitted in my palm perfectly, placing my hand exactly where I needed it to maintain precise trigger control. Made from high impact glass resin, the grip offers semi-anatomical design and is ambidextrous. The safety catch can also be released from both sides, so left hookers won't be disadvantaged.

I found that the steadiest way to hold the LP8 was with the palm of my left hand at the bottom of the grip. Being a springer there is naturally a lot of recoil, making the pistol jump around considerably, but by adopting this technique my groups soon tightened up.

The Magnum is designed to be a precision plinker. You can use it on paper targets with good results, but it's also just as good for shooting tin cans or knock-over targets. At the moment the LP8 is only available in .177 calibre, which makes it ideal for this sort of shooting. If it were to ever come out in a .22 then the Magnum with its power would be ideal for despatching small vermin.

The LP8 Magnum is a great pistol for those who want a refined traditional spring piston air pistol. The only bad point of this pistol is the price. At around £225 it is not cheap. But then you could argue that quality does not come cheap and it's the quality that will remain long after the price has been forgotten. **AG**

SPECIFICATION

UK DISTRIBUTOR: RUAG Ammotec UK Ltd
CONTACT: 01579 362319, enquiries@ruag.co.uk
ACTION: spring-piston
CALIBRE: .177 only
GRIP: High impact glass resin
SIGHTS: Tru-Glo fibre optics sights
OBJECTIVE LENS DIA.: 45cm
BARREL LENGTH: 23cm
WEIGHT: 1.53kg (without red dot sight)
POWER: 5.5 ft.lbs. (7.5 joules)
MUZZLE VELOCITY: 580 fps
PRICE: around £225
PRICE OF RED DOT SIGHT: £49.95

'I always think having open sights as well as a red dot sight is a bit like having a belt and braces on your trousers; there's no need for both'

DIANA RED DOT SIGHT

This Diana 1 x 30 red dot sight is an ideal accessory to the Magnum LP8 because it allows fast target acquisition. Just point the red dot at your target and squeeze the trigger.

There are 11 light brightness settings, which are easily adjusted by the large dial at the side. Setting 11 was a bit bright for average light conditions, but setting eight was just about right. In darker ambient light setting four seemed ideal.

The lithium 2032 battery has a shelf life of up to ten years and is designed to operate in temperatures far below that of other power cells, so even in frosty weather you will still have your red dot operating perfectly.

Elevation is adjusted by a turret at the top of the scope and windage by the side turret. The dust covers are on incredibly long threads, but once you have got those off the adjustment can be done with a screw driver or coin.

Diana is so confident of their workmanship that the sight comes with a five year warranty against manufacturer's defects. The red dot sight costs £49.95.



DIANA LP8 AIR PISTOL

'But this pistol is about more than power; it is also very refined. The trigger is superb.'

The Diana red dot sight is light enough not to unbalance the pistol and the pistol looked really good with it on. I positioned the sight close to the rear of the action because it felt balanced there and the rear open sights acted as a recoil arrestor. However, the scope rail has deep grooves and allows a really firm footing for any sights fitted.

I would have liked the foresight to have been removable. I always think having open sights as well as a red dot sight is a bit like having a belt and braces on your trousers; there's no need for both. Also I found that the foresight dug into my palm when cocking the pistol. The instructions say you are meant to hold the barrel behind the sight when cocking, but even so my hand slipped towards the rather sharp foresight and it dug into my palm. Perhaps a hood over the foresight would have helped.

TEN OUT OF TEN

However, cocking the pistol was easy and there was a nice positive 'click' when the trigger engaged the sear and the safety was applied automatically. Diana has put a lot of thought in to making this pistol safe. Not only do they provide a proper automatic safety catch that disables the trigger mechanism, but they have also made the pistol so that there is no way the main spring can be released before the barrel is closed again. Also the safety catch can be re-applied should you need to. So the LP8 gets 10 out of 10 for safety.

The barrel lock-up is nice and firm and uses the spring-loaded ball bearing mechanism. This firm lock-up ensures no air escapes when the pistol is fired, which maximises the power. And this is a powerful pistol. Putting out 5.5 ft.lbs., this is as close to the legal 6 ft.lb. limit as you can safely get.

But this pistol is about more than power; it is also very refined. The trigger is superb. It is a proper two-stage job and is crisp and predictable every time. The first stage can be adjusted via a screw on the bottom of the trigger guard. Turn it clockwise for a shorter first stage and anti-clockwise for a longer one. My usual advice is not to mess with triggers unless you know exactly what you are doing, however, if you are only adjusting the length of pull then it is safe to do this.

Above: The Tru-Glo sights are fully adjustable via screws. Diana the hunter on the end stop of the pistol is a nice touch
Right: This is how the LP8 looks in its minimalist form
Below: This unusually shaped trigger is excellent

