HEAD *to* HEAD!

1377 v P17

Old school versus modern-day. **Mark Camoccio** gives his verdict on two quite different pistol models that each have something extra to offer…

Describing an air pistol as 'general purpose' carries some potentially negative connotations. It risks making the product sound ordinary or unspectacular – cheap and cheerful. However, the entry-level pneumatic models I have on test here offer more than their price might suggest, and they both represent unbeatable value for money in an already crowded sector.

Many pistols at the affordable end of the market cut corners on quality; the old adage 'you get what you pay for' holds true. But what sets both my test models apart here is that, despite being bargains, they offer a generous dose of real accuracy potential, encouraging both the novice and experienced shot alike.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Dubbed the American Classic, Crosman's Model 1377 has been with us in a similar guise since I was a schoolboy, but it's by no means outdated. Indeed, the characteristic ultra-long sight base and front pump handle still cut a distinctive profile, every bit as impressive as when the pistol was first introduced several decades ago.

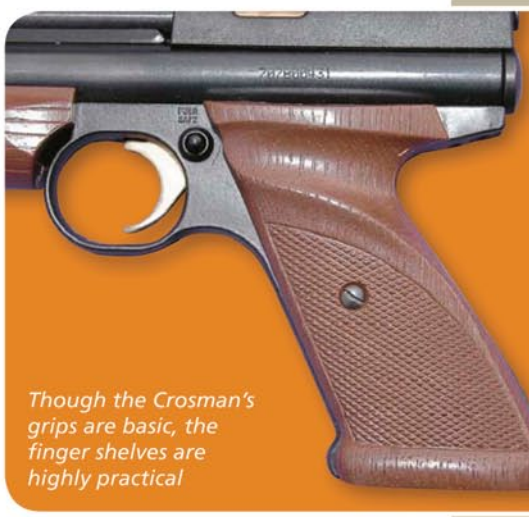
By contrast, the Beeman – which was introduced to the UK as the 2004E, but is now known as the Model P17 – looks rather more subtle and sophisticated, complete with its modern polymer black chassis and crisply moulded features. With the look and feel of a contemporary firearm, the macho image of the Beeman should appeal to those who want their air pistols to look like, well… pistols!

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

GETTING TO GRIPS

The two-part grips of the Crosman are fairly gruesome, looking slightly crude and plasticky. That said, their ambidextrous configuration affords a supportive grip thanks to the deep finger shelf on each side. The forend section acts as the pump handle and is comfortable

The Beeman features a black, two-piece polymer frame



Though the Crosman's grips are basic, the finger shelves are highly practical

The black polymer chassis of the Beeman looks and feels slick

The 1377's main cylinder has a sturdy feel – even if those plastic components don't

Just one pump of the Beeman's overlever system generates adequate power

The Crosman requires roughly four pumps for general use

enough in use, but a pistol of this quality deserves far better grips in my opinion.

The Beeman's two-piece black polymer frame has a smart, slick feel about it, and also offers ambidextrous styling. What it lacks in the absence of sweeping finger shelves, it more than makes up for in palm-filling elegance. Its detailed appearance and finger grooves result in a very assured feel once in your palms.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

OPEN SIGHTS

Both pistols come fitted with good old-fashioned open sights – but only the Beeman offers the option for telescopic sight or red dot use via its generous dovetail section.

For me, the Crosman should score highly thanks to its extremely long sight base – but I have to knock points off the test model, because despite lowering the sight all the way, it still shot high – even at 20 yards! Adjusting its sight is also fairly basic – the base itself is shifted from side to side once a screw is slackened; I'd much prefer a sprung leaf mechanism. The option of a peep sight element is offered, though I'm not sure this is altogether practical on an air pistol.

By contrast, even though its windage and elevation adjustments require a screwdriver, the Beeman sports an altogether better rearsight set-up.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

OVERALL BUILD QUALITY

Although the 1377 is one of my all-time favourite air pistols, irrespective of price, its build quality is typical of Crosman – it uses several, cheaply-made and fairly basic components. Take a moment to remind yourself of the asking price, though and it's surely churlish to expect much better? Sturdy parts are used where it matters, with the pump leverage arm, barrel and main cylinder all adding to a solid feel.

By virtue of the grips alone, the P17 feels much the superior pistol. Nonetheless, for me, its slightly garish silver components, such as the trigger, hammer and safety catch, take something away from its quality air.

Overall though, both pistols are sufficiently weighty and well-styled to impress beyond their price bracket.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

PUMPING EFFORT

Both pistols are recoilless pneumatics, and though each takes a different approach to compressing the air, they're certainly worth the effort.

Crosman goes for the multi-pump approach. Firstly, the forend pump handle is pulled right down to its full reach, sucking in air, and then pushed all the way home to compress the air. The pressure – and effort – increases with each additional stroke. Ten pumps are permissible, which returns near legal-limit power, though I'd recommend four pumps for general use – a happy medium between performance and cocking effort.

The Beeman requires just a single stroke of its overlever cocking action – which returns only around 30fps less than the Crosman when primed with four pumps. Again, the air is compressed on the return stroke, and because that single pump is so effective, it takes more effort than one stroke of the Crosman's pump handle. You also need to take care not to catch your hand inside the action as it snaps shut at the end of the stroke – but that equally applies to the Crosman, too.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★☆☆☆

Above: The trigger blade on the Crosman is fairly narrow

Left: Though there is some creep from the Beeman's trigger, it's a competent performer

ACCURACY & CONSISTENCY

For the test period, I fired both .177 calibre pistols over 10 and 20 yards from a rest – and I was mightily impressed all round! At 10 yards, with match-style H&N Top Shot pellets, the Crosman posted 10mm groups and the Beeman printed 16mm clusters.

Over the longer distance, I had still posted some stunning results from the Crosman, although the groups opened slightly due to its heavier trigger. Even so, 20mm groups were the norm – and the Beeman also excelled, typically with a 22mm c-to-c performance.

Bearing in mind I was using the pistols' open sights, you have to concede that both the Crosman and Beeman punch way above their weight in terms of asking price. But that's not all – both guns returned superb shot-to-shot consistency over the chrono, with 10-shot strings rarely deviating more than around 10fps.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★★★★☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

TRIGGER

While triggers are my obsession, I always consider a particular gun's prospective market in my assessments. The Crosman and the Beeman come well-equipped in this department, offering trigger mechanisms superior in operation to any of the equivalent entry level spring-powered models available.

Some creep is evident every now and then on the 1377's trigger, and its rather narrow blade is slightly irritating – but overall, I find it hard to criticise for a pistol at this price-point.

The Beeman boasts a slightly lighter pull and a much broader trigger blade, which is a definite advantage – and even though the unit on my test gun possessed a fair amount of creep, it wasn't difficult to adapt to it and develop a consistent technique that returned a wholly acceptable end-result at the target.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★☆☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★☆☆

Both pistols posted tight groups at 10 and 20 yards

The cocking bolt on the Crosman is easy to operate

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS		
MODEL	1377 American Classic	Beeman P17
MANUFACTURER	Crosman	Beeman
IMPORTER	ASI	Sportsmarketing
TYPE	Multi-pump pneumatic pistol	Single-stroke pneumatic
CALIBRE	.177 (4.5mm)	.177 (4.5mm)
WEIGHT	900g	820g
OVERALL LENGTH	345mm	235mm
BARREL LENGTH	254mm	170mm
SIGHTS	Opens, fully-adjustable	Opens, fully-adjustable
TRIGGER	Single-stage	Two-stage
SAFETY	Manual, resettable	Automatic, resettable
GRIPS	Two-part plastic	Synthetic
VELOCITY	550fps (10 pumps);	378fps
	417fps (four pumps)	
PRICE	£95	£69.95
CONTACT	ASI	SMK
	www.a-s-i.co.uk	www.sportsmk.co.uk
	01728 688555	01206 795333

HANDLING

On the range, the Crosman is the more muzzle heavy and so sits nicely on the target. Factor in those ergonomic grips and this American Classic begins to shine where it matters. The relative ease of pumping, coupled with a nicely weighted cocking bolt, means the Crosman is fairly user-friendly overall. While on the subject of the bolt area, I would recommend seating the pellet into the breech mouth only once the cocking bolt is withdrawn, as pellets have room in the channel to sit off-centre when the bolt picks them up to feed them into the breech.

No such vagaries with the Beeman, though, as the up-and-over design just needs a pellet to be fed directly into the barrel lip before the top chassis is closed on the compression stroke. The centre of balance is more central with this pistol, yet it just feels spot-on.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★★☆☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★☆☆☆

VERSATILITY

This category is where the Crosman really shines. In theory, 10 pumps give full power, but fewer will be sufficient for informal target shooting. Four pumps generate roughly 3ft/lb – with excellent shot consistency – while the full output equates to around 5.5ft/lb, giving the beefy Crosman further strings to its bow.

While the Beeman lacks the vari-power facility, its power output of around 2.5ft/lb is more than adequate for what most pistol shooters require – and well over 350fps with standard-weight .177 pellets.

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★★★☆☆
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★☆☆☆

VALUE FOR MONEY

Bear in mind the inherently clever design features that both the Crosman 1377 and Beeman P17 carry, and this pistol pair knocks most of the similarly priced opposition into a cocked hat. We are talking about two extremely well-priced pistols, offering near recoilless performance in well-presented formats… carrying sub-£100 price tags. How can I not highly recommend either?

Each will reward you with genuine accuracy providing you do your bit, which is more than can be said for your typical spring-piston handgun. Their combination of performance, design features, and all round engaging appeal, really takes some beating – so top marks for both in this category!

Crosman 1377 ★★★★★★★★★★
Beeman P17 ★★★★★★★★★★

Insets above: Release the P17's dummy hammer in order to load directly into the breech

FINAL VERDICT

Crosman 1377	70/ 100
Beeman P17	78/ 100

Although points-wise I favoured the highly capable Beeman across the 10 categories it was tested in, I still have a lot of admiration for the classic Crosman. Both pistols are highly accurate and exceptionally consistent, yet the Crosman offers rugged styling which deservedly stands the test of time. Ultra-fast action times are synonymous with these types of pneumatic, due to the valving and air expansion characteristics, yet the Beeman arguably feels that bit slicker and crisper in its air delivery. At the end of the day, while there is a clear winner, neither pistol disappointed me.