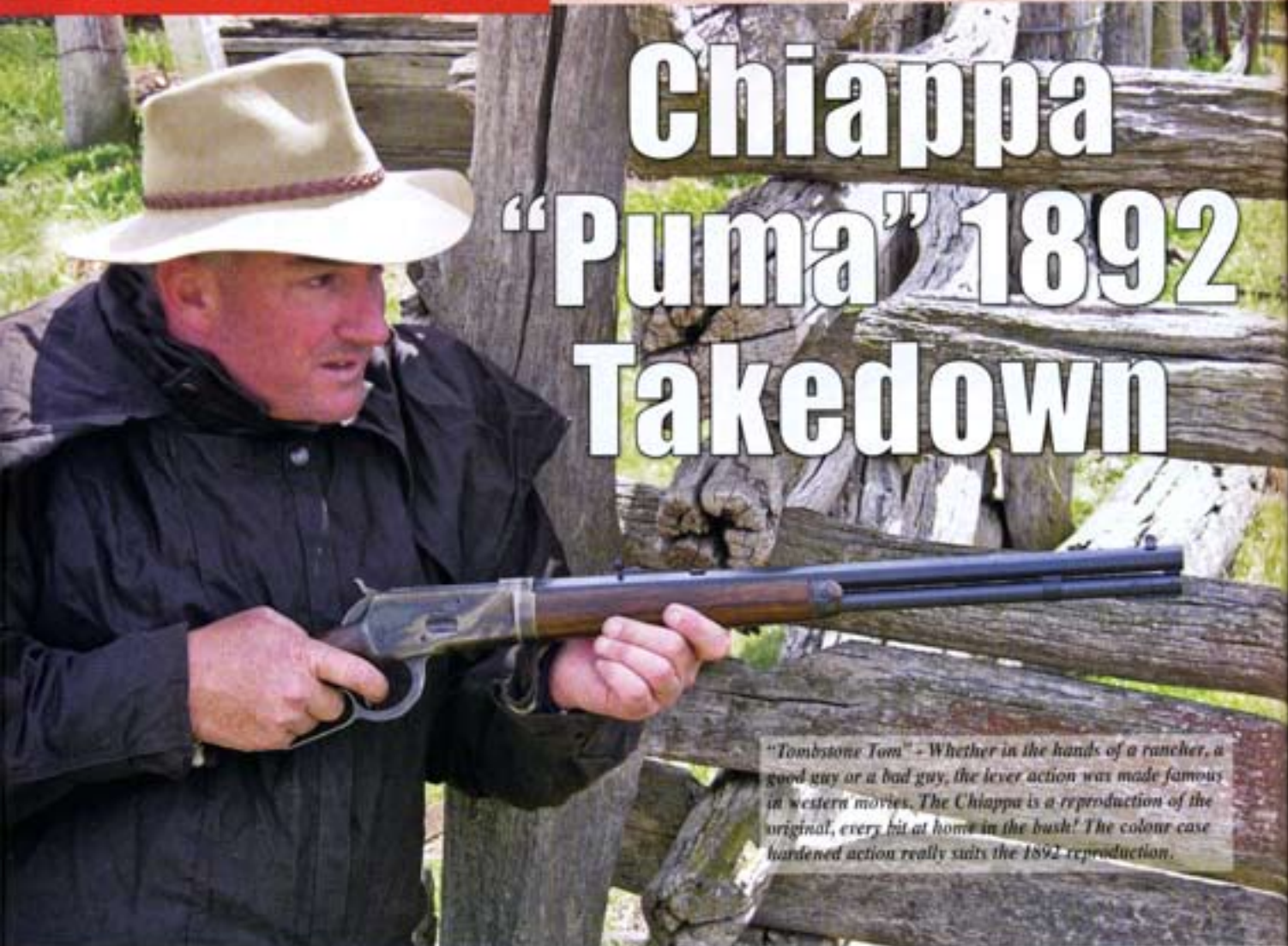


Chiappa "Puma" 1892 Takedown



"Tomestone Tom" - Whether in the hands of a rancher, a good guy or a bad guy, the lever action was made famous in western movies. The Chiappa is a reproduction of the original, every bit at home in the bush! The colour case hardened action really suits the 1892 reproduction.

When I was working out in the bush in the top end of the Northern Territory, accommodation was generally a swag and a good mozzie net. I remember one occasion where my offsider was unrolling his swag and right in the middle of it was a little lever action carbine in .357 Magnum. I can't remember the brand of it now, maybe a Marlin, but I can remember how he put it to exceptional use when we stalked up onto a mob of pigs at close range. I remember him working that lever to churn out fired case after fired case in very quick time. I think he managed to down about eight of the mob before he ran out of cartridges in the magazine. It was one of the most impressive displays of shooting I have observed.

The Chiappa "Puma" 1892 takedown is chambered for the .357 Magnum. The comprehensive instruction booklet and

parts list has a spiel inside the front cover on the Winchester 1892, and quotes it as being stronger than the 1873 design and having 1,004,675 made between the years 1892 and 1941. It also quotes the development of this line of firearms as for the sport of "Cowboy Action Shooting". The manual further goes on to state "the take down version is extremely easy to transport thanks to the length reduction and furthermore allows the change of calibre with an interchangeable barrel". Very clever indeed!

When it comes to a lever action and how they work, most everyone has seen this in some sort of cowboy movie along the line somewhere. Loading is achieved through the loading port on the right hand side of the rifle, magazine is a full length tube underneath the barrel and ejection of fired cases is out the top of the action. No surprises there certainly! When it comes to



The 1892 splits apart at the front of the action. The result is a compact package for transportation or backpack. There are some pretty close tolerances in place to make the rifle takedown and reassemble consistently and accurately.



*(Above) Barrel reinforce
The barrel reinforce can be seen through the top of the action. The threaded hole is where the magazine tube screws into
(Above right and right) The action must be open to take the rifle down. The magazine tube is removed and the two major parts simply twist and separate.
(Left) Magazine tube end*



*(Right) Top of action. The beauty about lever action rifles is they are "slab sided" meaning there is nothing to get caught up sliding the rig in or out of a scabbard.
(Below) The bolt face seen inside the disassembled action.*

magazine capacity I could only manage to get five rounds into the tube, and the instruction manual lists a magazine cutoff to reduce the number of cartridges it can hold. This is a requirement in Italy apparently, but the cutoff is easily removable for other countries with no such restrictions. Magazine capacity for the 24" barrel version is listed as 10, plus one up the spout.



So let's have a look how Chiappa's little takedown stacks up. The overall length of the rifle is 965mm (38"). That measurement splits down into 505mm (19.8") for the barrel section and 480mm (18.9") for the butt end. To separate the two pieces the magazine tube is unscrewed (with the assistance of a "lever" at the muzzle end) and removed, and then the barrel twists clockwise ninety degrees and slips away from the receiver. This must be done with the lever in the open position. Of course, assembly is the reverse to this process. It is quick, easy and precise. Tolerances in this regard are very good indeed, and they have to be because if they weren't it quite simply wouldn't be effective or reliable.

The barrel is octagonal, measuring 18mm (3/4") across the flats. It is blued to a lovely deep finish as is the magazine tube. The bore is excellent to look at, and smooth as silk when I ran a cleaning patch through it to clean out the oil and leftovers from the manufacturing process. The muzzle doesn't have any sort of



(Left) The lever on the end of the magazine tube hinges out. This is used as a lever to unscrew the magazine tube from the rifle.

"crown" to speak of, and the knowledge about their importance we have today wasn't available when the original of this rifle model was designed by Mr. Browning. In

any case we aren't talking a benchrest rig here, we are talking about a rifle built for a cowboy to protect himself, gather food or fight off bad guys. Sub MOA wasn't even a thought for that guy!

The rear sight is a ramp setup which takes care of the elevation adjustments with regard to point of impact. The front sight is a blade, and provides the windage side of the zeroing equation. The hammer has a half cock position, however, apart from that there is no dedicated safety catch fitted.

The action, forend cap and curved steel buttplate are all case hardened. I am not usually attracted to case hardening for some reason, but this is an exception. It fits in very well with the rifle and, I think, it makes it very attractive. As stated the buttplate is curved, with about a 12mm (1/2") radius at its largest point. This isn't a concern for the shooter in a pistol cartridge such as the .357 the test Chiappa is chambered for.

When it comes to timber, the Chiappa displays a reasonably dark butt and forend with grain visible through the clear finish. There is no checkering, nor should there be on a



(Left) The front sight provides the fine tuning in the windage department. The barrel is octagonal and blued to a high quality finish.

(Below) There is no safety as such fitted to the rifle, but the hammer does have a "half cock" position.



(Left) The steel buttplate is curved. This would be punishing on a large calibre rifle but with the smaller pistol cartridges it doesn't create an issue.

(Below) A bonus with the takedown is that it facilitates barrel cleaning from the breech end.



(Right) This group was the best at 25m - about an inch and a half with Highland's 158gn FPJ.

(Right below) Tetra's 100m smallbore target was used for some offhand practice at 50m. All shots were "in the black" which would be entirely adequate for putting the shots into the boiler room of medium sized game at that range.

reproduction such as this one. The butt features a straight grip, and in typical lever rifle style the profile of the whole rifle is narrow with nothing to get caught up on scabbards when inserting or removing the firearm in the saddle.

The action of the rifle is slick to operate. Chiappa claims hardened components internally to assist with this smooth levering and it looks as though they have achieved what they set out to well. It was very easy to work the lever and keep the fired cases spitting out the top with the rig shouldered.

The rifle really was a pleasure to

SPECIFICATIONS

CHIAPPA "PUMA" 1892 TAKEDOWN

Maker: Armi Chiappa (Italy)

Action: Lever

Calibre: .357 Magnum

Overall Length: 965mm (38")

Barrel Length: 505mm (19.8") (24" avail)

Weight: 3.0kg (6.6lb)

Stock: Walnut

Metal Finish: Blued barrel, case hardened action and fittings

Sights: Ramp adjustable rear, front blade adjustable for windage

Safety: 2 position hammer, no other safety

Distributor: Highland Sports

www.highlandsports.com.au

Warranty: 12 months

Price: \$2700 RRP

shoot, from accuracy, fun and function perspectives. I don't shoot "cowboy action" matches but I could more than see myself going for a stroll around some scrubby country with this rifle. It can be carried all day without the fatigue of higher power rifles; it is reasonably quiet, basically doesn't recoil and will drop our medium game species up to 40 or 50 yards if the marksman does their bit.

I took the carbine to the range and spent a very enjoyable morning punching holes in targets out to 50m, both



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(Above) The 1892 was designed as a rifle to be carried in the old west - the lever action is slick and shooting is mild with the .357 Magnum.

from the bench and offhand. Accuracy wise the best group with the .357 was 37mm high by 12mm wide for five shots at 25m, with three shots all cutting each other. I dragged a target out to twice the distance and off hand I managed to keep 13 shots in a 107mm x 77mm group. This translates into dropping all the rounds into a 4" circle. Given 50m is about the effective limit on small to medium game with this round, putting rounds consistently into the vital area of medium game at that distance is no problem for this rifle. I tested the rifle using Highland ammunition, in 158gn FPJ (solids) and 158gn SJHP (semi jacketed hollow points) guise. I can report there were no malfunctions of either rifle or Highland ammo during the process, as one would expect.

The takedown feature was very welcome post the testing, for it made the job of cleaning the barrel very easy. No need to try to clean from the muzzle, just assemble the Tetra cleaning kit and run the rod with the required brushes and patches through until it was gleaming!

Summing up our time together, I found the 1892 lever action takedown slick and easy to manipulate. A pleasure to carry and a time proven design, lever action fans you need to run your eye over this line of firearms. The option of changing barrels (chamberings) is a carrot sure to entice the enthusiast.

I continue to be impressed with the quality of manufacture of Chiappa firearms, and see no reason why you shouldn't be as well.



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