

The new Nikko Stirling 3-9 x 42 Gold Crown. It can only be described as... brilliant!



The eye-piece.

I'd have probably dismissed the scope as being a bit of a gimmick – but the fact is, after thoroughly putting it through its paces, I really rate this model and think ASI have got its price completely wrong! At that price, for 'very good', read 'unbelievable'!

I don't mind admitting that I've already put my order in for one, and here's why...

Finished in anti-reflective matt black, the new Gold Crown

TOP OF THE POP-UPS!

When Nikko Stirling's importers, ASI, sent me this month's review scope they forgot to include the retail price list – so I rigged up the 3-9 x 42 Gold Crown on my Air Arms TX200 HC Mk. 3 and spent a couple of weeks testing it in all sorts of lighting conditions unaware of whether I was trialling a top-end flagship, or bargain basement giveaway!

Given that it came with a top-quality, blue-coated, wide-angle front lens that seemed to brighten up even the duller of images, had very neat, finger-adjustable turrets that I'd never seen before, parallax adjustment, my favourite 3-to-9x

magnification range and flip-up scope covers in place of the usual elasticated affairs, my final verdict was 'very good'.

And having been in the scope-testing game for a couple of decades, I felt confident it would be around the £120 mark – though knowing Nikko's remarkable ability for delivering top value-for-money scopes, part of me also hoped that the suggested retail price may be as low as £100!

Imagine my surprise, then, when the Suffolk-based importers sent me the 'official' price list showing this new Gold Crown model to cost, wait for it... a mere £43! Yes – forty-three pounds. Retail!

If you'd told me the price beforehand,

measures up at 360 mm. and tips the scales at 520 grammes.

It has a 25 mm. diameter tube and unless your rifle has a scope ramp (that's raised), you'll need to buy 'high' mounts so that the front end clears the receiver.

That's because its front, objective lens is slightly oversize at 42 mm. diameter. This alone provides extra light-gathering power – but Nikko have also coated their wide-angle lenses with a compound that further improves light transmission.

Besides making it look rather blue and sexy, it also enables you to pick out a sight picture down-range when your eyes can see diddly-squat – making it ideal for dusk and dawn airgun hunters. (And that's when I get most of my hunting successes.)

You get the brightest – and sharpest – picture when you've zoomed down the scalloped magnification ring to 3x power, though at top-power, I wouldn't be complaining at the image definition even if this was a £120 scope!

You primarily focus the Nikko by



Whether the magnification's 3x or 9x the sight picture is always clear, bright and sharp!





The Nikko's pop-up covers simply cover the turret when you're not shooting.



to move your pellets' point of impact – and their quarter-minute clicks mean you can fine-tune your rifle/pellet combo to a perfect zero; at 25 metres, one click will move the point of impact just 1.5 mm!

Once you've got your shots hitting pin-centre, you can set these turrets to '0' by slackening off

turning its entire eye-piece until the thick-to-thin, Duplex-style reticle looks at its sharpest, and then secure your setting via the locking ring situated between the zoom ring and eye-bell.

Once this is set, you leave it be – adjusting only the front, parallax collar to fine-focus the target according to the distance over which you're shooting. Setting this to suit your range – and for airgunners, it's marked-up for 10, 15, 20, 30 and 50 metres – also eliminates parallax error.

This error can cause the apparent movement between the central part of the cross-hair and the target by simply moving your head on the stock, even though the rifle remains still – so being able to dial it 'out' is good news on those forays where long-range sniping from a hide is the order of the day.

For general fieldwork, I left the Nikko's



The blue-coated objective lens.

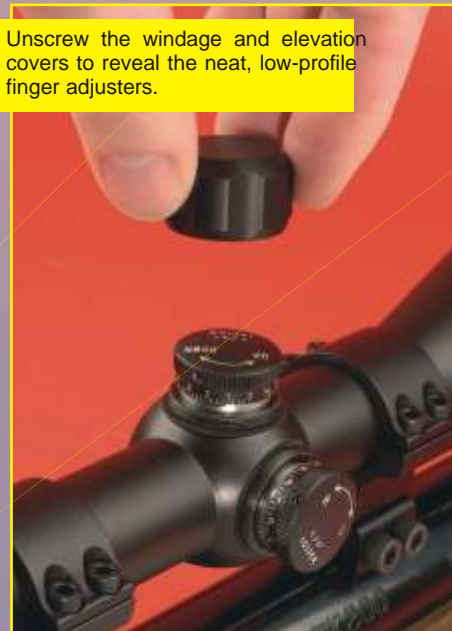
P/A ring, as it's called, set to between 20 and 30 metres as most of my hunting shots are taken in this region – but when I did come to alter the setting, it was made all the more easy thanks to the scalloped ring which gives you a good finger hold even when you've got slippery hands.

Besides being on the P/A and zoom rings, this 'scalloping' is also featured on the protective dust turrets of the windage and elevation adjusters, which screw off to reveal 'dials' the like of which I've never seen before!

Beautifully low-profiled, they clearly indicate which way you should turn them

three slot-headed grub screws – and there's also a vertical vernier to ensure that you don't accidentally turn back to '0' the wrong way if you 'dial in' a new zero at different ranges.

I'm a fan of the 'dialling in' aiming



Unscrew the windage and elevation covers to reveal the neat, low-profile finger adjusters.

system when I'm sniping vermin from a hide, because by being able to aim dead-on for every shot, rather than having to hold 'over' or 'under' at ranges other than zero, you can be a lot more precise.

Of course, you have to calibrate the system to suit your rifle/pellet/mount set-up beforehand, but experimenting is half the fun of airgunning! Using Crosman AccuPells, I found that if I set

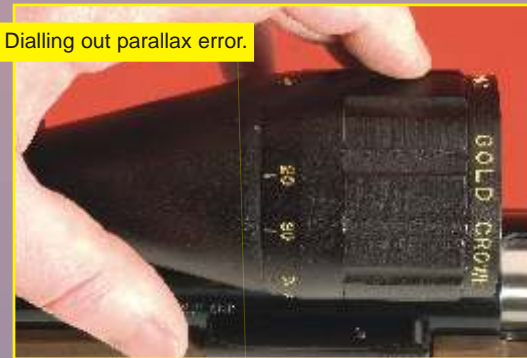
"I don't mind admitting that I've already put my order in for one..."

the Nikko to '0' for 20 metres, I had to dial down to '14' for 15-metre targets, and up to '1' for 25-; '3' for 30- and '5' for 35-metre targets.

Of course, certain field situations didn't give me enough time to mess about with the turrets – so in these circumstances, I simply set the scope to a 25-metre zero, screwed on the dust covers... and allowed some hold-over or -under. Simple!

But the simplest thing of was operating the new Gold Crown's lens covers! Push-on covers that usually come supplied with scopes are cumbersome and bulky – and I'm forever losing them in the field!

But the Nikko comes with a posh set of flip-up covers; pop 'em shut when you're not shooting and flip 'em up when you are. Simple – and brilliant!



Dialling out parallax error.

Brilliant is the perfect word to describe every aspect of Nikko's new 3-9 x 42 Gold Crown. Brilliant engineering. Brilliant finish. Brilliant picture quality. It even comes with a 390 mm.-square lens polishing cloth – brilliant!

Forty-three quid? Go get two – now... before ASI realise they can put their prices up!



Nikko give you a lot of scope for your £43!