

Shooting

BY TERRY WIELAND

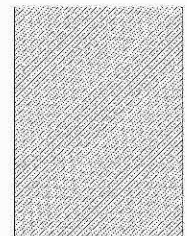
Mauser M18

There are three key things to look at when assessing a new rifle: ergonomics, price, and accuracy. Mauser's new M18 (\$699) scores very high on accuracy, its ergonomic qualities are excellent, and its price is almost unbelievable. The M18 bolt action follows in the tradition of the Mauser 98, but with such modern features as a three-lug, low-lift bolt and a trigger-block safety. The latter, however, is three-position, meaning you can unload the chamber without moving the safety to "fire" and have a third position where the trigger is blocked and the bolt is locked closed. Mauser achieves that partly by fitting it with a composite stock rather than wood and dispensing with open sights, which are almost an anachronism these days anyway. A Mauser detachable scope mount is available, and it's outstanding. Out of the box, this is one of the most accurate rifles I have ever encountered, and it has an absolutely superb trigger. Other innovative features include a detachable recoil pad, which allows storage of small items like a pull-through; a detachable polymer box magazine that outwardly resembles the traditional Mauser; a trigger guard that is integral with the stock, eliminating the need for a floorplate; soft rubber inserts in the polymer stock to give a firm, comfortable grip. Because of the price, Mauser styles the M18 as the "People's Rifle." Considering its low price and high quality, it could also be termed "Everyman's Rifle." www.mauser.com

GPO Passion 3x 3-9x42 Riflescope

GPO stands for German Precision Optics, a company founded several years ago by a group of senior German optics executives with the goal of combining German technology and production standards with Far Eastern precision and low-cost production. "Design, engineering, and quality control" are all done in Germany. The American branch is headed by Mike Jensen, and few industry executives know American hunting (and hunters) as well as he does. The result is a line of riflescopes and binoculars that look German and perform as if they were German, but seem to be missing a few digits from the price. The 3X line is not extensive—yet—but consists of the eminently useful (but neglected of late) one-inch scopes. Among these is the one I would nominate as the single best for most hunting situations: 3-9 x 42. It lists at \$400, astonishingly inexpensive by today's German optics standards. Some would call it "no frills," but a better description would be "no unnecessary impediments." Waterproof and shock-proof with a Plex reticle, positive but easy adjustments, and excellent optical quality, this is the kind of scope you want to buy a few of, just so you always have one available. At the same time, the scope is missing nothing essential, including focus adjustment on the ocular bell and long eye relief for use on rifles with heavy recoil. GPO's top executives are not only optics experts but also hunters and shooters, and it shows. This scope is the company's "work-horse." Who could disagree? www.gp-optics.com

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRY WIELAND



SPORTING

Steyr-Mannlicher Zephyr II

Back in the 1960s, before inflation changed the rifle world, Steyr produced a high-quality .22 rimfire called the Zephyr. It combined the best steel, genuine walnut, nice styling, and Steyr's incomparable Austrian craftsmanship to produce a real rifle, for serious riflemen. The Zephyr disappeared from the American market around 1971, as European labor costs drove prices out of sight. At the same time, American .22s generally evolved into cheap, undersized guns aimed at the "kids and paupers" market. Now, Steyr has returned with the Zephyr II, a bolt-action sporting rifle, elegantly styled in steel and walnut, put together using Steyr's modern CNC machinery and an Austrian eye for quality. Among the Zephyr's virtues are a trigger rarely found these days even on quality centerfire rifles, much less .22s, unless they are out-and-out target rifles. It's a military-style two-stage trigger with a crisp release but is adjustable to shorten or even eliminate the initial take-up, according to preference. It has a five-shot, detachable polymer clip. The walnut stock is modern Teutonic, with a Bavarian cheekpiece and Schnäbel forend; instead of checkering, there is laser-cut fish-scale pattern on grip and forend. Overall styling is similar to recent sporting rifles from Steyr. At a list price of \$995, the Zephyr II is not cheap, but everyone should have one really good .22 on the rack. This may be it. www.steyrarms.com

Revelation Shotgun from CSMC

It is safe to say that no American gunmaking company knows more about fine shotguns than Tony Galazan and his Connecticut Shotgun Manufacturing Company (CSMC). Over the past few years, Galazan has produced ground-breaking guns such as the A-10 American (an over-and-under with detachable sidelocks) and the less expensive boxlock Inverness. Now, Galazan has produced an over-and-under aimed directly at the starter-gun market—the aptly named Revelation (\$1,995). In the past, there have been fine, well-balanced O/Us, and there have been inexpensive O/Us, but never the twain have met—until now. First, the price: Over-and-unders do not come much less expensive. Now the specs: It's a 20-gauge, with a straight grip, slim forend, and 30-inch barrels, weighing just 6 pounds 6 ounces. Combined with its sleek, rounded boxlock action, this is a recipe for a sweet-handling gun with the feel of much more expensive over-and-unders. It may not be a Boss or a Woodward, but it is far closer than anyone else has achieved at such a price in a hundred years. The Revelation is also available with a pistol grip and shorter barrels, but in the above Gray's Best configuration, it is a gun like no other ever made in this country. Upgraded wood (as you see here) is the only extra cost, adding \$350 to the base price. www.connecticutshotgun.com

