

The NEW Diana Model 280

Matt Clark gets back to basics when he goes plinking with the new Diana Model 280 with open sights



rifle can be used for plinking, whether it's a Pre-charged Pneumatic (PCP), springer or CO2. The typical rifle used for plinking is spring piston powered with open sights. The rifle I'm testing here from Diana is a typical plinker, even if it is somewhat up market.

The Model 280 is the latest springer to come to the UK from the famous German company Diana. Read John Atkins feature this month and you will see that Diana has a long pedigree. The rifle I'm testing here is called the Model 280. Doesn't really have a ring to it does it? The Germans maybe uber engineers, but they lack imagination when it comes to naming their great products. If you look at their cars, like Audi and BMW, all the models are just

number; Audi A4, BMW 325.

The Germans might not be very imaginative when it comes to naming things, but they have a superb reputation as engineers and gunmakers and the Model 280 represents everything that is great about German gunmaking.

Just picking it up you can feel the solidity it exemplifies. The beautiful beech stock has fine chequering that is crisp and clean. The white spacer between the butt pad and the stock is another quality feature. Being a German rifle the stock is a little larger than English springers, but it fitted my six foot plus frame perfectly.

The stock is ambidextrous, so left hander shooters aren't disadvantaged and can enjoy some plinking as well. I must point out here that the Model 280 isn't just a plinker; it's a full-power hunting rifle as well. We will bring you a field test of it in a later issue.

A Modern Classic

Anyway, back to the rifle. The action has a lustrous deep blueing and the trigger is ribbed, which is slightly old fashioned, but I love traditional touches on a rifle. Overall the rifle is a classic break-barrel springer of the sort Diana made its name with in the early part of the 20th century. It's the sort of thing that you could buy and hand down to your grandchildren - the build quality is that good.

Another touch of quality is the open sights. So often in the age of optics, open or iron sights are very basic because the makers know that most of us will put a telescopic sight of some description on top. But on the Model 280 they are a technical masterpiece that exemplify the approach Diana take to gunmaking. They are easy to use, solid and accurate. Windage and elevation are easily adjusted by thumbwheels that are ratcheted, so you can adjust them with little clicks, making them easy to set for your requirements. They also have Tru-glo fibre optic insets, which makes the rifle easy to use in low light conditions. The foresight is shrouded, which means that when you take it in the field it will be protected from branches.

Naturally there's a solid scope rail for those who want to take longer distance shots and it looks as if the iron sights can be easily removed if you prefer optics.

We've all done it. Many of us still enjoy doing it. For some of us it's all we do and it's probably the way most of us got initiated into our sport. Yes, I'm talking about plinking. It's a word used to describe casual target practice, often in someone's back yard. Any

Always thumb a pellet into the breech because using your thumbnail can deform the pellet and affect accuracy



The safety catch is automatic and re-settable



The open sights were easy to adjust



A solid lock up, well sealed breech and rounded edges on the breech demonstrate how well made this airgun is

Plinking Performance

PLINKING

The Diana Model 208 is a classic springer of the highest order

Personally I always like a rifle you can shoot straight out of the box, so the open sights on the Model 280 gets the thumbs up from me.

The rifle takes some effort to cock, but the action is smooth and the sear engages with a reassuring 'click'. The safety catch is automatically engaged and is resettable. For me the safety catch at the back of the action is in an ideal place because it's easy to release before shooting. Some might argue that the shooter's hand might creep up the neck of the stock and release the safety. But in its favour the safety disables the whole action and not just the trigger, so even if the rifle is dropped - as long as the safety is applied - it's unlikely to go off.

The lock up is very solid and the breech well sealed as you would expect on a springer of this quality. This ensures

an efficient transport of air from the cylinder through the breech. However, I was disappointed to see that the cocking arm wasn't hinged. Consequently, there was a large chunk of the stock cut out of the forestock to accommodate the cocking lever. In time this can weaken the forestock and cause it to split, but I can assure you that the stock seemed very sturdy and would be unlikely to split even over a long period of use.

Pellet picking

I tested the Diana with pellets made by RWS, which like Diana is also under the Ruag Ammotec umbrella. I



The Diana Model 208 fitted Matt's large frame perfectly. Inset: If in doubt always use the rifle manufacturer's own pellets. These RWS Superfields were great



This rabbit has taken some flak



have visited RWS and seen what care they take when making their pellets, so I felt confident they would perform. People often ask me what pellets are best to use in their rifles and I would say if you haven't yet found the perfect pellet, use the manufacturer's own because it's usually what the rifles are tested with in the design phase of their production.

Naturally, the Diana was accurate and I was impressed by the trigger mechanism. It's a two-stage, adjustable trigger and had a lighter pressure than I expected when I first fired the rifle. However, the length of pull and trigger pressure can be adjusted by adjusting several screws and full marks for Diana for providing clear directions on how to do this. First stage adjustment weight ranges from 300g minimum to 380g maximum and the trigger weight ranges from 400g minimum to 500g maximum. As I've always said, don't adjust the trigger unless you know what you are doing because you could have an accident. I soon got used to the relatively light trigger pressure and was hitting the kill zone on the crow knock down target with ease. There was a little bit of a 'twang' when the spring was released, but otherwise the action was very smooth.

What many people forget in the PCP age is that springers need time to 'bed' in. When the rifle is bedded in (after a 1000 pellets or so) the action gets smoother and the power and accuracy are generally more consistent. Like all mechanical things, they take time to work at their optimum. Having said that the Diana was pretty good straight from the box, so it won't take that long to bed in.

Everything about this rifle just feels right. Its balance, its trigger and the quality of workmanship is very high indeed. I had a great time plinking knock down targets with it and I can't wait to bring you a report of it in the field. ●

SPECIFICATION FOR DIANA MODEL 280

Manufacturer: Diana
Distributor: RUAG Ammotec UK
Tel: 01579 362 319 or visit www.ruag.co.uk
Price: £210
Type: break-barrel Sporter
Stock: Beech
Length: 1020mm (40.3inch)
Weight: 31.2 kg (7.7lbs)
Trigger: Two-stage adjustable
Calibre: .177 (tested) and .22
Prime purpose: Hunter/plinker
Safety catch: Auto re-settable