GUN TESTS®

THE CONSUMER RESOURCE FOR THE SERIOUS SHOOTER

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COOL THREADS, MAN

There are a lot of impediments to using a suppressor: Money, hassle, paperwork. But some gunmakers are removing the biggest mechanical stumbling block. ● Page 6



PACKABLE RIMFIRES

Want to take a handy handgun on a long walk? We put three Kit Guns to the test to see which one would go in our pack. ● Page 17



SELF-DEFENSE INSURANCE

Okay, the worst has happened. You protected yourself with a firearm. Do you have someone to defend you? A lawyer explains how to choose a legal-defense program before the "bang." ● Page 23



NEW HANDGUNS FOR 2018

Check out these new sidearms and ammunition introduced earlier this year... ● Page 27

DOWNRANGE: 2 ● FIRING LINE: 3 ● CUSTOMER SERVICE: 26 ● COMING UP: 32

DOWNRANGE

DID YOU KNOW?



Todd Woodard

Did you know that a retired associate justice of the United States Supreme Court had penned a *New York Times* op-ed entitled, "John Paul Stevens: Repeal the Second Amendment." In his op-ed, Stevens (nominated by a Republican president) praises the work of the March for Our Lives organizers and urges the group to "seek more effective and more lasting reform" via a "repeal of the Second Amendment." He calls the Second Amendment a "relic of the 18th century."

Did you know that moviemaker Michael Moore has a Facebook page that starts, "My Proposal to Repeal the Second Amendment and Replace It With This." He then goes on to cite a proposed 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that reads: "A well regulated State National Guard, being helpful to the safety and security of a State in times of need, along with the strictly regulated right of the people to keep and bear a limited number of non-automatic Arms for sport and hunting, with respect to the primary right of all people to be free from gun violence, this shall not be infringed."

Did you know that Karen Carter Peterson, chair of the Louisiana Democratic Party and vice chair of the Democratic National Committee recently tweeted, "Repeal the Second Amendment." The tweet linked to Stevens *NYT* article mentioned above.

Did you know that MoveOn.org has an active petition drive with more than 5000 signatures that is headlined, "Repeal the Second Amendment Now." Then below, there's language that reads, "This anachronistic, poorly worded amendment prevents us from passing real gun control measures that will be effective in stopping the ongoing gun slaughter. It should be no more a constitutional right to own a gun than to own a car."

Did you know a recent survey covered in the *Washington Post* asserts that "One in five Americans wants the Second Amendment to be repealed."

Did you know that television personality Larry King has supported repealing the Second Amendment because it is poorly worded.

Did you know that *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens had called for repeal the Second Amendment, saying "There is something kind of aggressively and inhumanly repetitive about this line that guns are essential to American liberties, hard one to stomach when so many thousands of people are dying every year for this so-called liberty."

Did you know there's a Facebook page called "Repeal the Second Amendment?"

Did you know that an amendment to the Constitution has actually been repealed? The 18th Amendment. It can happen. The question is, will gun owners fight to keep the Second Amendment?

To follow the progress of our tests, read up-to-date information on new firearms and accessory introductions, learn about gun legislation, and see the latest efforts to restrict the 2nd Amendment, please "Like" the Gun Tests Magazine Facebook page. Also, to see testing videos, check out our YouTube channel @ Gun Tests Magazine.

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Bad Luck with Ammunition

Reader Mike says he's the guy who gets all the duds when he buys ammo. We should thank him for his great public service. Also, Reader Bill thinks the M1 should have won a recent test.

Re "Affordable Handgun Ammo: Is It Up to Par for Your Firearms Use?" April 2018

Hey Gun Tests, just finished reading the April issue. Another great issue. One thing I wanted to point out was the affordable ammo tests. I personally love those kinds of tests. It also shows me that I am in the minority on the Remington Thunderbolt 22 LR ammo. I've bought a few boxes of that stuff throughout the years and it hasn't performed that well in any of my 22s. I'm the customer that gets the boxes with the duds in them. Or the bullets that do not cycle the gun at all. CCI Blazer is my affordable 22 ammo of choice. Shoots quite well in my rimfires. I also loved the home-defense section, too. Keep that kind of test coming as well. Thanks for making the best firearms magazine out there. — **Mike**

Re "Affordable Home-Defense Rifles: AR-15 or M1 in 30 Carbine?" April 2018

Hi Todd: I just got the latest issue and have many comments on the M1 Carbine vs. AR. I have a Carbine and have shot an AR, but much prefer the Carbine. I'm an old fart who has no use for plastic-fantastic. Yes, the 1911 or Hi-Power are my choices. I do not intend to have to defend my farm and home at ranges of 100 yards. Lawyers would have a field day were I to shoot "aggressors" at long range. So, either gun is a short-range weapon applicable only if you are directly threatened and must "stand your ground" and cannot retreat. And no, the Carbine isn't a "minute of coyote or feral dog" gun at 100 yards. It is what it was. A rifle designed for people who couldn't master a handgun.

In this era of what is socially acceptable, the M1 Carbine doesn't raise hackles, as does the AR. The writer was definitely biased towards the AR. Perhaps he should have included more comments from the distaff shooters and folks less experienced in shooting anything but a 22 LR. He should have commented on the difference in muzzle blast, as you are not going to be wearing ear plugs if you need to use either gun for immediate self defense.

Yes, the Carbine is a better alternative for those who cannot readily master a handgun. As someone in his 70s, I cannot shoot a handgun as accurately as I once could, due to loss of muscle mass and aging eyes. But, I can still shoot a 38-40 '92 SRC or an M1 Carbine. Shortcomings? What shortcomings, other than the fact that the 110-grain bullet penetrates more than the 55-grain bullet. Which is more easily mastered and which can be readily cleared of malfunctions? I think the Carbine. Fifteen-round magazines vs. thirty-round magazines? Did you forget that thirty-round Carbine magazines are available on the internet and from some aftermarket manufacturers? They have the last round hold-open follower that surplus fifteen-round magazines don't have. Availability of ammunition? Yes, 223/5.56 is available almost anywhere, but one needs to plan ahead for potential future needs. In the event of a natural disaster or social upheaval, neither Carbine nor 223/5.56 ammunition will be available. One needs to buy

GUN TESTS REPORT CARD GRADING

Gun Tests Grade: A
A gun with this rating functions perfectly, shoots accurately, and exhibits comfortable, easy use for its owner. We may prefer one gun over others based on its unusual accuracy, superior performance, unusual features, or nice cosmetics. We recognize such a gun for these traits without regard to its cost.

Gun Tests Grade: B
We give this ranking to a gun that functions appropriately for its category, but which might not do as well in major areas as an **A**-ranked gun.

Gun Tests Grade: C
We may have reservations about some aspect of a gun's performance or pricing. We express those reservations so the reader can balance our concerns with his or her needs.

Gun Tests Grade: D
Some aspect of a gun's performance — in particular, safety, function, or accuracy — doesn't meet our standards and isn't easily resolved.

Gun Tests Grade: F
Some aspect of a gun's performance is dangerous, inappropriate for the category, or is likely to fail.

sufficient ammunition before an upheaval occurs.

You alluded to the fact that the Carbine was easier to learn how to shoot and manipulate. I think you should have elaborated more on that aspect. Home defense requires a firearm designed for immediate, short-range use, not long-range use. One all family members can readily use. That leaves handguns, shotguns, and the AR in the dust. Just my biased opinion. Readers must judge for themselves. **— Bill**

Terrific issue. I especially liked the article comparing the M1 carbine with the AR. I own a 1943 Winchester M1 carbine and a Olympic Arms PCR. I would like to see an article about the Ruger ARX ammunition. I carry a Kahr P-40 now that I am retired. Have a great day. **— Robert**

One of your best issues ever, loved the M1 carbine material, loved the inclusion of previous reviews, really thoughtful for your readers. I bought my M1 carbine from the DCM around 1965, well worn but serviceable. The accuracy is all right for 100 yards. It is reliable and would make a good home-defense carbine, very handy. I have read that if you are going to use a 30-round magazine, you should have an M2 magazine catch installed for better retention and reliability. **— David**

I am surprised that you did not include the Ruger Mini-14. That is my wife's choice. She calls it her can killer. They are well within the price range of a 5.56, and lots of accessories readily available. I should say I am not a real fan of the 30 Carbine cartridge and never have bonded with the AR frame, ever since I had to qualify with one. **— Bruce**

Re "New Rifle Introductions for 2018," April 2018

Dear Mr. Woodard, I want to thank you for making the section much clearer about the SHOT show material and that it is not a review, just material from the show. And thanks for the material. It is useful. Also, thank you for the review of the cheap ammo. You verified what we have thought here in our group for quite some time, that Fiocchi makes very good and very accurate ammo, from our experience the best of the lower half of ammo manufacturers, and in some cases, better than the expensive ammos. One of my colleagues also shoots a lot of Wolf and Bear ammo, and he likes it for the price, exactly what you reviewed. All of that review is very helpful.

You recently reviewed a gun case that you use to transport guns to and from the range. That was helpful, but it would have been much stronger of an endorsement if you had reviewed two, or better yet three, four, five or more along with it and it had come out on top. And it would have served us readers better to know what the cheaper ones do and don't do, have and don't have. You could also run a test on some range bags, but those tests might be better done over five years or so to see how they hold up.

I appreciate the reviews on reloading items. They have been helpful to me at least, and I would like to see more. I would like to know if it is possible to verify which dies are the most accurate, which presses, that sort of thing. Not just opinion, but actual testing or measuring or whatever to see what is the best stuff.

I would like a review of shooting benches, tripods, bipods, etc. Also, and most helpful to me, I would like a review of the sandbags, vises, rests, and whatever else the stuff is called that you put a gun in to sight it in and shoot to test loads.

I really appreciate your tests and your approach. I remember reading the ad or flier or whatever it was I saw on your magazine years ago. I had never heard of you or the magazine. I had subscribed to *Field & Stream* and *Outdoor Life* regularly as a kid, mostly to read Pat McManus, but I liked the rest of the information as well. Sometimes I also subscribed to *Sports Afield*. But as I got married and had many other expenses as our six boys arrived, I could not justify subscribing and reading so much. But when I saw your magazine ad, and read that you actually fail guns when they don't perform, I thought you would be worth the money and worth the time to read. And that has turned out to be completely correct. We still have four people reading every issue here that I get. We initial the inside front cover corner to make sure we don't miss anyone. Thanks for turning out content worth reading, and worth keeping. **— Don**

Re "Firing Line," March 2018

Greetings, Todd. I just wanted to get my two cents in regarding the beauty of the Walter P22. Obviously, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and I'm beholding two Walter P22s in my collection because they are a hoot to shoot and they look great too! Keep up the good work and keep up the good fight. Regards, **— Jim**

Re "Downrange," April 2018

Hello Todd and staff. I'm just back from my local indoor range and picked up my April copy of Gun Tests and started reading Downrange, "Say something leads to do nothing." As information comes out about the female shooter at YouTube, it looks like law enforcement had some solid intel about her frame of mind and her destination well before she showed up in San Bruno. Communication has to happen between law enforcement and public health agencies, and it has to happen now. Your article is right on the issue. **—Richard**

Dear Mr. Woodard: Your editorial about the Parkland tragedy is full of common sense, empathy, and sound suggestions. A real pleasure to read. Thanks. **— Otto**

Dear Editor: I have been a devoted reader of Gun Tests since Vol. 1., No. 1, but have never been prouder

of the magazine than this year. Todd Woodard's editorial comments on the 2nd Amendment are always insightful, informative, balanced, and effectively quotable to those who would restrict our right to bear arms — quite in contrast, unfortunately, to lunatic editorials regularly appearing in other venues. Sincerely, **—Eugene**

I enjoy Todd Woodard's editorials each issue. The one in April 2018 issue of GUN TESTS made the point that responsible gun owners have responsibility to report people in their community who demonstrate erratic or dangerous behavior. Report to whom? Local law authorities are the first and most appropriate response. But when you say to the FBI, and then the FBI failed to act, or the FBI "could have pursued…," then that presumes the FBI has been provided the resources to respond, including but not limited to manpower and state-of-art computers to cross-check all these incoming reports from concerned citizens, then zero in on a potential threat. How do we make sure the FBI has those resources? Ante up, fellas, Federal taxes. Nobody likes paying taxes, but I don't want criminals escaping capture. Sincerely, **— Nicholas**

Just got the issue. A superb editorial which needs to be disseminated to congressmen/senators and the public. You hit the nail on the head about being responsible shooters/gun owners. To add to your editorial, I would add that the school officials, the Broward County Sheriffs Office/Scott Israel and the FBI need to be held accountable and held liable for their failures to adequately report the mental problems of this maniac so that a background check would have prevented him from the gun purchase. They share the blame, not the NRA or law-abiding gun-owning citizens. The same holds true for the gay-nightclub shooter in Florida, the Texas church shooter, etc. These maniacs were all known to various law enforcement/governmental agencies who did nothing to intervene beforehand. My son is a decorated police officer in Tampa, and he clearly states that their training mandates active (cautious) confrontation of the shooter to kill the shooter... not just setting up a perimeter while active shooting is in progress. The Parkland tactics were deplorable non-actions taken by those deputies. **— Paul**

In light of your editorial in this month's issue, will GUN TESTS (or have I missed it) do testing on gun locks (I just bought a Zore, on sale), gun safes (quick open, full combo, etc.) and lock boxes, etc.? You check out different kinds of ammo, holsters, etc., I think it's a good idea to give us readers unbiased reviews of all the important safety items for pistols and rifles. And it would be a worthy contribution to the cause. As many people often forget, rights come with responsibilities. Thank you. **— Jerry**

Yes, I'm arranging upcoming tests of quick-access gun safes now, and other safety items you mentioned are in development. — Todd Woodard

Re Website Access

How do I access the index to find information on prior reviews of weapons, ammunition, holsters, etc.? **— John**

Check the box below for detailed instructions. — tw

PRINT SUBSCRIBERS: HOW TO GET WEB ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVES

Setting up free electronic access to our website allows you to search the **GUN TESTS** archives for specific guns — and you get access to the current issue on the web before it hits your mailbox. Also, you can check the status of your subscription account, update your mailing or email address, pay your subscription invoice or renew your subscription, and communicate with the editorial staff. Current subscribers can begin activating free online access by typing this into your browser: **Gun-Tests.com/activate.**

To create your web-access login, you provide your first and last name, the ZIP/Postal Code, and your account number. That's the first 11 digits found on your magazine's mailing label just above your name. If you can't get the account activated, contact us at **Customer_Service@GunTests.info**, or call 1-800-829-9084.

There are two ways to find guns we've reviewed. The Compare Guns feature (top left corner of the page under the logo) allows you to input several descriptors and narrow the search results. Or you can use the Search function. If you search for a common item, such as "22 LR," you'll get tons of references. Basically, the search function finds every instance of the searched-for topic and lists the accompanying articles the topic appeared in. The more specific and unique the reference, the better the search. We do our best to list the catalog numbers for guns we've tested, so that's usually a good place to start. There's also an "Advanced Search" area to help you narrow the results.

We welcome mail from our readers. To send us comments or questions about previous articles in the magazine, email us at: **GunTestsEditor@icloud.com.** *If you'll include the month and year of the article you're writing about, it's a big help. Also, please include your name, address, and phone number. We won't publish your personal information other than your name, but we may need to contact you about material in your letter.* **GT**

Threaded-Barrel Bolt Guns In 300 Blackout and 308 Win.

We pitted three well-made rifles from Savage, Remington, and Ruger to see which one was the best to use with a Surge 7.62 suppressor and some subsonic rounds. All could shhh-oot.

A few years ago, the incidence of factory-supplied threaded barrels on rifles was negligible, because most people didn't have a lot of interest in changing their muzzle devices, including flash suppressors and sound suppressors. Sound suppressors, also incorrectly known as silencers, and more accurately called "mufflers" or "moderators," just weren't that common because the devices were regulated by the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934. In that law, Congress used its tax power to set up a tax-and-registration system for machine guns, short-barreled shotguns and rifles, grenades, mortars and various other devices, including sound suppressors.

Under the NFA today, a prospective owner must go through a months-long registration process with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE) and pay a $200 tax, in advance, before he or she can purchase a suppressor. Despite the difficulties posed by the regulatory system, suppressor sales have continued to grow over the last decade, and especially the last five years. Suppressor ownership is legal in most states. The exceptions are Hawaii, California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. In the 42 states where suppressors are legal, they are allowed for hunting in all but Connecticut and Vermont, and states are de-regulating suppressor use every day, so this list may be outdated by the time you read this.

Concurrent with the sales growth of suppressors, manufacturers have responded by making the muzzles of some of their rifles and pistols easier to receive the devices. Thus, the growth of factory-threaded barrels, three models of which we recently tested, with and without a suppressor.



Top is the Ruger American Rifle Ranch Model in 300 Blackout, the same chambering as the Remington Model 700 SPS-T, middle. At bottom is the Savage 10PT-SR No. 22356 chambered in 308 Winchester. All three have bulges on the muzzles that are thread protectors for the muzzles, which come from the factory to accept suppressors like the Rugged Suppressors Surge 7.62 from SilencerShop.com at right. The Surge 7.62 is a modular 30-caliber rifle silencer, which enables the shooter to change the size and configuration of the silencer from a full-size 9-inch silencer to a shorter 7.5-inch unit. Also, it has an interchangeable 5.56 endcap. It produces a sound reduction level down to 134 to 138.4 dB.



The Contestants

We wanted to test three threaded-muzzle bolt actions in a reference chambering well known to hunters and shooters, the 308 Winchester, along with a less-common bolt-action choice, the 300 AAC Blackout, which is more often chambered in AR-15 uppers because it has the same overall length, base diameter, and rim diameter as the 5.56 NATO round, so it will feed from an unmodified magwell in an AR-15 lower. The 300 Blackout can be loaded with lighter bullets, where it compares favorably to the 7.62×39mm Soviet round, or loaded with heavier bullets that travel below subsonic speeds for suppressor use. At sea level, the speed of sound is roughly 1125 fps, with the "roughly" changing based on air temperature and other conditions. Subsonic ammo is easier to suppress at

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer	**Savage Arms**	**Remington**	**Ruger**
Model	**10PT-SR 22356**	**Model 700 SPS-T 84205**	**American Rifle Ranch 06968**
Cartridge	**308 Winchester**	**300 Blackout**	**300 Blackout**
Price	**$550**	**$680**	**$420**
Action	Bolt; steel cylindrical receiver	Bolt; steel cylindrical Model 700 receiver	Bolt; machined-steel hexagonal receiver
Length, Overall (in.)	38.25	36.25	36.0
Height, Unboxed (in.)	7.25	6.9	6.75
Height, As Tested (in.)	8.6	10.0	9.0
Width, Maximum (in.)	3.1	2.9	2.6
Weight, Unboxed (lbs.)	7.7	8.25	6.2
Weight, Range (lbs.)	9.6	10.1	7.5
Barrel Length/Twist (in.)	18; 1:10 RH	16.5; 5-R 1:7 RH	16.12; 1:7 RH; 6 grooves
Barrel Finish/Material	Matte-blue carbon steel	Matte-blue carbon steel; hammer forged	Matte-blue carbon steel; cold hammer forged
Barrel Floated	Yes	Yes	No
Barrel Muzzle Diameter (in.)	0.843	0.883	0.748
Barrel Muzzle Style/Device	⅝"-24 thread; knurled steel thread protector	⅝"-24 thread; 9-side steel thread protector	⅝"-24 thread; 2-side steel thread protector
Stock	AccuStock black synthetic; checkered pistol grip	Hogue OverMolded Ghillie Green pillar bedded; pebbled pistol grip texture	Power Bedding integral block; Flat Dark Earth synthetic; grooved pistol grip texture
Stock Length of Pull (in.)	13.75	13.38	14.0
Stock Comb Style	Straight	Straight	Straight
Stock Drop @ Comb (in.)	1.75	1.6	1.6
Stock Drop @ Heel (in.)	2.25	1.6	1.75
Stock Pitch (in.)	3.25	1.6	2.75
Stock Cast (in.)	None	None	None
Stock Handedness	Ambidextrous	Ambidextrous	Ambidextrous
Stock Forend Style	Beavertail	Semi-beavertail; pebbled	Sporter; grooved
Stock Buttpad Thickness (in.)	1.1	1.1; Supercell	1.0
Stock Sling Swivel Attachments	1 butt, 2 forend	1 butt, 1 forend	1 butt, 1 forend
Stock Grip Cap	Black plastic	None	Black plastic; Ruger logo
Trigger-Pull Weight (lbs.)	2.5; AccuTrigger; adjustable	2.5; X-Mark Pro externally adjustable	3.2; Marksman adjustable
Trigger Style	Single stage	Single stage	Single stage
Trigger Guard Material	Black Aluminum Alloy	Black Aluminum Alloy	FDE polymer
Safety	2-pos. tang-mounted slider button	2-pos. action-mounted lever	2-pos. tang-mounted slider button
Magazine	(1) 4-rd. detachable box; stamped steel and polymer	5-rd. internal; hinged floorplate	(1) 5-rd. detachable box; rotary flush-fit black polymer
Magazine Release	Grooved polymer tab; front of magazine	Steel tab; front of trigger guard	Polymer tab; front of magazine
Bolt	2 lug; blued steel plunger ejector; 90-degree throw, BA bolt handle; floating bolt head	2 lug; blued steel plunger ejector; 90-degree throw, integral knurled oblong handle	3 lug; stainless steel; plunger ejector; 70-degree throw, blued ball handle
Bolt Release	Trigger-guard button & trigger-pull combo	Stainless-steel tab; top of trigger guard	Action-mounted lever; left rear receiver
Sights	None	None	None
Optics Mounting Hardware	Picatinny rail installed; alum.	Drilled and tapped	1-piece aluminum rail installed
Warranty	1-year limited	2-year limited	None written
Telephone	(800) 370-0708	(800) 243-9700	(336) 949-5200
Website	SavageArms.com	Remington.com	Ruger.com
Made In	Westfield, MA	Ilion, NY	Mayodan, NC

RANGE DATA

Hornady Match 308 Win. 168-gr. BTHP 8097	Savage 10PT-SR Unsuppressed	Suppressed
Average Velocity	2596 fps	2618 fps
Muzzle Energy	2513 ft.-lbs.	2556 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.2 in.	0.8 in.

Monarch 308 Win. 145-gr. FMJ	Savage 10PT-SR Unsuppressed	Suppressed
Average Velocity	2685 fps	2668 fps
Muzzle Energy	2320 ft.-lbs.	2291 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.2 in.	1.2 in.

Winchester 308 Win. 185-gr. Hollowpoint	Savage 10PT-SR Unsuppressed	Suppressed
Average Velocity	1109 fps	1079 fps
Muzzle Energy	505 ft.-lbs.	478 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.4 in.	1.2 in.

To collect chronograph and accuracy data for all three rifles, we set up at American Shooting Centers in Houston (AMShootCenters.com). We recorded velocities using an Oehler Model 35 Proof Chronograph ($595 from Oehler-Research.com) with the first screen set 10 feet from the muzzle. Velocities were recorded with an air temperature of 82 degrees and 90% humidity. For bench-accuracy shooting at 100 yards, we fired the rifles off Caldwell DeadShot shooting bags. Accuracy is the average group size for 10 three-shot groups, measured center-to-center of the widest-apart bullet holes in each group, then rounded to the nearest tenth of an inch. Suppressed data was collected with a Rugged Suppressors Surge 7.62 ($992 from SilencerShop.com).

***Ammunition sources:** Hornady Match 308 Winchester 168-gr. Boattail Hollowpoint 8097 ($29/20 from Academy Sports & Outdoors); Monarch 308 Winchester 145-gr. Full Metal Jacket ($10/20 from Academy Sports & Outdoors); and Winchester Super-X 308 Winchester 185-gr. Power-Point JHP Subsonic X308SUBX ($24.50/20 from MidwayUSA.com).*

the muzzle, and it doesn't create the downrange "crack" as the bullet breaks the sound barrier.

Our first test rifle was a Savage 10PT-SR No. 22356 chambered in 308 Winchester, $550 at an Academy Sports and Outdoors retail store in Houston. The bolt-action rifle featured a ⅝x24-threaded barrel with a thread protector and a matte-blued finish, a synthetic stock with a beavertail forend, a BA-style bolt handle, and a black one-piece 1913-cut aluminum-alloy accessory rail. It featured the company's AccuTrigger and Accustock and came with one detachable-box magazine, which had a steel body and polymer floor and release tab. The knurled-steel thread protector came installed on the 18-inch-long barrel. The protector detached from the muzzle with a twist of the hand, and went back on easily.

The first 300 Blackout rifle was the Remington Model 700 Special Purpose Synthetic (SPS-T, No. 84205), announced in 2012. The 300 Blackout is one of three SPS-T models with 16.5-inch-long barrels, with one (No. 85549) chambered in 223 Remington and the third in 308 Win. (No. 85538). Capacities of the 223 and the 300 are five in an internal magazine, and four for the 308 Win. Two other models in the line, a 223 Rem. and a 308 Win., have 20-inch barrels, the Nos. 84206 and 84207, respectively. It lists for $817 MSRP, but we bought ours at Academy for $680. The Model 700 SPS-Tactical has a cylindrical Model 700 receiver machined from solid steel, with a heavy-contour barrel and muzzle cut to accept ⅝x24 threaded flash hiders, muzzle brakes, and suppressors. The short carbon-steel hammer-forged barrel handles well in tight spots, we found, and with most ammunition, it delivered pinpoint accuracy. With a twist rate of one in seven inches, this rifle should stabilize heavier bullets well, but in our testing, it didn't, at least unsuppressed.

The runt of the trio — in terms of size, weight, and cost — was the Ruger American Rifle Ranch No. 06968 in 300 AAC. We bought it at Academy on sale for $420, well under its suggested retail of $529. The Flat Dark Earth (aka tan) lightweight synthetic stock featured modern forend contouring and grip serrations. It didn't come with sights, like the others, but instead had a non-Picatinny scope rail installed. By this we mean a one-piece M-223 Nikon 1913 scope base wouldn't fit the groove pattern on the rail as it did on the Savage, whose one-piece rail was 1913-spec and took the Nikon base willingly. This annoyance required re-ringing our Nikon test scope with two Weaver tactical bases to switch the optic between guns, but this still put the Ruger a step ahead of the Remington rifle, which didn't come with any bases. We used Weaver #35/36 bases for the SPS-Tactical. Elsewhere, the Ruger had a short, very handy 16.12-inch-long barrel with 1:7 right-hand twist. The Ruger Marksman adjustable trigger allows the pull weight to be adjusted down to 3 pounds, so that's where we set it. The Power Bedding integral bedding block system in the stock was supposed to free-float the barrel, but our sample had some interference in the stock channel, which we could have removed with a Dremel, but we chose not to because that's how the rifle came out of the box. If the stock hurt accuracy, then that would be penalty enough, we decided. Of course, the muzzle also had the ⅝x24 thread pattern like the others.

How We Tested

To collect chronograph and accuracy data, we set up at American Shooting Centers in Houston (AMShootCenters.com). We recorded velocities using

RANGE DATA

Remington UMC 300 AAC 120-gr. OTFB L300AAC1	Remington M700 SPS-T Unsuppressed	Remington M700 SPS-T Suppressed	Ruger American Ranch Unsuppressed	Ruger American Ranch Suppressed
Average Velocity	2222 fps	2236 fps	2210 fps	2229 fps
Muzzle Energy	1315 ft.-lbs.	1332 ft.-lbs.	1301 ft.-lbs.	1323 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.4 in.	1.2 in.	1.4 in.	1.2 in.

Sellier & Bellot 300 AAC 147-gr. FMJ SB300BLKB	Remington M700 SPS-T Unsuppressed	Remington M700 SPS-T Suppressed	Ruger American Ranch Unsuppressed	Ruger American Ranch Suppressed
Average Velocity	2099 fps	2110 fps	2064 fps	2096 fps
Muzzle Energy	1438 ft.-lbs.	1453 ft.-lbs.	1390 ft.-lbs.	1434 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	1.0 in.	0.4 in.	1.0 in.	0.8 in.

Remington UMC 300 AAC 220-gr. Subsonic 21422	Remington M700 SPS-T Unsuppressed	Remington M700 SPS-T Suppressed	Ruger American Ranch Unsuppressed	Ruger American Ranch Suppressed
Average Velocity	1075 fps	1088 fps	1073 fps	1089 fps
Muzzle Energy	564 ft.-lbs.	578 ft.-lbs.	562 ft.-lbs.	579 ft.-lbs.
Average Group	6.0 in.	0.6 in.	1.8 in.	0.8 in.

Ammunition sources: *Remington UMC 300 AAC 120-grain OTFB Supersonic L300AAC1 ($16/20 from Academy Sports & Outdoors); Remington UMC 300 AAC 220-grain Open-Tip Flat Base (OTFB) Subsonic 21422 ($17/20 from Academy Sports & Outdoors); and Sellier & Bellot 300 AAC 147-grain Full Metal Jacket SB300BLKB ($13/20 from MidwayUSA.com).*

an Oehler Model 35 Proof Chronograph ($595 from Oehler-Research.com) with the first screen set 10 feet from the muzzle. Velocities were recorded with an air temperature of 82 degrees and 90% humidity, with 20-mph 6 o'clock winds. For bench-accuracy shooting at 100 yards, we fired the rifles off Caldwell DeadShot shooting bags. Accuracy is the average group size for 10 three-shot groups, measured center-to-center of the widest-apart bullet holes in each group, then rounded to the nearest tenth of an inch. Suppressed data was collected with a Rugged Suppressors Surge 7.62 ($992 from SilencerShop.com).

The riflescope was a Nikon M-223 series 3-12x42mm No. 16305, whose BDC (bullet-drop compensating) system has the lower half of the vertical reticle wire showing a series of open circles and hash marks that can quickly be put over a target. Though the scope circles are set up for an optimum 55-grain 223 Rem. loading, Nikon's Spot On Ballistics Match Technology iPhone app allows shooters to obtain instant data specific to their shooting equipment. The shooter simply enters his BDC-equipped Nikon model, load data, and preferred zero range, and the program will show the precise range for the crosshairs and each ballistic circle. While at the range we used an iPhone 7 Plus to consult Spot On and move from a 100-yard zero and shoot center shots at 300 yards with no come-up adjustment. For example, with the 308 Win. in the Savage using the 168-grain Hornady load, the second hash mark from the top offered a 294-yard point of impact. Elsewhere, the scope is equipped with a side-focus turret for parallax correction and a one-piece 1-inch main tube that is nitrogen-filled and O-ring-sealed. The glass lens elements are fully multi-coated and offer sharp target images. Adjustment clicks gave the expected quarter-inch of bullet impact at 100 yards, and we could adjust the click-stops while keeping the head on the stock because the adjustments have tactile clicks. Eye relief was 3.9 inches. It runs $460 at OpticsPlanet.com.

We mounted the scope to the rifles with Weaver's Six Hole Tactical Rings, which have six Torx screws per ring for extra security. We started with the Savage, which had a Picatinny top rail already affixed, then adjusted the rear ring to fit the cross slots on the non-Pic Ruger base and the Weaver bases on the Remington without having to re-level the scope.

The Suppressor

In early 2007, BATFE said there were about 1.3 million silencers registered in the United States, an increase of nearly 400,000 registered silencers since the same time in 2016, when ATF records indicated there were 902,805 silencers in the country.

Why do people own suppressors? There are two common reasons: reducing noise pollution and protecting hearing. If you hunt in state or national forests or other locations near where people live, suppressors can keep gunfire sounds from annoying nearby residents. On a personal basis, many of our test shooters have hearing damage caused by gunfire. We now use plugs and earmuffs to reduce the felt decibel level of gunfire, but had suppressors been more widely available back in the

day, perhaps we could hear our spouses better today. We think the trending numbers of suppressor ownership reflect the advantages the devices give shooters.

As noted above, we also shot all the rounds for velocity and accuracy with a Rugged Suppressors Surge 7.62 from SilencerShop.com in Austin, Texas. The Surge 7.62 is a modular 30-caliber rifle silencer, which enables the shooter to change the size and configuration of the silencer. It has a removable section of the tube that allows the shooter to go from a full-size 9-inch silencer to a shorter 7.5-inch unit. Also, by adding an interchangeable 5.56 endcap or 7.62 endcap and respective muzzle devices for both calibers, the Surge 7.62 can be assembled as a 9-inch or 7.5-inch 30-caliber silencer rated up to 300 Remington Ultra Mag or as a 9-inch or 7.5-inch 5.56 silencer. According to Silencer Shop sound-pressure measurements, it produces a sound reduction level down to 134 to 138.4 dB. Depending on configuration, it weighs 17.5 ounces to 21.5 ounces and is made of a 17-4 stainless steel called Stellite with a high-temp Cerakote finish. It comes with a spanner tool to remove the endcap and a user manual. Installation was simple: With the bolt out of the action, tilt the rifle muzzle upward and start the Surge onto the provided threads. (We think taking the bolt out of the action is a prudent safety step because at least one hand is too near the muzzle to futz around otherwise.) Screw the main barrel of the Surge down as far as it will go on the muzzle threads and tighten the locking collar.

We shot the Surge in only the 9-inch mode and was impressed with the 300 BLK suppression. When paired with 220-grain subsonic rounds, the report is barely noticeable with plugs and muffs on (there were other shooters who weren't shooting suppressed). According to Silencer Shop's testing, the 9-inch configuration creates 122 dB with subsonic 300 BLK while the 7.5-inch format comes in at 128 dB. At similar speeds, we'd expect the 220-grain 308 Win. to perform the same.

Test Ammunition & Results

Our test ammunition included both supersonic and subsonic rounds. For the 308 Win. Savage, we chose Hornady Match 168-grain Boattail Hollowpoint 8097, Monarch 145-grain Full Metal Jackets, and Winchester Super-X 308 Winchester 185-grain Power-Point JHP Subsonic X308SUBX. The 300 AAC Blackout rounds were Remington UMC 300 AAC 120-grain OTFB Supersonic L300AAC1, Remington UMC 300 AAC 220-grain Open-Tip Flat Base (OTFB) Subsonic 21422, and Sellier & Bellot 300 AAC 147-grain Full Metal Jacket SB300BLKB.

As shown in the nearby Range Data tables, the Savage shot consistently at 1-minute-of-angle with the Hornady Match 308 Win. 168-gr. boattail hollowpoints. Average group sizes were 1.2 inches unsuppressed and 0.8 inches suppressed. Average velocity unsuppressed was 2596 fps and 2618 fps suppressed. The Monarch 308 Win. 145-grain FMJ shot 1.2-inch average groups both unsuppressed and suppressed and had respective average velocity of 2685 fps and 2668 fps unsuppressed and suppressed. The subsonic Winchester 308 Win. Super-X 185-grain hollowpoint didn't shoot as well unsuppressed (1.4 inches) as it did suppressed (1.2 inches). Average velocity was 1109 fps unsuppressed and 1079 fps suppressed.

The results for the 300 AAC in the Remington and Ruger rifles were substantially better with one of the rounds. Shooting the Remington 120-grain load, the SPS-T fired 1.4-inch unsuppressed average groups and 1.2-inch suppressed average groups, results mirrored by the Ruger with the same ammo. Average velocities were 2222 fps unsuppressed and 2236 fps suppressed in the SPS-T and 2210 fps unsuppressed and 2229 fps suppressed in the Ruger. Things improved markedly for both rifles shooting the Sellier & Bellot 300 AAC 147-grain FMJs. Both rifles shot this round into 1.0-inch groups unsuppressed and 0.8-inch average groups for the Ruger and a best-of-test 0.4-inch average group size in the Remington. Average velocities in the Remington were higher suppressed, 2110 fps to 2099 fps unsuppressed, and in the Ruger 2096 fps suppressed and 2064 fps unsuppressed. Shooting unsuppressed, neither rifle liked the 220-grain subsonic round from Remington, with the SPS-T shooting patterns, instead of groups, that averaged 6.0 inches and the Ruger shooting 1.8-inch average groups. Suppressed was another matter altogether, with the Remington firing the namesake 220-grain round into 0.6-inch average groups and the Ruger also shooting well with 0.8- inch groups. Average velocities were all safely below supersonic, with the SPS-T shooting 1075 fps and 1088 fps unsuppressed and suppressed, respectively, and the Ruger producing 1073 fps and 1089 fps unsuppressed and suppressed, respectively.

Here are more detailed notes about how each rifle performed.

Savage Arms 10PT-SR 22356
308 Winchester, $550

This was the counter price at an Academy Sports and Outdoors store in Houston, and we couldn't find this model number for sale anywhere else. In the box came the rifle with a mounted 1913-cut accessory rail, a lock, and manual. The manual was for the Model 10/110 LE Series and Model 12/112 Target/Varmint series.

As we noted above, both the Remington and Ruger rifles outshot the Savage across the board, but the results from the Savage weren't bad at all, slightly above minute-of-angle for most loads, and better than MOA with the Hornady Match 308 Win. 168-grain boattail hollowpoints.

All in, this is a big rifle, despite its short barrel length. The thick diameter at the muzzle (0.843 inch) suggests how heavy the barrel contour is, and the unboxed weight is 7.7 pounds — lighter to be sure than the Remington at 8.25 pounds dry weight, but a pound and a half more than the Ranch rifle. Surprisingly, that's not very heavy

SAVAGE ARMS 10PT-SR 22356 308 WIN., $550

GUN TESTS GRADE: B+

Good build. It wasn't the most accurate, and we didn't like the feel of the magazine fit and lock. But it did shoot sub-MOA with one round. We loved the bolt handle and the AccuTrigger.





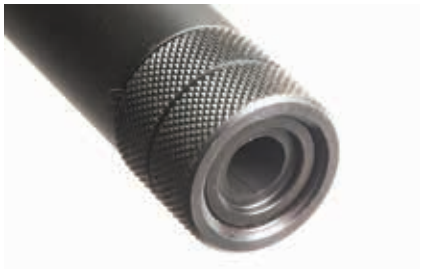


Near right: The Savage bolt is a standard two-lug style with a small claw extractor and a plunger ejector. Far right is the BA-style bolt handle. It was longer than the bolts on the other two rifles and offered plenty of leverage and control when feeding and ejecting 308 Winchester rounds.





Near right: The Savage magazine had a steel body and a polymer cover that would fit flush with the bottom of the rifle when inserted and locked in. We had some trouble getting the tab to seat properly, and a couple of subsonic Winchester rounds didn't feed into the chamber properly.





Here's a closer look at the muzzle treatment on the Savage. At left is the knurled thread protector in place. We liked that cosmetic/functional treatment. At right are the exposed threads. The Surge slipped right on. We learned in short order to elevate the barrel to start the device on the threads. The weight of the suppressor made it easy to misalign with the barrel parallel to the ground, but at near vertical, the Surge started itself onto the barrel more easily.

muzzle biased, with the balance point of the rifle without a scope occurring at the front of the magwell. But when you add the Surge can, all get very front heavy. With a scope and a full complement of ammo, its range weight ticked in at 9.6 pounds. So if you were going to use the Savage as a deer or varmint rifle, its short overall length (38.25 inches) would be handy in a blind, but we'd prefer the Ruger for walking.

The bolt-action rifle had a black synthetic stock with a beavertail forend, which rested on the bags firmly. The straight comb was comfortable, and the 13.75-inch length of pull didn't bother our shooters. There were two sling-swivel studs in the forend, one more than the other rifles, which would likely be used to attach a bipod and sling. We noted the shape of the stock mildly favored the right-handed shooter. The AccuStock incorporates a bedding system with two action screws. When tightened, the action is pulled inside an integrated aluminum bedding cradle that is slightly narrower than the receiver. To eliminate forward and rearward motion during recoil, the bedding cradle uses a rearward-sloping cutout for the recoil lug. The barrel free-floats in the barrel channel. At the range, we noticed the pitch of the stock caused the shooter to ride higher on the butt than on the other rifles, and with heavier-recoiling ammunition, that caused more upward pressure to be transmitted to the face during recoil. Also, we noticed a mold line up and down the stock, which we would have liked to dress down. The line was fairly prominent on the pistol grip, and it abraded the shooting hand more than the others.

All three rifles had adjustable triggers. To adjust the AccuTrigger, make sure the firearm is unloaded and the bolt is open before removing the stock and adjusting the trigger. Remove the stock and insert the AccuTrigger supplied tool into the bottom of the trigger return spring to engage the spring-tail with the slot on the tool. Turn the trigger return

spring with the trigger adjustment tool. To adjust for a heavier pull, turn the tool clockwise. The maximum trigger pull is at the point where the spring clicks when rotated. We went the other way, turning the tool counter-clockwise to get a minimum trigger pull. This occurs when the large coil contacts the top surface of the trigger and we felt resistance. We were happy with the pull at 2.5 pounds, and we dropped the rifle on its butt and sides to ensure that the sear didn't release with the safety in the Fire position. That pull weight was on par with the Remington and slightly better than the Ruger at 3.0 pounds.

Operationally, the Savage was very well mannered. Installing a riflescope was easy because it came fitted with a 1913 rail, a plus over the non-Pic rail on the Ruger and a double plus over the Remington, which required fitting bases on the drilled-and-tapped action. We had no issues installing or removing the Rugged suppressor on the ⅝x24 threaded barrel. The thread protector was easy to remove and install. We liked the big BA-style bolt handle better than the others because it provided a lot of leverage opening and closing the action. We had some misfeeds out of the supplied magazine, which was hard to seat. On a few occasions, a 220-grain round would be picked up out of the magazine but the tip wouldn't elevate enough to enter the chamber cleanly, and the bolt would stop behind the jammed cartridge. We'd have to back the bolt out then use a pair of forceps to pry the round loose, then run the bolt behind the cartridge again while pressing down the others in the magazine. We otherwise had no failures to fire or extract, and brass exited a couple of feet to the right on ejection. We favored the cushy buttpad on the Savage; it was thick and soft and made shooting the 308s pretty comfortable.

The safety on the Model 10/110 has three positions. The Safe position has the safety button fully rearward toward the shooter and the red dot on the tang covered. This blocks the trigger and prevents the bolt from being opened. The Mid Position has the trigger blocked and allows the bolt to be opened. The Fire position has the safety button pushed away from shooter, exposing the red dot on the tang. Everything worked perfectly in this system.

From the kneeling and standing positions, we could run the 90-degree bolt throw comfortably without having to take our cheeks off the stock. The big bolt handle aided this process as well. Prior to installing the bolt, the shooter first ensures the bolt assembly matches the action by verifying that the four digits engraved on the bolt extractor match the last four digits of the serial number on the receiver. Ours did. Then, with no ammunition in the chamber and the magazine out of the gun, we rotated the front baffle to line-up the bolt guide with the extractor, pulled the trigger fully rearward and held it in that position, then inserted the bolt into the firearm, pushing it forward. To remove the bolt, which we did a lot to ensure the gun couldn't be fired when we installed the suppressor, with an empty gun and the muzzle pointed in a safe direction, we moved the safety forward to Fire, lifted the bolt handle and pulled the bolt fully to the rear, opening the action, then pulled the trigger fully rearward and held it in that position. Then we pushed the bolt release on the front of the trigger guard as far as it would go into the trigger guard and grabbed the bolt handle, pulling the bolt assembly fully rearward until it cleared the receiver. We noted a couple of occasions when the bolt seemed to bind or stop, which usually meant we had lost engagement on either the trigger or bolt release, or that the bolt release was not pushed as far as it would go into the trigger guard. Savage noted the presence of a cocking indicator on the back end of the bolt, the purpose of which is to visually show when the firearm is cocked. This is not a loaded-chamber indicator. Supposedly, when cocked, the tip of the indicator protrudes from the rear of the bolt. When uncocked, the tip of the indicator recesses inside the bolt body. Our indicator did do this, but it was so subtle we couldn't tell visually if the bolt was cocked or not. We could feel the back of the bolt to learn that the cocking indicator was flat against the bolt housing (cocked), or that it was barely indented (uncocked).

Our Team Said: We dinged the Savage with a couple of demerits, but we recognize the quality of its build. It wasn't the most accurate gun in the test, and we didn't like the feel of the magazine fit and lock. But it did shoot sub-MOA with one round, which suggests the rifle could go below an inch with other commercial rounds or with handloads. We loved the bolt handle, and the AccuTrigger was among the best non-competition models we've shot. But Savage doesn't list a 300 AAC Blackout as a cartridge availability, so you'll have to find another round, such as our 185-grain Winchester 308 Win. Super-X, to go subsonic with a suppressor.

Remington Model 700 SPS-T 84205 300 Blackout, $680

This also was an over-the-counter transaction at an Academy store. MSRP is $817.

Before we get into the rifle specifics, it's worth a few words to talk about the cartridge. The 300 AAC Blackout (300 BLK) is a 30-caliber projectile sized to fit into a 5.56mm-sized AR-pattern rifle, like the 300 Whisper before it. The 300 Whisper was developed and trademarked in 1992 by J.D. Jones. Advanced Armament Corporation (AAC) developed the Blackout round reportedly for a U.S. military special missions unit that wanted a 30-caliber cartridge that could be easily adapted to AR-15 magazines and bolts and which could be developed in both subsonic (for suppressed use) as well as supersonic loads. The cartridge has dimensions of 7.62x35mm and keeps the 5.56x45mm cartridge's rim dimensions and tapered shape, meaning the 300 BLK could function with a standard 5.56 NATO bolt and standard 5.56 magazine. As a result of shoving a 30-caliber bullet into a suitable case, the 300 BLK has a shallow neck relative to the case. The 300 BLK has plenty of reloading components (cases, bullets, dies)

REMINGTON MODEL 700 SPS-T 84205
300 BLACKOUT, $680

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Remington SPS-T shot well in 300 BLK, both supersonic and subsonic. It would make a fine pairing with your AR-15 chambered in the same round.





At right is the layout of some important parts of the Remington. The left arrow points to the pebbled grip texture; the top arrow points to the two-position safety; and the right arrow points to the bolt handle. We preferred the larger Savage bolt handle.



At right is the SPS-T's thread and protector. Having the factory threads makes adding a "can" fast and easy. Otherwise, you'd spend some bucks adding this treatment to your rifle.



Here's a full magazine's worth of Blackouts ready to take a walk. Loading from the top of the SPS-T was easy, either feeding from the internal magazine or loading a round at a time. Something to be said for simple.





You gotta take the good with the bad, it seems. At left is a representative group the SPS-T shot with the 220-grain house load when fired with the suppressor. It translated to a 0.6-inch average at 100 yards. At right is one of the better unsuppressed groups, which really weren't groups at all.

available for its development, and quite a few ammunition companies now make it commercially. A quick check at MidwayUSA.com finds 61 commercial loads available in 300 BLK, in bullet weights from 88 grains to 240 grains. As an aside, Remington purchased AAC in 2009.

The SPS-T looks odd, we have to say, because it has a stubby 16.5-inch heavy-contour barrel. After a moment's thought, it makes sense that all three barrels would have thickish contours (0.883 inch at the muzzle for the SPS-T) to have enough material to hold the threads and a can. That puts the Remington's out-of-the-box weight at 8.25 pounds, the heaviest of the test, but its short barrel makes the OAL just 36.25 inches, a quarter-inch longer than the Ranch rifle and 2 inches shorter than the Savage. A nine-sided steel thread protector comes installed, and it easily screws on and off with finger pressure. The rifling rate is marked midway down on the right side of the barrel as "5-R Tactical 1:7 Twist," which should have been enough spin to stabilize the 220-grain Remington load, but which didn't, at least unsuppressed. The unsuppressed 6.0-inch average group size was shockingly bad, especially when compared to the suppressed 0.6-inch average group size with the same round. The SPS-T shone with the Sellier & Bellot 147-grain FMJs, shooting 1.0-inch groups unsuppressed and 0.4-inch average group size suppressed in the Remington.

It gets this accuracy with fundamental gun building. The barreled action is set into a Hogue OverMolded Ghillie Green pillar-bedded, synthetic stock with a semi-beavertail fore-end. It looked more grey than green to us, and we found it very well mannered on the shooting bench. It featured one sling-swivel stud on the butt and one on the forend. The dual-point pillar bedding produces a stable relationship between the action and stock, and as a result, we didn't see stringing when we fired up to five rounds at a time, and the first-shot cold-barrel

zero was good for following rounds, showing no point-of-impact shifts. On the bench, the pebbled grip on the stock was comfortable and positive. The 5-R rifling on the SPS-T is the same type as found on the company's M24 SWS (Sniper Weapon System) rifle barrel. There are five lands instead of six, as on a traditional barrel. Also, traditional lands are squared off at a 90-degree angle to the groove, while the lands on 5-R rifling are tapered at 110 degrees, which results in less bullet deformation, according to Remington. Also, none of the lands are directly across from one another. The barrel free-floated in the stock channel. Remington touts these features as leading to better accuracy and less fouling, and based on our results, we have to agree in most cases. Add Remington's X-Mark Pro externally adjustable trigger, which we adjusted down to 2.5 pounds with the included Allen wrench, and you have the major components for accuracy.

Installing Weaver bases on the drilled-and-tapped receiver was easy, but Savage has the better idea of providing an installed 1913 rail with the rifle, in our opinion. Five rounds fed cleanly out of the hinged steel floorplate internal magazine, and we didn't experience any binding issues as we did on the Savage. Unloading the magazine took the push of a button, located inside the front of the trigger guard. The stock doesn't have much drop at the comb or at the heel, and there's not much pitch either. The gun comes up to the face mid-cheek for most shooters. The rifle's soft Supercell recoil pad reduced what little push the 300 BLK makes, which is even less with the silencer on.

We liked the trigger, the adjustment screw for which can be reached with the short end of the wrench, rather than poking it through a hole in the trigger guard. Remington thoroughly warns shooters not to adjust the trigger pull force below 3 pounds unless it's being fired from a secure stationary rest in a controlled environment, which it

RUGER AMERICAN RIFLE RANCH 06968
300 BLACKOUT, $420

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

This Ranch Rifle is a good, lightweight solution for coyotes or deer, and it shot well both suppressed and unsuppressed. Its short length would make it handy getting in and out of a pickup, even with a big can on it.





At right, the Ranch Rifles come with a 5-inch-long short-action aluminum scope rail installed, but it isn't all 1913 slots. No big deal, as long as you know. The three-lug bolt only requires a 70-degree throw to operate.



Along with a slightly thinner barrel contour, the Ranch shaves weight with a sportier forend profile. It's also more rounded, so it's not as stable on bags.



The Ranch Rifle held five rounds in the rotary black-polymer magazine, which snapped smoothly into the stock, unlike the Savage magazine.



The rifle's barreled action sits on a pair of V-notch supports in the stock that bed the action. A simple but effective system.



Here's a peek at the Ruger's threads. This was the thinnest-contour barrel in the test, with a diameter of 0.748 inch, much smaller than the Savage at 0.843 inch and the Remington SPS-T at 0.883-inch diameter.

was. So to move the trigger pull to 2.5 pounds with an empty chamber and magazine, we placed the provided wrench's hex key in the socket of the adjustment screw located at the top of the trigger. A standard 1/16-inch hex key can also be used to make this adjustment. Turning the trigger-pull-adjustment screw counterclockwise lightens the trigger-pull force. Turning the trigger-pull-adjusting screw clockwise increased the trigger pull force by approximately 1 pound for each full turn of the adjustment screw. After making an adjustment, we used an empty casing to dry-fire the rifle several times to ensure the trigger-pull force spring was re-seated. It is unusual for us to like a factory trigger, but this one was all right. We preferred the flat face of the Remington trigger to the blade in the Savage's trigger face.

To engage the thumb safety on the right rear of the action, pull the safety lever fully to the rear towards the 'S' position, for Safe. When you are ready to shoot, push the safety mechanism forward towards the 'F' position to disengage the safety mechanism, making it ready to Fire. We experienced no failures with the operation of the safety.

Installing the bolt assembly is simple. With the safety mechanism in the 'S' position and with an empty rifle, align the lugs on the bolt assembly with the receiver, then slide the bolt assembly into the receiver and push it all the way in. Removing the bolt is easy on the SPS-T, on par with the Ruger. Raise the bolt handle, pull the bolt handle all the way back, push the bolt stop release in the top of the trigger guard, and slide the bolt assembly out of the firearm.

Our Team Said: The Remington SPS-T is a fine-shooting firearm in 300 BLK. If you already have an AR-15 lower with a 300 BLK upper on it, this is a great way to add a bolt-rifle support to shoot subsonics suppressed. However, we'd think real hard if we already had an AR-10 about staying with the 308 Win. in the Savage instead of adding another cartridge to our collection, or getting this same SPS-T in 308 Win. (No. 85538). The latter rifle earned a B+ grade in the October 2017 issue, so we think it stands on par with the 10PT-SR.

Ruger American Rifle Ranch 06968 300 Blackout, $420

This was the counter price at an Academy store in Houston. MSRP is $529. The Ruger Ranch Rifle comes in several chamberings, including our test gun with a five-round rotary magazine, the new 26968 in 300 BLK with an AR-style magazine, the 06965 in 5.56 NATO/223 Rem., the 16950 in 450 Bushmaster with a single-stack magazine, the 16976 in 7.62x39 with a Mini Thirty magazine, the 26965 in 5.56 NATO with an AR-style magazine, and the 16978 in 450 Bushmaster and a camo stock. If you're interested in the cartridge more than the rifle, Ruger also chambers an upper for the SR-556 Takedown (90455) in 300 BLK, as well as the Mini-14 Tactical Rifle 05864.

The Ranch Rifles come stocked with Flat Dark Earth synthetic units paired with a 16.12-inch-long alloy steel



To put the rounds in size perspective, here is a sampling of them side by side. Left to right are the Monarch 308 Win. 145-grain Full Metal Jacket with steel lacquered case, the Remington UMC 300 AAC 120-grain Open-Tip Flat Base Supersonic, the Remington UMC 300 AAC 220-grain OTFB Subsonic, and the Hornady Match 308 Win. 168-grain Boattail Hollowpoint.



The Savage had some problems digesting the Winchester Super-X 308 Winchester 185-grain Power-Point JHP Subsonic X308SUBX load. The big hollowpoint, shown in detail at right, would sometimes catch on the edge of the chamber and get jammed.









The Savage shot the best with the Hornady Match 308 Winchester 168-grain Boattail Hollowpoint. It was okay unsuppressed, but the rifle improved its accuracy when we affixed the Surge suppressor. Both of the targets shown above are representative of the groups fired with the Surge 7.62 on the Savage 10PT-SR.

barrel with a muzzle diameter of 0.748 inch and the muzzle threading of ⅝x24. As noted above, it comes with a 5-inch-long short-action aluminum scope rail installed, but the rail doesn't have all 1913 slots — so a one-piece Picatinny base won't fit. The matte-black anodized rail displays the Ruger Eagle logo and is mounted to the receiver with four Torx screws.

Like the Remington, the Ranch has a 1:7-inch right-hand twist, but with traditional six grooves/lands, which didn't seem to hurt it one bit. The rifle's hammer-forged barrel is mated to the steel action with a barrel-nut system that ensures perfect headspace. This barreled action sits on a pair of V-notch supports that bed the action. The RR held five rounds in the rotary black-polymer magazine, which snapped smoothly into the stock, unlike the Savage magazine.

But it is the physical dimensions, as well as its accuracy, that makes the Ranch interesting. This rifle is simply much smaller than the others. Out of the box, it weighed only 6.2 pounds (0.3 pounds more than the manufacturer's specs, however). Loaded out for the range, the Ranch weighed 2 pounds less than the Savage and 2.6 pounds less than the SPS-T. Overall length was a handy 36 inches, with a longish 14-inch length of pull and a straight comb with a middling amount of drop. After handling and testing the Ranch, our shooters said that in and around a vehicle, even with a 9-inch suppressor, aboard, the rifle was easy to move from the driver's seat out the window.

Like on the others, we couldn't see any cast in the stock, and both left- and right-handed shooters could shoulder the rifle comfortably and work the bolt, though lefties would have to reach over the rifle to operate the bolt, of course. The stock was a sporter shape, rather than the flattened beavertail fronts on the others, which made it roll around on the bags a little more. The stock had two sling-swivel studs, one in the butt and one in the forend. The buttpad was a cushy 1-inch-thick model that was very comfortable on the shoulder. The pistol grip had a grooved texture molded into it. Underneath the action was the company's patent-pending Power Bedding feature, an integral bedding block system that holds the receiver. It was also supposed to free-float the barrel, but ours didn't. As noted above, it didn't seem to affect accuracy. Unsuppressed, the Ruger shot on par with the heavier Remington when fed the 120-grain UMCs and the 147-grain S&Bs, and it way outshot the SPS-T with the 220-grain subsonics. Suppressed, the SPS-T was a little better overall, but the Ruger still shot two rounds under MOA.

The Ruger was easier to run because its three-lug bolt required only 70 degrees of throw compared to 90 degrees on the other rifles. That left ample scope clearance. The full-diameter bolt body and dual cocking cams offered smooth, easy cycling from the shoulder — better than the others, our shooters said. But we liked the big bolt handle on the Savage better. The five-shot magazine loaded easily, and the cartridges mostly fed smoothly. Only one rotary magazine came with the rifle. It's an all-polymer piece that fits flush with the bottom of the stock, reducing the chance of it hanging on clothing or car parts. We had a couple of rounds pop out of the magazine and wedge in the left side of the receiver. Also, the slab-sided receiver on the Ranch was cut higher on the left side than the other rifles, so it was harder to see into the magwell to check out if a round had gone astray. All ammunition tested functioned perfectly.



The less-expensive Sellier & Bellot 300 AAC Blackout ammunition turned in fine groups when suppressed in the Ruger Ranch Rifle.

Removing the bolt was simple: Press a lever on the left rear side of the action and pull the bolt out. It didn't require two fingers like the Savage, and the lever is easier to see than the Remington's tab up inside the trigger guard.

The Ruger has a two-position tang safety. The safety selector is located behind the bolt sleeve. The safety selector can be moved from the Fire position to the Safe position only when the firing pin is cocked. Fully raising the bolt handle cocks the firing pin. The cocking piece will protrude from the bolt shroud when the firing pin is cocked. We liked this safety better than the Savage's and as well as the Remington's lever. It was visible, accessible, and easy to operate.

Ruger Marksman Adjustable trigger offers a crisp release with a pull weight that is user adjustable between 3 and 5 pounds. To access the pull-weight set screw, remove the barreled action from the stock. The set screw is located on the outside, forward edge of the fire control housing and is treated with a thread-locking compound, so it was difficult to move. Turning the screw in (clockwise) will increase the trigger pull weight; threading the screw out (counter-clockwise) will reduce the trigger pull weight. There is about six full turns of adjustment. Turning the screw in no more than half-revolution increments, we got the trigger-pull weight down to 3 pounds.

Our Team Said: If you're looking for a lightweight suppressed solution for coyotes or deer, this Ranch Rifle is an easy winner. There is a caveat with the Surge suppressor in place, however; the can really throws off the balance of an otherwise handy rifle. Also, the price was right, so it's hard to find much fault with Ruger's American Ranch Rifle in 300 BLK.

Written and photographed by Gun Tests *staff, using evaluations from* Gun Tests *team testers.* GT

New Kit-Gun Revolvers from Charter Arms, S&W, Heritage

These 22 rimfires offer a lot of safe plinking fun for the outdoors enthusiast. You can opt for fancy features or a basic revolver that you would not be afraid to accidentally drop in a stream.

A **Kit** Gun, by definition, is a small-frame revolver that is packed up with rest of the kit when fishing, hiking, camping, hunting, or some other outdoor pursuit are being planned. The intention of the Kit Gun is to deal with pesky varmints raiding your cooler or a coiled viper in the middle of a foot trail that refuses to move. They also help decide bragging rights around the campfire after a session of plinking empty soda cans. These revolvers have been called Kit Guns since after WWI, but S&W was the first to use the name in 1935 on the 22/32 Kit Gun, which was built on the now-discontinued I-frame. This original Kit Gun had an adjustable rear sight, a DA/SA trigger, short barrel, and a smallish grip. Since then, the features of a Kit Gun have come to include single-action triggers, fixed sights, and snubnose-length barrels. It could be argued the semi-automatic 22 rimfire pistols have usurped the revolver's position, but that is for another test.

We took a look at three of the latest packable handguns, which included a S&W Model 317-3 Kit Gun, Charter Arms Pathfinder Lite, and Heritage Manufacturing's Small Bore single action. We were looking for a lightweight revolver that was accurate enough to shoot the head of a snake at 10 yards, had the ability to accurately fire a variety of 22 rimfire ammo, and be safe should we accidentally drop the revolver while trekking through the great outdoors.

We tested at 10 yards, which we thought was an optimum distance for these rimfires and used a variety of 22 rimfire ammo, including 22 LR with a range of bullet weights and types, 22 Short, and 22 Shot cartridges. Ammo consisted of commonly found CCI Mini Mag with a 36-grain copper-plated hollowpoint (CPHP), CCI Target 22 Short with a 29-grain lead roundnose (LRN) bullet, Browning BPR 37-grain fragmenting



Above: The Kit Guns tested were compact and functioned perfectly, but they were hardly perfect. The Charter Arms Pathfinder Lite, bottom, and the Smith & Wesson Model 317-3 Kit Gun, middle, both had bent front sights. The Heritage Mfg. Small Bore, top, was the easiest to shoot, but it was also the largest and heaviest of the revolvers. If we wanted to slip one of these in our back pocket or in a backpack, we'd choose the S&W Model 317-3 due to its light weight, 8-round capacity, and adjustable rear sight.



From the business end, is it obvious the Model 317-3 at right is smaller and lighter than the Pathfinder Lite, left, and the Heritage Small Bore Revolver, center.

hollowpoints, and the hot Aguila Supermaximum loaded with a 30-grain CPHP. We also tested Federal Game-Shok Shot cartridges loaded with #12 shot. We used a rest and fired the revolvers in single-action mode to gauge accuracy. Then we let loose, plinking away in both DA and SA mode, using a two-hand hold until all the ammo was gone. Here's what we found out.

Charter Arms Pathfinder Lite Model 52270 22 LR, $379

The Pathfinder Lite uses Charter Arm's trademark one-piece frame mated to a 2-inch barrel and typical



Right: We ran a variety of 22 rimfire ammo through the revolvers to check for function and accuracy, including 22 LR, 22 Short, and 22 Shot cartridges.

RANGE DATA

CCI Mini Mag 22 LR 36-gr. CPHP	**Heritage Mfg. RR22B4**	**Charter Arms Pathfinder**	**S&W Model 317-3**
Average Velocity	837 fps	890 fps	819 fps
Muzzle Energy	56 ft.-lbs.	63 ft.-lbs.	54 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.6 in.	0.7 in.	0.8 in.
Average Group	0.7 in.	1.0 in.	0.7 in.

CCI Short Target 22 Short 29-gr. LRN	**Heritage Mfg. RR22B4**	**Charter Arms Pathfinder**	**S&W Model 317-3**
Average Velocity	573 fps	638 fps	707 fps
Muzzle Energy	21 ft.-lbs.	26 ft.-lbs.	32 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.7 in.	0.9 in.	0.9 in.
Average Group	0.8 in.	1.1 in.	1.0 in.

Browning BPR 22 LR 37-gr. Frag HP	**Heritage Mfg. RR22B4**	**Charter Arms Pathfinder**	**S&W Model 317-3**
Average Velocity	989 fps	952 fps	1008 fps
Muzzle Energy	80 ft.-lbs.	74 ft.-lbs.	83 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.8 in.	0.9 in.	0.9 in.
Average Group	0.9 in.	1.1 in.	0.9 in.

Aguila Supermaximum 22 LR 30-gr. CPHP	**Heritage Mfg. RR22B4**	**Charter Arms Pathfinder**	**S&W Model 317-3**
Average Velocity	1080 fps	1069 fps	1135 fps
Muzzle Energy	78 ft.-lbs.	76 ft.-lbs.	86 ft.-lbs.
Smallest Group	0.8 in.	0.9 in.	0.8 in.
Average Group	0.9 in.	1.1 in.	0.9 in.

Federal Game-Shok 22 LR #12 shot	**Heritage Mfg. RR22B4**	**Charter Arms Pathfinder**	**S&W Model 317-3**
Average Pattern (10 yards)	11 in.	12 in.	12 in.
Average Pattern (10 feet)	6 in.	7 in.	7 in.

To collect accuracy data, we fired five-shot groups from a bench using a rest. Distance: 10 yards with open sights. We recorded velocities using a ProChrono digital chronograph with the first screen set 10 feet from the muzzle.

CHARTER ARMS PATHFINDER LITE MODEL 72224
22 LR, $365
GUN TESTS GRADE: B

The Pathfinder had a great grip size, but the double-action trigger was too stiff, and it shot to the left for some testers. For the price, however, we'd settle and use Kentucky windage to compensate.



Action Type	Revolver
Trigger Type	DA/SA
Overall Length	6.5 in.
Barrel Length	2.0 in.
Sight Radius	4.0 in.
Overall Height	4.9 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	19 oz.
Weight Loaded	23 oz.

Cylinder Gap	0.003 in.
Capacity	6
Frame Finish	Matte stainless
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Matte stainless
Frame Front Strap Height	2.1 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.2 in.
Grip	Checkered, finger groove rubber
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	5.0 in.
Front Sight	Fixed ramp
Rear Sight	Fixed notch
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	14 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.3 lbs.
Trigger Span (DA)	3.0 in.
Trigger Span (SA)	2.6 in.
Safety	Transfer bar
Warranty	Lifetime
Telephone	(866) 769-4867
Website	CharterFirearms.com
Made In	U.S.A.



In hand the Pathfinder Lite felt like a large revolver due to the grip. Recoil with the ammo ranged from non-existent to extremely mild.



Notice how the shiny rear sight groove contrasts with the matte-gray ramp front sight. Nice contrast.



Note the tooling marks around the ramp front sight and that the barrel is rotated slightly. We had to compensate so it would shoot to point of aim.

checkered finger-groove rubber grip. This had a new anodized frame with a matte-silver finish and the barrel, trigger, trigger guard, hammer, and cylinder have a matte-gray finish. The contrast is pleasing to the eye. All machining was well executed, with the only visible tool marks appearing around the front sight. We also noticed the barrel was twisted slightly to the right. Since the Pathfinder is equipped with fixed sights, we assumed the turned barrel was due to regulating the sights to the point of aim. We found it was a bit off and shot to the left. The sights are large and the contrast between the shiny silver rear groove sight and the gray serrated front ramp.

The trigger is serrated, and the hammer spur was large and provided plenty of texture to cock the hammer. The cylinder release is pushed in to swing out the cylinder, and the release was nicely serrated and proved to work precisely. The 6-shot cylinder had the chambers countersunk so the rear of the cartridges were flush with the ejector. The recessed chambers help keep 22 rimfire debris out the mechanism. We preferred a higher-capacity revolver like the S&W. A transfer bar in the Pathfinder prevents the revolver from discharging if it is accidentally dropped on the hammer or otherwise. Since these Kit Guns may be packed and accidentally dropped, say out of a backpack, we appreciated the built-in safety.

In hand, the Pathfinder felt like a large revolver due to the grip. In our opinion, the grip offers a compact size, yet allowed large-handed testers to accurately shoot the revolver.

At the range, we found it was not a tackdriver by any means, but five shots in a 1-inch group was not bad for the intended purpose of plinking. Hitting a snake head at 10 yards might take a few shots until you zeroed in. It shot a bit to the left, so testers had to compensate by aiming slightly right. Sure, it was easy to hit the soda can, but hitting the "o" in cola was more difficult. The DA trigger pull was 14 pounds on average, and that was too heavy, in our opinion. We

HERITAGE MFG. SMALL BORE REVOLVER MODEL RR22B4 22 LR, $195

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The Heritage Mfg. functioned fine, offered a manual thumb safety, and shot to point of aim. This is an economical option.



Action Type	Revolver
Trigger Type	SA
Overall Length	10.0 in.
Barrel Length	4.75 in.
Sight Radius	5.6 in.
Overall Height	5.2 in.
Maximum Width	4.8 in.
Weight Unloaded	33.4 oz.
Weight Loaded	37.4 oz.
Cylinder Gap	0.007 in.
Capacity	6
Frame Finish	Blued
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Blued
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.0 in.
Grip	Smooth cocobolo
Grip Thickness (max)	1.5 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.5 in.
Front Sight	Fixed blade
Rear Sight	Fixed notch
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.7 lbs.
Trigger Span (SA)	2.8 in.
Safety	Manual hammer block
Warranty	1-year Limited
Telephone	(305) 685-5966
Website	HeritageMfg.com
Made In	U.S.A.

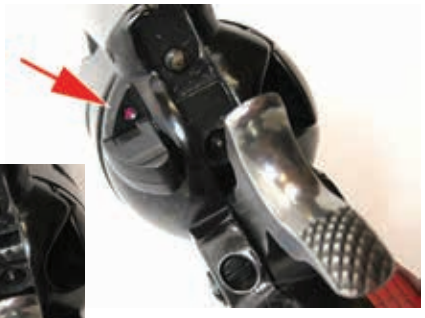
The Small Bore was the largest and heaviest of the revolvers tested. In our opinion, it was too bloated to be a true Kit Gun, but it was a fun, accurate, inexpensive shooter.



Field-stripping the Heritage was the same as a traditional SAA.



Right: With the manual safety flipped down, a red dot is exposed, telling the shooter the revolver is ready to fire. Inset: When the safety is rotated up, it puts the revolver on Safe and blocks the hammer from hitting the firing pin.





also could feel the trigger stacking just before the shot broke. We used SA mode, and the relatively crisp 3.3-pound pull allowed us to finally drill the vowel. Initially, we experienced some splatter — debris from the fired round coming out of the cylinder gap — hitting on the support hand. After running rounds through the cylinder a few times, we did not experience further splatter. The ejector rod ejected all empties except for the Federal Game-Shok Shot shells. These cartridges use a crimped nose that blows out and extends the length of the case once fired. We let gravity do its part to help those shells fall out.

At 10 feet, the Pathfinder produced a snake-killing pattern of 7 inches. With ubiquitous CCI Mini Mag 22 LR ammo, the Charter Arms gave a best average group of 0.7 inch inches with five shots.

Our Team Said: We could buy two Pathfinder revolvers for the same cost of the S&W. We liked the grip and slightly extra weight when shooting the Pathfinder, but we all know ounces are precious when you are toting gear into the back country. The fixed sights were a liability compared to the sights on the S&W and Heritage.

Heritage Mfg. Small Bore Revolver Model RR22B4 22 LR, $195

The Small Bore Revolver was the largest and easiest to shoot of the three revolvers tested. It features a 4.75-inch barrel, 6-shot cylinder, and a smooth cocobolo wood grip. The hammer is left in the white with a silver finish. It is a smart-looking revolver, but we suspect the finish on the alloy frame would wear quickly. We noticed the sharp edges were beginning to show bare metal. For a revolver that lists at $197, but has a street price of $133 at CheaperThanDirt.com, we wouldn't complain too much.

The Small Bore uses a traditional SA mechanism. The hammer needs to be at half-cock to rotate and load the cylinder, though the loading gate can be opened with the hammer in any position. If you carry the Heritage

SMITH & WESSON MODEL 317-3 KIT GUN 22 LR, $759

GUN TESTS GRADE: A-

The 317-3 Kit Gun had a good trigger and grip size. We thought the front sight was easy to see and was fine for informal plinking, but not for more-detailed precision shooting.



Action Type	Revolver
Trigger Type	DA/SA
Overall Length	7.2 in.
Barrel Length	3.0 in.
Sight Radius	4.1 in.
Overall Height	5.2 in.
Maximum Width	1.3 in.
Weight Unloaded	11.7 oz.
Weight Loaded	16.5 oz.
Cylinder Gap	0.008 in.
Capacity	8
Frame Finish	Matte silver
Barrel/Cylinder Finish	Matte silver
Frame Front Strap Height	2.2 in.
Frame Back Strap Height	3.7 in.
Grip	Textured finger groove rubber
Grip Thickness (max)	1.1 in.
Grip Circumference (max)	4.5 in.
Front Sight	Ramped pinned, green fiber optic
Rear Sight	Adj. V-notch
Trigger Pull Weight (DA)	15 lbs.
Trigger Pull Weight (SA)	3.2 lbs.
Trigger Span (DA)	3.4 in.
Trigger Span (SA)	2.9 in.
Safety	Hammer block
Warranty	None written
Telephone	(800) 331-0852
Website	Smith-Wesson.com
Made In	U.S.A.

We did not feel much stacking with the S&W, but it did have a heavy 15-pound double-action pull which was not that user friendly.



This petite J-frame had a nice grip that made the 317-3 feel substantial without being bulky.



S&W did a lot to reduce the weight in the 317-3, such as the groove in the trigger guard.



loaded, follow the old-school method of ensuring the hammer rests on an empty chamber. A manual thumb safety is built into the left recoil shield on the frame. Rotated up, the safety blocks the hammer from hitting the firing pin. Rotated down allows the hammer to contact the firing and fire a round. This is a good feature, especially when introducing new shooters to revolvers. The grip allowed most shooters to have all fingers on the grip. Large-handed shooters needed to curl a finger under the butt.

The trigger was smooth save for the mold mark down the center of the trigger face. The trigger had no creep and constantly broke at 3.7 pounds. The sights are cowboy style — fixed with a blade front and groove rear. They were well regulated and shot to point of aim at 10 yards. Empty shells are shucked using the ejector rod, which fully kicked out empty shells. The rear of the cylinder is recessed so cartridges are loaded and flush with the outer rim of the cylinder. Any dry lube that shaves off a bullet can collect in this recess so the revolver can still operate, even if gunked up.

Using a rest, we were able to average 0.8-inch five-shot groups. With CCI Mini Mag ammo, we shot a best group that averaged a little over 0.5 inch. Since the Small Bore uses a small frame, the landing gate is also smaller, and some fat-finger testers had a harder time loading the revolver. Shooting the 22 Short Target ammo offers low noise and nearly no recoil, making it a good round for a novice shooter. The Heritage also gave us a smaller shot pattern due to the longer barrel.

Our Team Said: The Heritage Mfg. revolver is fun to shoot and inexpensive. As a Kit Gun it is heavy and large. You can't easily slip the Small Bore in a back pocket. If you don't mind toting the weight, however, the Small Bore is good option.

Smith & Wesson Model 317-3 Kit Gun 22 LR, $759

The Model 317-3 has the DNA of the original Smith Kit Gun but



Here are the back ends of the handguns, from left the Charter Arms, Heritage, and S&W rimfires. Obviously, the grips varied in size. We liked the S&W 317-3 grips best.







From top are the Charter Arms, Heritage Mfg. Small Bore Revolver, and the S&W 317-3. The chambers at the rear of the cylinders are recessed so debris like dry lube has a place to go, instead of jamming up the works. Note the loading port in the Heritage was small and harder to load. All empties were shucked clear except for the Federal shotshell cartridges, which needed a gravity assist.

with a J-frame. This revolver is a featherweight at 11.7 ounces, and offers a small but hand-filling grip, plus has an 8-round capacity. The S&W Kit gun was well constructed with a nice matte-silver finish. Working the cylinder-release latch was smooth and precise. There was plenty of hammer spur to cock the hammer back and fire it in single-action mode. The trigger face was smooth. The Smith uses a hammer block, so if the revolver is dropped, it will not fire. The chambers in the cylinder were recessed, and the cylinder locked up tight with no wiggle.



Note the slight lean of the S&W's front sight. Since the 317-3 has adjustable sights, we were suspect of this, but it shot to point of aim. The green dot and V-notch were fine for plinking, but we did not like these sights for more precise shooting.

As we started to use the little revolver, a ring quickly appeared around the cylinder. The same occurred with the Charter Arms. We also noticed the front sight was bent to the right. The front sight blade is replaceable, so we thought this suspect. At the range it fired to point of aim, but for the cost it was not aesthetically pleasing. The front sight consisted of a green fiber optic that was easy to pick up and a V-shaped notch in the adjustable rear. With the dot set in the V-notch, the top edge of the sight was flush with the top of the rear sight. The precision shooter on our test team wanted to line up the top edge of the front-ramp sight with the top edge of the rear sight, but the green dot was distracting. He finally settled on the green dot touching the bottom edges of the V-notch. The sights as equipped meant this Kit Gun was a plinker, not a precision shooter, and we felt we wanted to squeeze more accuracy out of this petite revolver. For blasting empty aluminum cans, the sights sufficed.

We really appreciated the light weight of the 317-3. It was easy to tote and easily slips in a back pocket. When shooting in DA mode, we noticed the heavy 15-pound trigger pull was not that user friendly. It was fine plinking at the aforementioned tin cans. For accuracy, the SA mode was crisp at 3.2 pounds, a nice SA trigger pull. We liked the grip because it was not too small and not too big. We could get our entire hand on the grip without curling a finger under the butt.

As with all the Kit Guns, residue builds up with extended shooting, and we had to be sure to seat the cartridges fully or the cylinder would not close. All cases ejected easily. We preferred the 8-shot capacity of the Smith. Again, the CCI Mini Mag ammo with its 36-grain CPHP performed well, with average groups measuring 0.7 inches.

Our Team Said: The 317-3 is a well-built revolver with features we like: light weight, comfortable grip, and 8-shot capacity. The sights are quirky for precision shooting, but they suffice for plinking. With a street price of $642 from BudsGunShop.com, it is the most expensive, but it also offers all the best features of a Kit Gun. We'd slip this one in our pack.

Written and photographed by Robert Sadowski, using evaluations from Gun Tests *team testers.* **GT**

Buying Self-Defense Insurance: Important Factors to Consider

We've had several requests from readers to survey legal plans that protect gun owners after they've had to use a firearm to defend themselves. Here's a guide to help you choose.

As an attorney (and, for full disclosure, someone who was formerly an independent program attorney for Texas Law Shield), it is abundantly clear that the legal system puts self-defense shooters in a bad spot. It is costly, time consuming, slow, and worst of all, the legal system decides whether you keep your freedom after you have defended yourself. To make matters worse, this system is, from what I've seen, biased against gun owners. From my own experience, many law-enforcement officers, district attorneys, and even jurors seem to think that if you own or carry a firearm, you are inherently guilty in some way. They believe that even though you were actually carrying your lawfully owned firearm, you were really looking for trouble, you wanted an excuse to shoot someone, or similar mental fictions. I've honestly lost track of the number of times a gun owner was arrested after a lawful incident of self-defense. Accordingly, due to the nature of our legal system, individuals are purchasing legal protection in case they have to defend themselves.

This area of pre-paid legal services, legal insurance, or however your state may codify it, has exploded. The number of competitors has quadrupled over the past few years. It's hard enough figuring out what your carry firearm will be; what kind of monumental effort and research will it take to find out which, if any, legal program is right for you?

To give Gun Tests readers a heads-up on what to look for when considering legal insurance, I'll cut through the sales talk and marketing and present you with the plan benefits you should look for in the field of firearms legal protection.



Attorney Gordon Cooper, the author of this article, spent several years representing gun owners for a Houston-based legal-defense firm.

The Criteria

Having represented individuals who lawfully defended themselves, I am painfully aware of which parts of a legal insurance program are a necessity, and how they should operate to deliver what they promise. As a result, there are several areas on which I judge these legal-insurance programs:

Attorneys' Fees Coverage — Seeing as how these programs exist to diffuse the cost of attorneys, this one is a no-brainer. If the program can't cover your attorney's fees, it isn't a program worth buying. And there may be both criminal and civil proceedings, so you need coverage for both types of representation.

Bail-bond Coverage — This is the one people forget about the most. You may get arrested, be completely innocent, and the district attorney dismisses your case during your first appearance. Sounds like a slam dunk, but you had to cough up $2500 to get out of jail, and that money is long gone. Having good bail-bond protection means you don't have to sit in jail, which is always a benefit.

Access to an Attorney — A 30-second conversation with an attorney before the police arrive can be the difference between the gun owner inadvertently saying, "I killed him," instead of "I was afraid for my life, and I

defended myself," or, perhaps, "I need to speak to my attorney before answering any questions." Consequently, whether you can instantly access an attorney when you need one is key.

Freedom of Choice — As we can see, having an attorney is a requirement to survive the legal system. However, there's a huge difference between Matlock and the Public Defender in the too-small suit and crooked tie who rides the bus to the courthouse. Does your legal insurance allow you to choose your own representation, or could you be stuck with a rookie lawyer? Considering that some plans deny benefits if you don't use their programs' attorneys, this is a very important question to ask.

Civil Judgment Coverage — There's a popular phrase — "Every bullet has a lawyer attached to it." Bad news — every bullet has two lawyers attached to it! After the criminal suit, the survivor or survivor's family will be coming after your savings account. While having quality representation can make or break you, a jury is a fickle thing. Every trial lawyer can tell you about a trial they should have won… until the jury went its own way. Losing a civil suit means having to pay civil damages or a judgment — in short, money paid to the other party to make them whole. Having a back-up plan in case you lose a civil suit is a fantastic idea.

Here is what I think you should look for in a legal-protection program.

The Breakdown: Attorneys' Fees Coverage

Keep in mind that the defensive use of a firearm happens in a variety of ways; be it displaying the firearm, discharging but not hitting an individual, hitting but not killing an individual, and finally, killing another in self-defense. In my career, the large majority of cases were usually road-rage based, where one driver flashed his gun at the other. In terms of representation costs, a relatively new attorney or public defender may want to bill you for somewhere around $6,000; an experienced attorney could look for anywhere from $10,000 to $15,000. Actual shootings are relatively rare; however, they do happen. These can range from $25,000 if the person who was shot is still alive, all the way to George Zimmerman levels of legal representation that cost $500,000.

Now, it may be my bias as a criminal-defense attorney, but, personally, I believe that escaping the criminal system is more important than anything else. You risk losing your freedom and spending the rest of your life in jail. Civil protection is important; however, the cases happen less frequently. You simply don't see a civil case for a brandished or displayed firearm (though you can be darn sure there will be an inquiry by the criminal system).

Besides the dollar calculations, if your legal-defense firm's contract terms aren't totally transparent, it is very difficult to find out what your money gets you. If, for instance, there is no written contract that governs the responsibilities of the legal provider, this means that, arguably, the information provided on their marketing pages becomes an offer, and your payment is acceptance. Maybe this is just my attorney's mind speaking, but a contract exists to give you a clear outlining of what exactly you are getting for your money. If you don't get what the contract promises, you can go to court to force the other party to give you what you are owed. Having to argue to the judge that the marketing language is the "contract" is an unpleasant position to be in, in my opinion.

Here's an example. Suppose your legal firm provides $25,000 for attorney's fees in a criminal action. But there is an asterisk next to this statement that it is up to $25,000. This means that the actual amount to be paid depends on the "needs of the case" and "severity of likely charges." What happens if the attorney thinks the needs of the case require $20,000, but your self-defense firm believes it should only be $10,000? Who decides?

If your legal representation requires any payment beyond this initial fee, you might have to request a grant of further financial assistance to defray the cost of going to trial. So, you may request a payment, but there is no guarantee whatsoever you will receive one. The lack of any contract creating duties or responsibilities means that even if you were legally justified, under this language, your firm could still deny you further monies.

Some services cover all attorneys' fees criminally for a certain amount a month, without caps. It avoids the issues we've outlined above, but it's not a perfect solution. Sometimes caps on coverage, as much as we hate them, exist for a reason.

Insurance companies are able to do business by spreading the risk among all of their customers; if one person has an incident, it is paid for by the other customers of the insurance company. If this event is catastrophic in nature, the insurance companies pay to the limits of their caps to prevent themselves from going bankrupt. If your carrier has four George Zimmerman–style proceedings, can it afford to take a $2 million hit? I can't answer that because it depends on the company's financial reserves, which will likely not be disclosed.

Both plans with and without caps have their advantages and disadvantages, so consider carefully which disadvantages you find are easier to stomach.

Criminal Fees

These are covered in several different ways. Some firms offer tiered plans. As an example, a basic plan might start at $9.95 a month for $10,000 of criminal defense, then have another layer for $50,000 at $19.95 a month, and then $100,000 for $49.95. Sounds great, but you should check to see if these amounts are available immediately. If only a small percentage of the promised money is available immediately, and the remainder is the potential amount you will be reimbursed upon a not-guilty verdict or

dismissal, what does this mean in plain English? Imagine you have basic protection and you just had to discharge your firearm in self-defense. You go to hire an attorney, who is a long-standing family friend who offers to take the case as a personal favor for a measly $9,000. While this is under the $10,000 cap, only $2,000 is made available to you; the rest will be reimbursed upon the finding of a "not guilty verdict or similar outcome." In the mean time, you have to cough up $7,000.

Another caveat of this pay-and-be-reimbursed model is that the contract may state you only receive reimbursement on a "not guilty or similar outcome." This means if you take any kind of plea deal, or deferred adjudication, you will **not** be reimbursed. I had a client once charged with a felony, but ended up taking a deferred on a traffic-ticket-level offense. There were many facts and pieces of evidence that made this a superior tactic to going to trial. However, if this individual was operating under this plan, he would have had to forgo the better legal strategy of taking the deal, because otherwise he would have lost his reimbursement.

Finally, these caveats aside, look at the dollar ratio of the amount you pay versus the coverage you receive. For instance, one offering might give you $2,500 of protection for each $1 of premium you pay. If a competitor offers $50,000 of protection up front for $13 a month, or a plan that offers $75,000 for $22 a month, or a plan that offers $150,000 of protection for $30 a month, you can calculate the Protection/Premium formula to see that you get $3846 of protection per fee dollar for the first plan, $3409 for the second Plan, and $5000 for the third plan.

It's a distinct edge if the money is available up front, as in the firm overnighting checks directly to your attorney, up to the full limits of your coverage.

Civil Fees

Civil suits are certainly less commonplace than criminal charges when firearms are involved. While the criminal system is costly, the civil system treats money as just another legal strategy. It is not uncommon for attorneys or firms to exploit the discovery process in trial to quintuple legal fees, knowing the other side can't afford to continue.

In such a system where money loses meaning, it is important to make sure you have a program that will cover your attorney's fees in a civil suit. Calculate this coverage the same way you examine your protection for the dollar on the criminal side.

Access to an Attorney

The sooner you get your attorney involved after a self-defense incident, the better. Being able to call an attorney gives you immediate access to legal assistance, which is fantastic. Having an attorney actually appear on the scene is incredibly helpful in most cases, so that the attorney can speak to the police on your behalf. However, do all of these plans give you this immediate access, or on-site assistance?

If your plan does not cover "on-site assistance," this means you will not have an attorney helping you at your location. From a legal standpoint, it is beneficial for the defender to have an attorney intercede to prevent any legal misstatements and possibly keep the client out of jail altogether. In my opinion, a service that provides a "Manager" who is tasked with getting you an attorney simply isn't as advantageous as getting directly to your attorney. Frankly, if I just shot someone, I want to speak to a cool, level-headed attorney immediately, not after I've spilled my guts to the police and talked myself into a 20-year conviction. If you get a call the next day, you've already had to figure it out on your own (for better, or for worse), so I guess the attorney can tell you how you messed up.

Some firms have a roundabout way of getting you to an attorney. First, you talk to a case manager, whom I imagine is the gatekeeper for the pocket dials, unintentional calls, or 4 a.m. theoretical questions clients have (it happens, believe me). This case manager then gives your contact information to the attorney. The attorney then contacts you back immediately. A better plan is that you would contact the attorney, and once the situation is safe or you've been processed, then you speak to the case manager.

Some firms tell you to have your own attorney picked out ahead of time and they provide a number to get your attorney paid. Chances are, depending on your attorney, they will not spend their life prepared and ready for the phone to ring with your call. Most likely, the attorney will keep sleeping and will call you back the next day. Some firms have a 24/7 emergency hotline that gets you immediately to an attorney.

The goal: Having immediate access to an attorney to give you specific advice on that state's laws.

Bail-Bond Coverage

Bail-bond coverage is universally underestimated by law-abiding citizens. A quick note on terminology. Bail is the cost to get out of jail and wait for your court dates. This amount can range from $500 to $100,000. Most commonly, I see bail hover around $25,000. If you deposit the money and make all of the court dates, you get the money back. Now, most of us don't have $25,000 sitting around, which is where a bail-bond company comes into play. Instead of paying the $25,000 bail, the company pays that for you, and this is called a bond. The cost of bail bonding is, generally speaking, 10% of the bail. Instead of depositing $25,000, you would pay $2,500 to the bail-bond company. This money doesn't come back to you, ever. It is gone for good. This is a terrifying concept. Imagine that a police officer arrests you, you pay to bail out, you show up to court, and the District Attorney dismisses your case on the first day. Sounds like a slam dunk, except you're still out your bail money. What's worse, if you can't make the $2,500, you sit in jail until your court dates, which can

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be months apart in many cases.

Some companies provide escalating levels of bail-bond coverage, such as $1,000, $5,000, and $25,000 amounts. However, it all comes out of your overall criminal cap; if you utilize your $1,000 to cover the bail bond, and the $2,000 up-front attorney fee coverage, you will only have $7,000 of your original $10,000 policy remaining for further use. It's better when your bail-bond monies are separate from your overall bail-bond cap.

Some services take a novel approach to this issue, offering you a percentage of your bail-bond limits up front to do with as you please. Now, this may sound crazy, but I have a feeling everyone will choose to use this money to get out of jail. If your up-front limits are split between your bail bond and your attorney retainer, you may run into a situation where you use up a large majority of your money for bail bonding purposes and have to pull from your own pocket for the retainer.

Some firms offer bail-bond coverage as an add-on. This is fine if the price per dollar of coverage meets your goals and the bail money doesn't come out of other fees.

What you want: The most money possible with the fewest offsets.

Freedom of Choice

Being able to afford legal representation is a requirement for survival in the legal system. However, there can be a huge experiential gap between attorneys, and that can make the difference between walking free and going to jail. When your freedom or your life's savings are on the line, you want the best representation you can get; and being able to choose your attorney will help you do this. Some firms offer both criminal and civil protection, but only allow you to pick your criminal-defense attorney. Other companies provide lawyers from their own network that you must use or surrender coverage.

The best solution is for the client to be able to select a self-defense attorney for both criminal and civil proceedings.

Civil Judgment Coverage

You may see plans that offer $250,000 in civil protection, $500,000, maybe even $1,000,000. These sound like quite a lot; however, these dollar amounts often cover both the civil suit AND the civil judgment. In some plans, because it will be insurance company lawyers representing you, it will be in their interest to use as much of that money for the representation as possible.

It's a win-win for them; either they successfully defend the suit and pay nothing further out, or if they lose, they've hit the coverage cap and have nothing to pay out.

In the realistic, day-to-day practice of law, this amount of money will go to settling, rather than civil suits or judgments. However, if we prepare for the worst-case scenario of a tenacious plaintiff, this format leaves a lot to be desired.

Your plan should provide a stand-alone amount specifically in case of civil judgment. Ideally, it would have unlimited Civil Judgment Coverage, but we don't live in a perfect world where this is common.

The Bottom Line

As a fellow firearms owner and Texas License to Carry holder, I realize the decision to buy protection is a personal one. If you have the foresight to realize that you may need to defend yourself one day, I think it's smart to be prepared for everything that will happen afterwards, too. At the same time, I realize most concealed-carry practitioners nationwide do not have after-the-act coverage.

Is that the wrong decision? No, not at all. We all assess risks differently, from where we choose to live, work, and travel to the firearms we choose to protect us at the scene of a self-defense incident. You may believe you don't need these plans, and I'm not here to sell you one. But now you know how to assess them so you can make the right decision for you and your family.

Gordon Cooper is a licensed attorney in the State of Texas, practicing law in the Houston area. More important, he is a proud gun owner and defender of the 2nd Amendment. **GT**

New Handguns, Ammo for 2018

Aguila jumps into the self-defense hollowpoint market, Dan Wesson celebrates its 50th anniversary with a commemorative 1911, and Nighthawk Custom goes big with its Echelon model.

Gun Tests reporters and editors on the scene at SHOT Show 2018 in Las Vegas scoured the show for new pistol and handgun accessory entries for our readers to consider this year. Amazingly, a handgun made of steel with a design more than 100 years old — the fabled 1911 — still drives the market. A third of the new guns that follow are based on this legendary platform, followed closely by pocket pistols, and it's clear the revolver is not the antiquated firearm many assume. In fact, when it comes to handguns, 2018 is a good mix of old, new, plastic, and steel, with a wheelgun or two thrown in for good measure, along with loads for defensive handgun use to feed these new beasts. Here's a rundown on a few new handgun and ammunition choices for 2018 that our staff thought were notable and which we'll be looking to include in future issues. — *Todd Woodard*

Aguila

Aguila ammunition is imported from Mexico by Texas Armament & Technology, and for 2018 Aguila is adding hollowpoint ammunition to the centerfire product line. Self-defense capable hollowpoint loads are now offered in 9mm, 380, 357, 40 S&W, and 45. Just as noteworthy, this particular ammo is manufactured in Conroe, Texas. (AguilaAmmo.com)



Aguila self-defense loads now come in five calibers.

Browning

Browning (Browning.com) continues to add appealing variations to its reduced-size 1911 lineup. The Black Label 1911-380 Pro Stainless is available in full-size and compact versions, with an accessory rail option. They feature a matte-black composite frame with a machined 7075 aluminum subframe and slide rails. The slide is stainless steel, and the barrel has a rust-resistant satin-silver finish. Grips are G-10 composite, and the sights are three-dot combat or night sights dovetailed into the slide. Supplied with two 8-round magazines, the full-size model has a 4.25-inch barrel. The barrel on the compact model is 3.6 inches. SRP: $800+.

The Buck Mark Camper UFX Suppressor Ready is a 22 LR trail gun (see earlier story this issue on Kit Guns)



Browning's Black Label 1911-380 Pro Stainless is available in full-size and compact versions, with an optional accessory rail.

that features a 6-inch matte-finished tapered bull barrel that's threaded for a suppressor (see page 6 for coming suppressor coverage). Additional features include Ultra FX ambidextrous grips, a Pro-Target rear sight, a Truglo/Marble Arms fiber-optic front sight, and a Picatinny rail for optics. SRP: $500.

Another suppressor-ready Buck Mark is the Plus Lite Fluted UFX Suppressor Ready model. It has a 5.5-inch steel barrel, with an alloy sleeve and fluting in a matte blue finish. The Lite UFX comes with a thread-protector, Pro-Target rear sights, and a Truglo/Marble Arms fiber-optic front sight. The grips are Ultragrip FX ambidextrous. SRP: $620.

Browning has added a 130-grain .38 Special BPT load. For those who like to shoot a lot of FMJ, there are 100-round packs for the 9mm, 40, 45, and 380.

Bushmaster

Just when you thought interest in the AR platform had subsided, there are AR pistols to keep it going. For 2018, Bushmaster has the SD Pistol, which is chambered for the 5.56 NATO or 300 Blackout. It has a mil-spec upper and lower, an AAC square-drop handguard, an AAC Blackout Flash Hider, an SB Tactical Arms brace, a Hogue Overmold grip, and an ALG Defense fire-control group. SRP: $1399. (Bushmaster.com)

CCI

CCI's new Mini-Mag 40-grain Segmented Hollow Point features a bullet engineered to split into three equal-size parts on impact. SRP: $9.95/50. (CCI-Ammunition.com)



CCI Mini-Mag 40-grain Segmented Hollow Point

Cimarron

The Cimarron Bad Boy is

a 44 Magnum revolver built on a pre-war frame, with an Army-style grip and an octagonal barrel. It's ideal for hunting or hitting steel, or for backwoods trapping or living off the grid. Features include a blue finish with smooth walnut grips and a flattop frame with adjustable sights. Available with a 6- or 8-inch octagonal barrel. SRP: $688.

Also new from Cimarron is the 1851 Navy cap-and-ball six-shooter replica known as the Percussion Peacemaker. This revolver, with laser engraving on a case-hardened frame, is available in 44 or 36 caliber with a 7.5-inch octagonal barrel. SRP: $423. (Cimarron-Firearms.com)



Cimarron's 1851 Navy cap-and-ball six-shooter replica comes in 44- or 36-caliber and has a case-hardened frame.

CZ-USA

CZ has added two new variants to the P10C line of polymer-framed pistols. Joining the Urban Grey series of pistols, one new variant wears a mix of flat dark earth and light gray colors. It also has suppressor-height night sights, a suppressor-ready barrel threaded ½x28, and an extended base pad that boosts capacity to 17+1. The CZ P-10 Urban Grey Suppressor Ready is available in 9mm Luger. SRP: $549.

The other variant is the CZ P-10 C FDE White Nitride 9mm pistol. The white nitride used on this slide offers the same hardy surface protection as the standard black nitride. Combined with a flat dark earth frame, this two-toned pistol is affordable and classy. SRP: $539.

Now available with an OD green frame and a set of metal night sights, the new CZ P-09 full-size and compact variants carry all the features that make the P-09/P-07 series pistols desirable. SRP: $539.

For those wanting a braced pistol package out of the box, CZ-USA has added the SB Tactical folding arm brace to the Scorpion pistol. This pistol is ideal for those who already own a 9mm suppressor because most 9mm cans fit inside the carbine forend. SRP: $999. A blue/gray and OD green color variant was also added to the Scorpion EVO 3 S1 9mm line. SRP: $899.



CZ-USA's Scorpion (top) features the SB Tactical folding arm brace. The CZ P-09 (bottom) is now available with an OD green frame and a set of new metal sights.

The Cadet kit, which allows a 9mm pistol to fire 22 LR ammo, is an overlooked item in the CZ line. These conversion kits are amazingly accurate and easy to install. Now CZ has two new kits — one for the longer frame of the Shadow 2, the other for SP-01 models with a full-length frame. Both come with two 10-round magazines. SRP: $431. (CZ-USA.com)

Dan Wesson

For 2018, Dan Wesson increased its line of 1911 handguns by 10. The most exceptional is the 50th Anniversary Limited Edition. This 1911, chambered for the 45 Auto, is adorned with engravings on the frame and slide and has a set of ivory-looking G10 grips embossed with Dan Wesson logo medallions. Produced in limited numbers, this is an all-stainless gun, finished



Top to bottom: Dan Wesson's 50th Anniversary Limited Edition 1911 in 45 Auto, Vigil 1911, Wraith 1911, and Discretion 1911. The latter three are suppressor-ready. See related article on page 6.

in a high-polish nitride. SRP: $2999.

The new Vigil series of 1911s are built on checkered aluminum frames with stainless-steel slides. They offer an affordable entry into the Dan Wesson line of handguns. With four variants, the Vigil can be had in sizes from CCO to government, and in suppressor-ready form. A tritium front sight, serrated rear, rounded butt, and Shadow cocobolo grips are standard. SRP: $1299 to $1397.

Suppressor-ready pistols are an industry trend — one that Dan Wesson has fully embraced. The Wraith is a threaded-barrel government-size 1911 available in 45 Auto, 10mm, or 9mm and clad in a distressed version of the Duty finish. High night sights are standard. SRP: $2077 to $2375.

The distinctive Discretion 1911 gets a commander-sized little brother for 2018. The Discretion is a purpose-built suppressor host, and the lightening cuts in the slide help negate some of the weight of the can. SRP: $2142.

The bull-barreled officer-sized 1911 known as the ECO now can be had in an OD green variant. SRP: $1662. There is also a parkerized variant of both the Government and Commander DW A2 pistols (SRP: $1363), and a distressed 9mm and 45 version of the Specialist (SRP: $2012). (DanWessonFirearms.com)

Federal Premium

American Eagle Syntech Action Pistol is specifically designed for action shooting sports and is loaded to power-factor requirements with heavy, flatter-nosed bullets for more reliable knock-downs on steel targets in competition. New Syntech offerings for 2018 include a 150-grain 9mm, a 205-grain .40 S&W, and a 220-grain 45 Auto. SRP: $18–$31, box of 50. Like to roll you own? Handloaders can now purchase 115-grain 9mm and 165-grain 40-caliber Syntech bullets.

The FBI's return to the 9mm is spurring ammo companies to perfect tactical loads. Federal Premium Hydra-Shok has proven itself for self-defense since 1989, and Hydra-Shok Deep builds off the time-tested platform. The new 135-grain bullet features a more robust center post and a core design that provides as much as 50 percent deeper penetration. SRP: $27.95, box of 20. (FederalPremium.com)



Federal Premium's American Eagle Syntech Action Pistol has been specifically designed for action shooting sports.

Magnum Research

Since 1985, Magnum Research has diligently worked to introduce new products to its iconic pop-culture



The Desert Eagle series now features a case-hardened finish on the 44 Magnum, 50 AE, and 357 models.

Desert Eagle series. New for 2018 is a classic case-hardened finish on the 44 Magnum, 50 AE, and 357 Magnum Desert Eagles. Each features a 6-inch barrel, and the case-hardened finish is protected with a clear coat. SRP: $2278. (MagnumResearch.com)

Nighthawk Custom Firearms

The new 6-inch Echelon 1911 is touted as the pinnacle of modern manufacturing technology. Guns in this platform with 6-inch slides are notoriously heavy and difficult to make run consistently using lighter-recoiling 9mm ammunition, but Nighthawk engineers worked for two years to find the perfect balance that will allow



Nighthawk Custom Firearms 6-inch Echelon 1911

115-grain round ball and +P ammo to function perfectly. The Echelon has a single side safety and 10+1 capacity. It weighs 43.8 ounces and has an overall length of 9.65 inches. (NighthawkCustom.com)

Remington

It appears Remington is after the lion's share of the 1911 market, as it is introducing nine new models. The R1 1911 Limited 9/40/45 Double Stack, which has a capacity of 19, 18, and 16, respectively, is a 41-ounce 1911 with a 5-inch barrel, wide cocking serrations, an LPA adjustable rear sight, a fiber-optic front sight, an extended beavertail, and VZ G10 grips. It comes with two stainless-steel magazines. SRP: $1399.

For those who really like the features of the Limited Double Stack but do not like the wide grip, there's the 38-ounce R1 1911 Limited 9/40/45 Single Stack. The features are the same, but the capacity and price are less. SRP: $1250.

If you have a little more change in your pocket going jing-a-ling-a-ling, and if you want something a bit more refined for racing, there's the R1 1911 Limited 9/40/45 Tomasie Custom. These pistols have 5-inch barrels, wide cocking serrations, an LPA adjustable rear sight, an extended beavertail, an adjustable skeletonized trigger, VZ G10 grips, and a stainless-steel slide and frame, The weight is 41 ounces. Each is also inspected and test-fired by action-pistol champion Travis Tomasie. SRP: $1650.

In the fighting-pistol category, Remington is offering the R1 1911 Tactical 45 ACP Double Stack. It has a 5-inch barrel, wide slide serrations, Trijicon sights, an extended beavertail, a PVD DLC finish, VZ G10 grips, an accessory rail, and a capacity of 15+1 rounds. SRP: $1275. It's also available with a threaded muzzle, and a single-stack version retails for $25 less.

The R1 1911 Enhanced Double Stack 15 45 features a 15-round double-stack magazine, a 5-inch stainless match barrel, adjustable rear sights, a fiber-optic front sight, VZ G10 grips, an adjustable trigger, an extended beavertail grip safety, a skeletonized hammer, and front and rear cocking serrations. SRP: $999.

A lightweight 1911 Commander is a coveted carry pistol, and now Remington has introduced its take on this classic. The R1 1911 Ultralight Commander has an aluminum frame, weighs 31 ounces, and has a 4.25-inch stainless-steel match barrel, an adjustable rear sight, a fiber-optic front sight, laminate grips, an adjustable trigger, an extended beavertail, front and rear cocking serrations, and a skeletonized hammer. SRP: $849.



Remington's R1 1911 Executive Commander has an aluminum frame, a stainless-steel match bull barrel, Trijicon front and rear sights, a bobtail frame and main housing, G10 grips, an adjustable trigger, and a skeletonized hammer.

For those seeking a bit more refinement, the R1 1911 Executive Commander just might be for you. It has an aluminum frame, a 3.5-inch stainless-steel match bull barrel, Trijicon front and rear sights, a bobtail frame and mainspring housing, G10 grips, an adjustable trigger, an extended-grip safety, and a skeletonized hammer. It weighs 28 ounces. SRP: $1250.

Remington is also offering the 41-ounce R1 1911 10mm Hunter FDE. It has a 6-inch stainless-steel match-grade barrel, a Cerakote flat dark earth finish, an accessory rail, wide front and rear cocking serrations, LPA adjustable rear sights, an extended beavertail grip safety, an adjustable trigger, and VZ G10 grips. SRP: $1340.

For little-gun lovers, Remington has added the RM380 Micro Carry Blue. This all-steel semi-auto is chambered for the 380 Auto and has a smooth DAO trigger, an ambidextrous mag release, interchangeable grip panels, an optimized grip angle, and an easy-to-rack slide. As for the color, it's blue—Robin's Egg Blue, to be exact. SRP: $348.

The R51 is still with us because it is an excellent protection pistol. The R51 Subcompact Smoke has a smoke-colored frame and weighs only 22 ounces. This +P-compatible pistol utilizes the Pedersen block design, has an ambidextrous mag release, and comes with two 7-round magazines. SRP: $408.

The striker-fired Remington RP45 pistol (15+1 capacity) has the smallest full-size grip circumference of any pistol in its class. Other features include an ambidextrous slide release, a smooth, light, and crisp trigger, an accessory rail, an optimized grip angle, and a loaded-chamber indicator. Ten-round versions are also available. SRP: $418. (Remington.com)

Ruger

Ruger tends to launch new products anytime it feels like it, but here are a few notable mid-year introductions you might have missed. The 3-inch-barreled LCR in 22 WMR should be a great trail or kit gun for the camper. It weighs only 17.8 ounces and holds six 22 Magnum cartridges. The same revolver is also available with a more compact 1.87-inch barrel. SRP: $579.

If you'd like a bit more punch to your compact revolver, Ruger has you covered there, too, with the six-shot 327 Federal Magnum LCR. It has a 1.87-inch barrel and is chambered for one of the most versatile revolver cartridges of all time; it can fire 32 Auto, 32 Short, 32 Long, 32 H&R Magnum, and 327 Federal Magnum cartridges. This is a little powerhouse of a sidearm. SRP: $669.

In the semi-auto line, Ruger has introduced a LaserMax-equipped LC9. It has a 7+1 capacity, a 3.12-inch barrel, weighs only 18.6 ounces, and is only 6 inches long. The LaserMax laser, which is mounted forward of the trigger guard, incorporates the patented LaserMax GripSense technology, and the unit includes a light as



Ruger's six-shot 327 Federal Magnum LCR adds a bit more punch to the compact-revolver format.

well. This is a lot of personal protection coolness for only $679. (Ruger.com)

Smith & Wesson

The compact M&P Shield 2.0 is fitted with a dedicated Crimson Trace laser that offers ambidextrous activation. These itty-bitty pistols come with a 7- and 8-round magazine, weigh 18.8 ounces, and are only 6.1 inches long (3.1 inches of which are barrel). Four laser-equipped variants are offered in 9mm or 40 S&W, with or without a thumb safety (SRP: $499). The same four versions are offered without the laser sight (SRP: $479). The Shield has set the standard for an affordable and reliable compact defensive handgun, and these new models add to its legacy.

The Smith & Wesson Performance Center is offering three new models, two of which are revolvers. The Performance Center 686 is a 4-inch-barreled 357 Magnum all-stainless-steel six-shot revolver. SRP: $966.

The seven-shot 686 Plus has a 5-inch barrel. SRP: $966. The 9mm subcompact SW1911 has an eight-round capacity and a 3-inch barrel, making it ideal for covert carry. $1330.



The Smith & Wesson M&P380 Shield EZ pistol features the M&P pistol's 18-degree grip angle and white-dot front and adjustable white-dot rear sights.

The new M&P380 Shield EZ Pistol is built for personal protection and every-day carry and is chambered in 380 ACP. Designed to be easy to use, it features an easy-to-rack slide, easy-to-load magazine, and easy-to-clean design.

Jan Mladek, general manager of M&P and S&W Brands, said, "When we set out to design the M&P380 Shield EZ pistol, our goal was to deliver an all-around, easy to use personal protection pistol. Throughout the development process, we focused on key areas that customers told us were important — the ease of racking the slide and loading the magazine. With that in mind, we reduced the amount of force required to rack the slide, and developed a magazine that is both easy and efficient to load."

The M&P380 Shield EZ pistol features an 8+1 round capacity and a 3.675-inch barrel. The M&P380 Shield EZ pistol ships with two 8-round magazines that include a load-assist button for quick, easy loading, as well as a Picatinny-style equipment rail to accommodate accessories. SRP $399.

Smith & Wesson also expanded its small-frame revolver line with a new, non-laser M&P Bodyguard 38 revolver. The new M&P Bodyguard 38 revolver features a gray, polymer grip, updated styling, and a serrated ambidextrous cylinder release that is easily operated by left handed shooters. MSRP $385. Chambered in 38 S&W Special +P, the new M&P Bodyguard 38 revolver is double action only and features a pinned, black-ramp front sight, ambidextrous cylinder release, and a 5-round stainless steel cylinder. (Smith-Wesson.com)



Smith & Wesson's new M&P Bodyguard 38 revolver features a 1.875-inch stainless-steel barrel, and a lightweight one-piece aluminum alloy upper frame.

Steyr

The Steyr RFP is a 22 LR rimfire pistol with a single-action trigger and synthetic grip frame. The RFP also has a trigger safety, a magazine safety, and a drop safety. The

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The Steyr RFP 22 utilizes a single-action trigger. The action is a recoil-operated blowback system.

action is a recoil-operated blowback system, and the pistol is fed by a 10-round detatchable magazine. The RFP weighs 1.33 pounds and has a 4-inch barrel, with an overall length of just under 7 inches. SRP: $425. (SteyrArms.com)

Winchester

The Super Suppressed line of ammunition is a groundbreaker in that it now offers commercial subsonic loads for cartridges not generally considered subsonic options. It is custom-tailored to provide quiet, clean, and reliable performance in both suppressed and non-suppressed firearms. Super Suppressed loads will be available for the 22 LR, 22 WMR, 300 Blackout, 308 Winchester, 9mm Luger, and 45 ACP. Winchester is also offering a metal ammo can filled with 1,000 rounds of 147-grain 9mm Luger FMJ ammunition.(Winchester.com)



Produced in association with SHOT Daily at the 2018 SHOT Show. GT

COMING UP IN GUN TESTS

● Automatic powder dispensers that drop a preset amount of smokeless powder have been around for a while. We wanted to know if automation would save time and still maintain a high level of accuracy in our load development. For our tests, we acquired Hornady's $235 Lock-N-Load Auto Charge Powder Dispenser, Lyman's $275 Gen6 Compact Touch Screen Powder System, and the $300 RCBS Chargemaster Lite. We challenged each machine to deliver a starting load for 40 S&W handgun and a starting load for 6.5 Creedmoor rifle. Watch the June issue for the results.

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