

1963 Tesla Smerle

Description: Similar in appearance and weight to the Webley Mk VI revolver (Webley & Scott produced the entire production run of the Tesla Smerle from 1945 to 1964), with the exception that the barrel has been filled with a crystalline substance whose composition is still classified (and also impervious to modern analysis). To reload, pop the top, pull out the capacitor, put in another. The Smerle CANNOT fire regular ammunition. Recoil is nonexistent.

Range: technically, about a mile or so.

Damage: A shot will kill a man. Three shots that hit the exact same spot will likely penetrate most tanks' side armor. There has been at least one occasion where a Smerle has been used to shoot down a fighter jet, but that was under *extremely* anomalous conditions.

Shots: 6 per capacitor.

Recharge time: the capacitor recharges at the rate of one shot per hour, assuming that somebody has enough electricity to power a city block at hand.

When Nikola Tesla died in 1943, his papers and things were expressly and specifically gone through by a MIT engineer (Professor John Trump) to see if there was a

death ray hiding in there. Professor Trump reported that there was not; and Professor Trump was, of course, lying. The notes and preliminary designs were naturally sent to the Office of Scientific Research and Development; the OSRD somewhat less naturally shared the information with the British, as per the Quebec Agreement. And then, in truth, the Americans forgot about the death ray. They were, after all, spending quite a lot of money, time, and attention on making atomic weapons, which were items with great promise that could also be understood by intellects less dizzying than Nikola Tesla's.

The British caught some lucky breaks in their own research, however: the prototype that they constructed in 1944 worked properly (and impressively) on its first try, and that was enough to secure enough funding for an extremely limited production run (the first actual Smerles) in 1945. If this sounds odd, consider: the guns worked, but they were exceptionally expensive to load, and the science behind them was *not* understood properly, or really even at all. Webley & Scott struggled to put out even a score of Smerles a year, and the capacitors were even trickier to make. While the British found that it was nice to have actual laser guns to hand out to its most elite-of-the-elite spies, they simply could not produce enough to make publicly revealing them cost-effective.

And then Webley & Scott abruptly discovered in 1964 that they could no longer make either new Smerles or capacitors. The old ones still worked, but once the guns (or, far more often, the capacitors) broke, that was it. Nobody is really sure why this would be the case; but then, they didn't understand how the Smerles really worked, either. Many people muttered 'magic' at that point, and many other people muttered 'Mad Science,' and not a few people scratched their head at trying to come up with a valid semantic difference between the two.

Today, Smerles are coveted historical artifacts that are ardently pursued by an extremely esoteric and hidden subset of the military memorabilia collectors' world. *Working* Smerles are worth their weight in whatever the seller feels like; the gun itself is quite robust, but the capacitors can be finicky. Very few people actually still use a Smerle in their day-to-day work, but it is a traditional holdout weapon for when the heroes finally burst into the central control room of the supervillain's lair. That sort of thing can add a touch of swank to the proceedings, plus of course it's a man-killing weapon that has no recoil and can blast through most cover.

One final note: Webley & Scott got out of the firearms business in the 1990s. It's since been sold, transferred, and is now owned by a British corporation specializing in outdoor activities -- and is making guns again. This information has been of no little interest to certain members of the aforementioned military memorabilia collector community; and as that community overlaps with several more unsavory ones, there is a certain predatory flavor to said interest. Not that anybody's going to do anything about it. Yet. Best to wait to see if Webley has retained enough institutional knowledge to even *want* to take another crack at making working Smerles again.

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