

The Diana Mauser K98 air rifle

by Don Caswell



The classic lines of the original Mauser K98 military rifle are faithfully reproduced.

Here is an air rifle that will have enormous appeal to aficionados of military firearms. That stalwart of air-gunning, Diana, has brought out a faithful Mauser K98 lookalike and the *Australian Hunter* was given the opportunity to review this product. The Australian distributor, Nioa, provided the air rifle, along with a Simmons ProTarget 3-12x40 scope, Sportsmatch T03C ring mounts and a generous supply of pellets.

My first impressions were of a design faithful to the German army rifle predecessor. The wood had good grain and was well finished with a nice sheen. The rifle was long and relatively heavy, in keeping with the replication of the original rifle. It is muzzle heavy by nature of the military design and the constraints of fitting an air rifle into that. The length of pull seemed a bit short for me, not much of a problem with open sights, but something to consider when fitting the scope.

It is a full-sized rifle with under-lever cocking that requires some effort to set. While I am sure that supervised youngsters will have a lot of fun plinking with this homage to a famous German military rifle,

it is going to need an adult to cock and load this hefty, spring-powered air rifle. Also included in the box is a small toolkit containing a wrench and driver set that fits all the screws on the rifle.

The action

Diana's Mauser K98 is an under-lever, spring-powered, single-shot air rifle. It can be obtained in either .177 or .22 calibres. I always opt for .22 calibre test rifles because they are better suited to pest control and small game hunting and I have a good variety of different pellets I can test.

Just cocking the rifle indicated it was gifted with a powerful spring and I was looking forward to what the chronograph would say once I began the pellet testing. The cocking lever is below the barrel, as you would expect, and is designed to look like the cleaning rod on the original military rifle. The effort to cock this big springer was not made any easier by the relatively slippery buttplate. Cocking this powerful springer requires a bit of careful technique and is definitely an adult operation. There is a small locking lever beside the rear-sight. This lever moves back with the piston as the rifle is cocked and must be



The Diana symbol.

The Diana Mauser K98 air rifle

pressed to lock the cocked spring in place.

One issue to be careful of is dropping a pellet when attempting to insert it into the barrel chamber. The bottom of the cylinder, exposed by the opening of the loading port, is slotted and any pellet that drops through the slot will fall into the lever mechanism and prove difficult to retrieve.

The trigger and safety

The Diana Mauser K98 is fitted with the T06 adjustable trigger. Access holes in the triggerguard allow the necessary tools to be inserted for adjusting the trigger pull. It is a two-stage trigger. The manual says that the first stage take-up weight of pull can be varied from 0.29kg to 0.38kg and the second stage actual trigger release from 0.39kg to 0.49kg. I measured the weight of pull with my trigger scales and found a consistent 1.18kg. There was only a hint of creep.

Cocking the rifle activates the automatic safety catch. It must be thumbed forward to enable a shot to be fired. There was no resistance, or positivity, to the thumbing of the safety catch to the 'fire' position, which I found a little disconcerting. However, the safety did its job flawlessly, so I cannot complain about that.

Open sights

I guess if you bought this rifle for its military



The Simmons scope complements the K98 and optimises its accuracy potential.

connection then you would most likely do your plinking with the open sights that come as standard on the K98. The rear-sight has micrometer adjustment for both windage and elevation. The front blade is shielded by a hood. The hood over the front-sight has two holes for screwdriver access, should you wish to adjust the position of the front blade. These open sights, while perhaps not identical to those on the original military rifle, are nevertheless a close facsimile.

It was certainly fun plinking with these open sights. After a few adjustments, and getting my eye in, I was able to start knocking over a bunch of dynamic targets out in the paddock. These dynamic targets



The hooded front-sight can be adjusted if required.



The Diana K98 is slung just like the original military rifle.

were simply small, green citrus fruits and a bunch of soft drink cans filled with water. Any hits produced a good spray of juice, or water, as the case may be. While that was a heap of fun, I wanted to see how well the K98 would shoot with its scope fitted.

The scope and mounts

A Simmons ProTarget 3-12x40 scope with a fine duplex reticle was a great choice for this, or any, air rifle. It is made from one-piece aluminium alloy tubing. The lenses are multi-coated optical glass. Side focusing >

The Diana Mauser K98 air rifle

parallax adjustment and ¼MOA adjusting targets were ideal for close-range air rifle shooting. Built for centrefire rifle use, this robust, waterproof, fog-proof, and recoil-proof scope is certainly capable of coping with powerful calibres.

However, I was a little concerned. From my own experience, I knew that big spring-powered air rifles can rapidly destroy the highest quality scopes. The scope was fitted into Sportsmatch T03C ring mounts. Despite my concerns, it all functioned okay during the test shooting. However, personally I would fit an air rifle rated scope and mount it in Sportsmatch adjustable mounts.



The rear-sight has micrometer adjustments and sits just in front of the loading port. Also seen is the cocking lock lever.

The stock

The stock on the K98 is also a faithful replica of the military rifle, with a few minor variations needed to house an under-lever air rifle mechanism. Diana says that the makers have utilised the same hardwood as was used for the military rifle. The review rifle had a rather nice lustre and grain to counter-point the blued metal. The stock is quite long and has the same upper timber hand protector that its inspiration does. The rifle can be slung just like

that German army rifle as well. There is a slot through the butt and a side fitting up on the fore-end to facilitate a military-style sling fitting.

The length of pull struck me as a bit short, and I measured 33cm (13") and 32.5cm (12.8") when the double pull trigger was taken up to the point of release. For the era of the original army rifle that may well have been the standard length and it will certainly suit younger shooters.

The buttplate is of hard plastic with the design reminiscent of the military predecessor. As I mentioned, it requires some care when cocking this long and powerful springer air rifle. It also needs some care when standing the rifle on a hard floor and leaning it against a wall. The smooth and hard buttplate proved to be a bit slippery and necessitates the rifle to be stood as vertical as possible.

Off the bench

A prolonged bout of wet and windy weather obliged me to do my test shooting in the shed, rather than outdoors at 20m, like I normally do. I set up my target pellet trap 10m from the muzzle of the air rifle. Just in front of the muzzle,

Pellet test results

Pellet maker and model (.22 cal)	Weight grains	Group* mm	Average MV fps	MV stndevn
Skenco UltraMag Metal Tip	18.2	7	747	6
Diana Exact Jumbo Diabolo	15.9	8	773	7
JSB Exact Jumbo Express	14.4	8	803	8
Predator Metal Mag Hunting Metal Tip	17	10	759	5
RWS Super Field	15.9	10	804	9
Milbro T22	14.2	11	865	10
JSB Exact Jumbo	15.9	11	775	12
Skenco UltraShock HP	16.7	12	793	4
Coal Field Target 250WP	15.4	12	804	14
H&N Sniper Light	14	14	801	10
H&N Sport Field Trophy Target	13.7	15	847	24
H&N Hornet (metal tip)	16	15	787	3
Coal Fenix FX550	17	17	749	17
H&N Sniper Magnum	18	22	757	5
Gamo TS-18	18	29	742	10

* Group size is measured for five shots at a distance of 10m from the muzzle



Skenco UltraMag Metal Tips produced the best accuracy in the Diana K98.

The Diana Mauser K98 air rifle

I positioned my chronograph, which has IR screens to enable measuring velocities indoors, or at least under the shed roof. With sandbags positioned under the forestock and butt and a pyramid of pellet tins, I was ready to start testing.

I fired multiple five-shot groups for each pellet type, measuring the group size at 10m and the average muzzle velocity. The data for all the pellets tested is shown in the accompanying table. The chronograph confirmed what the cocking tension had indicated – this is a powerful air rifle. Over the range of different pellet types and weights, from 13.7 to 18.2 grains, the muzzle velocity varied from 870 to 742 feet per second.

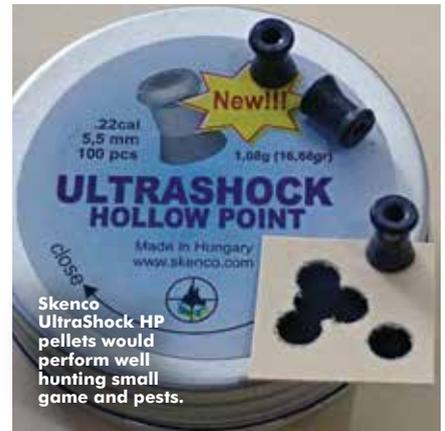
In general, the majority of the pellets I tested shot nicely. The Skenco UltraMag Metal Tip surprised me by coming at number one for accuracy, just pipping the JSB and Diana Exact Jumbos, which are renowned for consistent precision. There was not much in it though, the three pellets all shot identically well. I liked the clean, wadcutter-style holes that the Skenco pellets punched in the target. A little less accurate, but my pick for a hunting pellet, was another Skenco offering, the UltraShock Hollow Points. I was impressed by how hard these hit soft drink cans filled with water. Combined with the high-velocity grunt of the K98, the Skenco UltraShock Hollow Points would



be my choice for shooting small game and pests within 30m.

In summary

The Diana K98 will please folks who like military memorabilia. A close lookalike to the famous German military weapon, it is a powerful air rifle in its own right. I am sure it will provide a lot of fun plinking at responsive targets with the open sights. It would also be a good training rifle for youngsters and new shooters. Fitted with a scope, the high velocity and accuracy of Diana's K98 will make it a good option for shooting small game and pests. Retail pricing seems to be about \$650 but, as always, it would pay to shop around. ■



Specifications

Manufacturer: Diana

Model: Mauser 98K

Type: Spring-powered air rifle
Action Under-lever, fixed barrel, single-shot

Calibres: .177 and .22

Quoted velocities: 1150fps (.177)
850fps (.22)

Overall rifle length: 112cm (44")

Barrel length: 46cm (18")

Bare weight: 4.3kg (9.5lb)

Stock: Authentic Mauser K98
hardwood

Open sights: Hooded front and
micrometer rear sight

Trigger: Two-stage adjustable T06
match trigger

Length of pull: 33cm (13")

RRP: From about \$650

