

YOUNG GUN

Teenager TOBY ALLEN cuts his teeth on the **SMK SYNTARG** break-barrel

When Toby Allen saw Sportsmarketing's new line-up of air rifles his famous airgunning father was testing, he made a bee-line for one model in particular – the SYNTARG. And as this teenager hadn't expressed an interest in shooting before, the fact that the SYNTARG's unique styling had caught his eye was enough to convince Dad that another member of the Allen family had just been bitten by the airgun bug.

"It takes something special to draw Toby away from his Playstation," joked Toby's father, Nigel, "and the SYNTARG is certainly something special. It even caught *my* eye – and as I see a dozen different airguns each month, that's no mean feat!"

Aimed primarily at the youth market, this fantastic break-barrel is a new breed of airgun – so with young Toby eager to try his hand at airgunning for the first time, Nigel unlocked his gun safe so Dad 'n' lad could go to the farm for a session with SMK's all-new SYNTARG...

FACTS - SYNTARG

Action: Break-barrel

Calibre: .177 & .22

Length: 100.5cm

Barrel Length: 42cm

Weight: 2kg

Trigger: Single-stage

Safety: Automatic

Stock: Synthetic

Sights: Fibre-optic, adjustable

Price: £99.95

don't think I'm ever going to forget my first ever airgun shoot. Not just because I had such a great time, but because the SYNTARG is the most awesome thing I've ever used. The 'real thing' is so much better than the 'shooting' I've been doing on my computer games.

Obviously, Dad was supervising me at all times and he kept on about how good the SMK was as a 'first gun'. The number of times he went on about 'this and that', I reckon he was thinking it would make a good 'second gun' for him!

I don't know much technical stuff about airguns at the moment, but you can tell from the look of the SYNTARG that it's very much an up-to-date air rifle. To me, it looks quite big – but I didn't find it difficult to handle at all. Dad didn't find it 'too small', either and we decided that it was a good, all-round 'family gun'.

Because the stock is made from a tough synthetic, the gun's very light, and the butt has been 'skeletonised' to shave off even more weight. This makes it very easy for someone of my size to handle. I felt the gun was a bit front heavy – but Dad told me that's how you want a rifle to balance as it helps keep the barrel locked onto target.

Although its power isn't 12 ft. lbs., the .22 model we shot certainly sent tin

cans spinning for miles when you hit them right and I know Dad has since used the SYNTARG with great success on a few of the rats we saw scurrying around the farmyard during our plinking session.

The rifle is equipped with open sights that Dad said were 'much better' than what he learned to shoot with. The front sight is protected with a ventilated 'hood' and you can adjust the rearsight for up/down and left/right movement by the two click-wheels. It didn't take long to get the gun zeroed-in at 6 metres and before long I was able to score good results on paper targets.

What made aiming really easy for me

"I must have impressed Dad – he put a scope on for me!"



was the sights' fibre-optics. The back sight has two green dots, and you line up the front red fibre-optic bead between them. Because they catch the light, the dots glow, making it easy to take aim. Fibre-optics are the latest fashion in airgun sights and I can see why.

I was worried that, being quite powerful, the .22 rifle might kick hard in my shoulder. But it doesn't move much and it certainly didn't hurt me even though I was only shooting in a T-shirt.

Although I had to stretch for the trigger blade, it actually fires much



AND WHAT DAD THINKS OF THE SMK SYNTARG

Toby clearly knew something was special when he singled out this rifle from the pack. At £99.95, it's the sort of price any parent can afford and having spent many pleasurable hours shooting alongside my boy without a TV screen in sight, I can tell you it's the best expense I've laid out on for a long while. (The SYNTARG now resides in my gun safe as I ended up buying the rifle!)

Value-wise, it's money very well spent. Besides looking really neat – even to an adult's eye – the SMK SYNTARG sports a standard of engineering that's quite remarkable. It's stacked with features you have no right to expect on a rifle in this price bracket.

*Main Photo: Toby Allen, loving every minute with the new SMK SYNTARG.
Inset: Adjusting the fibre-optic rearsight.
Top of page: It's easy enough to cock.*

SMK 4 x 28 TELLY



WITH SUCH GREAT handling, it won't be long before any owner takes full advantage of the SYNTARG's dovetail/arrestor system and fits a scope – and SMK's compact 4 x 28 telly makes for a perfect combo.

Costing just £2 more than the black model, £26.95 silver version we chose comes with mounts and see-through dust covers. Fitted in seconds and easily zeroed courtesy of its coin-adjustable turrets, the eye-piece focuses the thick-to-thin cross-hair down to close range – and the scope has a long eye-relief so that there's no chance of bruised eyebrows. Its 4x magnification is perfect for a youngster – and Dad found the 28mm front lens ideal for rattling in low light, too.

further back. This is why I hardly ever pulled a shot off to one side. Once the sights had been set, I was pretty good at hitting the bullseye area and, even, was able to pick an exact mark on the tin cans Dad put up for me.

I must have impressed Dad because he put on a telescopic sight for me to try. You need to hold your head up a bit more to see the cross-hair, but the SYNTARG's very cool looking 'shark fin' cheek-piece made this easy enough.

Although the telly's 4x magnification made it seem like I was 'wobbling' more, the SYNTARG's excellent balance actually let me extend my range to 15 metres. At that distance, the tin can was a tiny target to look at by eye, but came very close in the scope, and my shooting got better the more I used it. As much as I loved the fibre-optic open sights, I'd want to shoot this gun with a telly.

Because I'm new to airgunning, there's a lot more to this gun than I actually understand about – but I'll take Dad's word for it that the SYNTARG is incredible value for money. I kind of want one based on looks alone – but it was also so

much fun to shoot that I'll definitely be swapping a few hours' gaming every week for a bit fun-gunning with Dad around the farm from now on.



SMK's new SYNTARG comes with a synthetic stock and 'shark fin' butt.

Below: Plenty of features for the budding young gun.

Any first gun has got to be tough enough to withstand a teenager's use and I can vouch that the synthetic stock and barrel shroud have stood the test of time over many sessions since Toby's first outing with me and the rifle. It still looks as good as new... and I've abused it on a fair few rattling sessions, too.

The fibre-optic sights are the perfect system to train a young shooter's eye and, once mastered, there's scope – literally – to develop him. The receiver's

dovetailed for a telly and the SYNTARG has an arrestor block to stop the scope creeping backwards. So once set, the sights stay set. Oh, how I wish *my* first gun had had this feature!

The gun's very accurate because the barrel pivots around a bolt (not a pin, which can wear loose in time) and the stock shape is perfect for novice hands.

There's a swelled fore-end, a sensible pull length, and the pistol grip is positioned nicely for the trigger's break point where younger fingers are concerned. There's also an automatic safety catch which can be re-set if it needs to be.

All in all, a great mid-size rifle.

