

# BOOK OF THE AR-15



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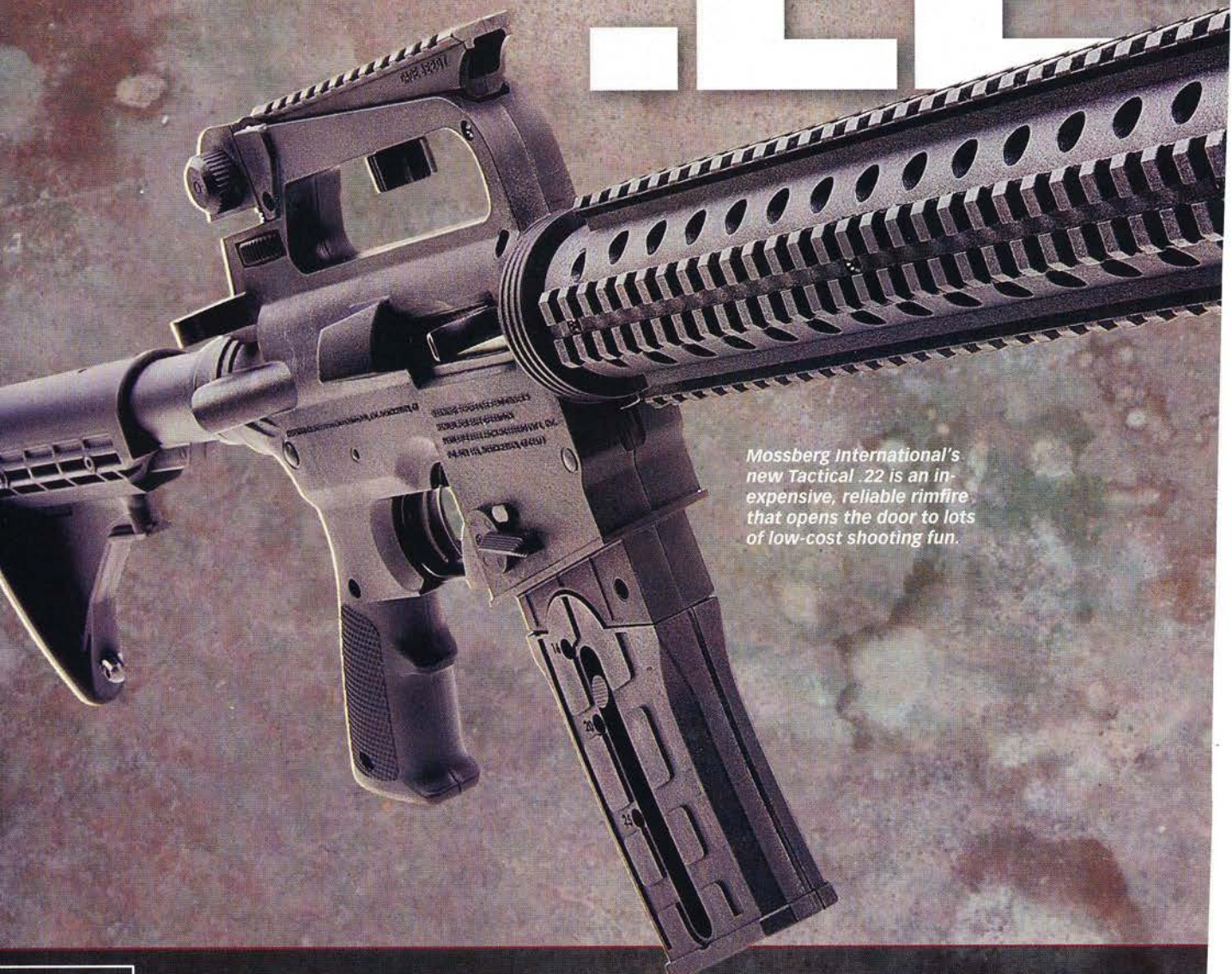
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# TACTICAL -22

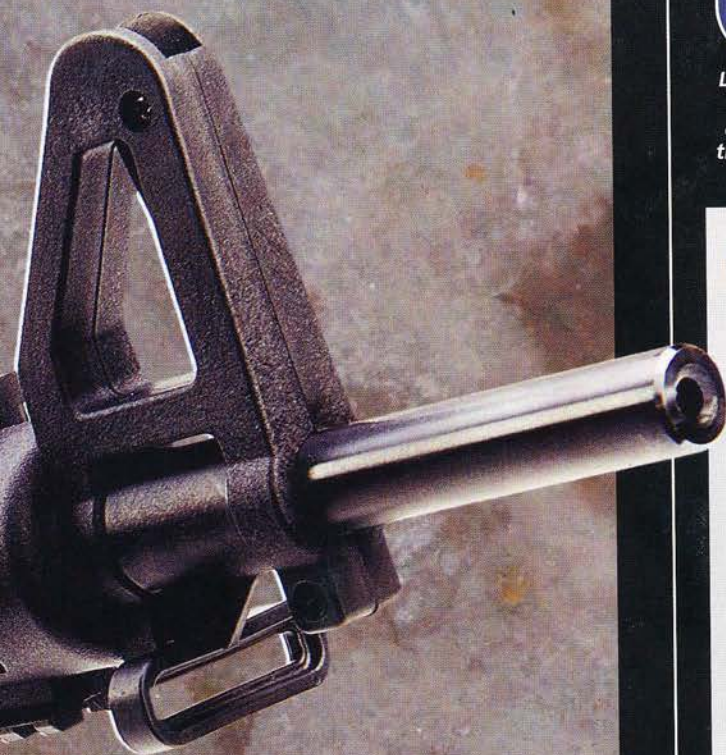
BY J. GUTHRIE



*Mossberg International's new Tactical .22 is an inexpensive, reliable rimfire that opens the door to lots of low-cost shooting fun.*



Lightweight .22 sporting rifles are fun for both beginning and experienced shooters because ammunition is inexpensive and recoil is nil (a 10-round magazine was tested, but at the time of print, Mossberg announced 25-round offerings for the Tactical .22).

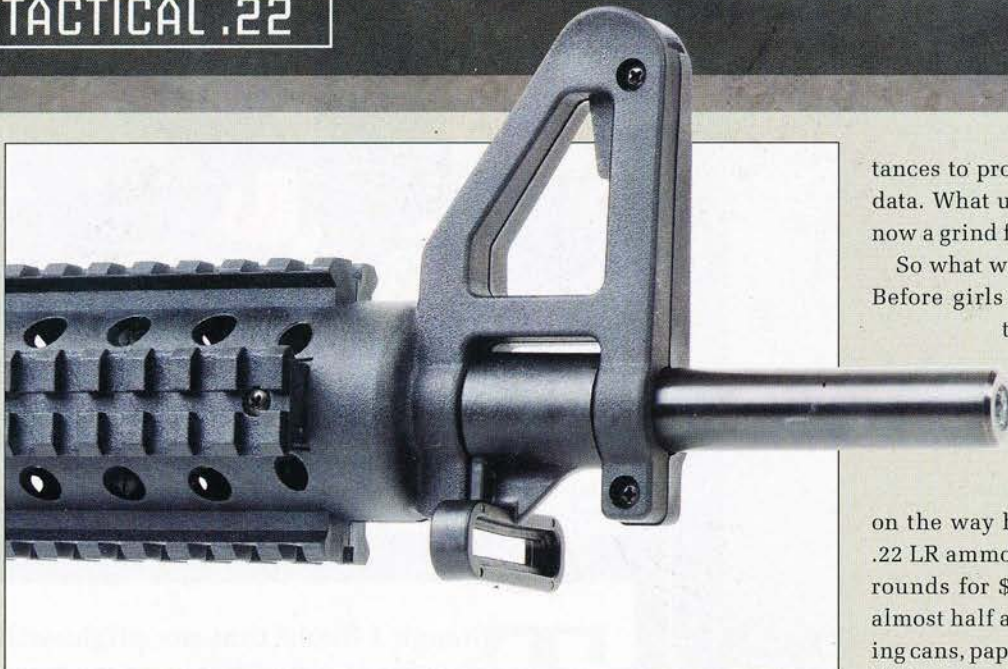


**This new Mossberg looks like an AR and helps put the fun back into shooting.**

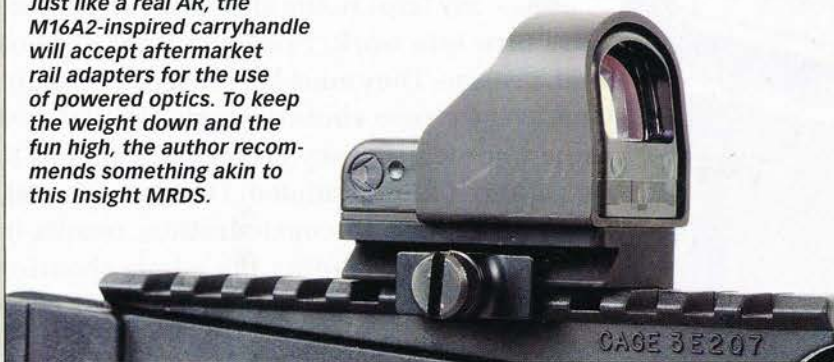
**T**hough I doubt that my plight will drum up much sympathy from friends or fellow gunwriters, most of my trips to the shooting range these days turn into work. Precision rifles are just that, *precise*. They must be tested accordingly, and every single shot demands the strictest adherence to accuracy protocols. Data has to be gathered and tabulated. One lax moment, one small break in concentration, results in a dropped shot, sending the whole shooting match akimbo, and everything must start again from scratch.

Pistols are no fun either. Editors want them torture tested, shot to pieces with accuracy tests before and after. Light-weight rifles in magnum calibers that kick like Grandpa's surly old mule. Slug guns, riot guns and goose guns with the latest 3½-inch, eye-crossing wonder loads take the fun out—and put the pain in—a day of burning powder. And the cost is amazing. It is nothing to shoot rounds that cost \$3 or \$4 apiece.

A good many of my friends are in the same boat. Getting rifles ready for hunting trips requires that a dozen loads be tested for accuracy, with strenuous barrel cleanings between each ammo type, then shooting at different dis-



*Just like a real AR, the M16A2-inspired carryhandle will accept aftermarket rail adapters for the use of powered optics. To keep the weight down and the fun high, the author recommends something akin to this Insight MRDS.*

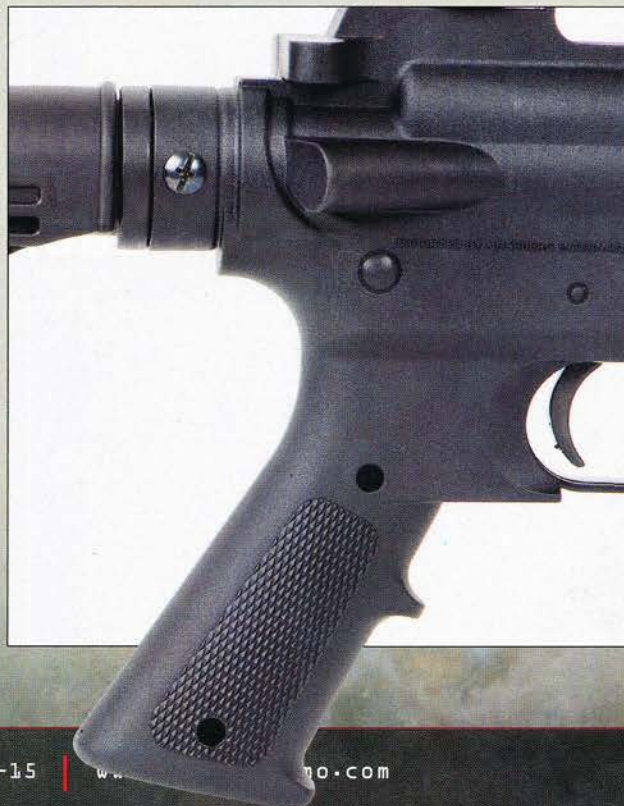


tances to produce reliable long-range data. What used to be loads of fun is now a grind for all of us.

So what were the golden days like? Before girls and college—and after the girls in college would not give me the time of day—a summer job would put enough cash in my pocket to stop by a hardware store on the way home and buy a brick of .22 LR ammo. You could get 500 or so rounds for \$15, and that would last almost half a lazy summer day shooting cans, paper targets, pine cones and little rocks all the way across the pond. My shooting crew would start out with reasonable targets at reasonable ranges and end up trying to shoot through the hole in the top of a Coke can at 80 yards or hit a rock the size of a baseball at 120 yards. The ammo was cheap, recoil was nil, and the rifles were accurate—you could afford to experiment, test your skills and, most of all, have fun with your friends. I've witnessed some amazing shots in my life, but one of the most memorable didn't come out of a centerfire barrel. My friend Charles



*The Tactical .22 takes a reliable 702 action and encases it in a glass-filled nylon shell that resembles an AR-15. The rifle retains the 702 fire controls but has innovative features such as a rotating front sling swivel and molded-in Picatinny rails, and it comes with a carry handle/optics mount.*





Lankford picked a dragonfly off an over-water limb at close to 100 yards with a .22 LR.

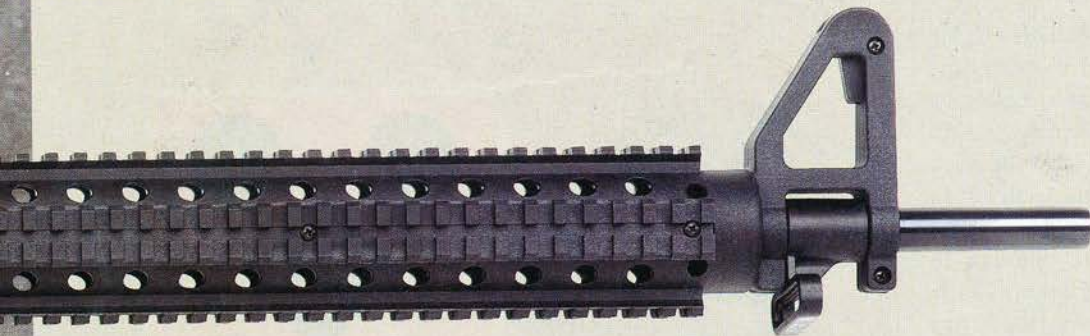
Those halcyon days have not left us, my friends; they are waiting to be rediscovered. Put down the centerfire whatever, and pick up your .22. And if you want to increase the fun, ante up a touch and pick up a new Tactical .22 by Mossberg International. Manufactured in Brazil, it has the look and feel of that other great fun gun, the AR-15, but it slings .22 LR bullets instead of pricey .223s.

### A FUN GUN

The Tactical .22 is a new introduction for 2011, built on a proven, simple semiauto action, the 702 Plinkster that appeared in 2004. In fact, the Tactical .22 joins a family of rimfire variants that numbers in the dozens—it just looks radically different. Designers did not have to scrap or change anything. They simply removed the iron sights and built a shell around a standard action and trigger group. Molded from near-indestructible glass-filled nylon, several halved sections are

screwed together around the action to form the stock, faux receiver, fore-end and pistol grip. Two action screws lock the pieces together and hold the action solidly in the stock. All the important stuff—bolt, trigger assembly, etc.—is contained within a standard aluminum-alloy receiver and trigger housing.





All the controls are stock 702, not AR-15, which limits the Tactical .22's role as a training rifle but keeps things simple. Instead of the T-handle under the carry handle, a round is chambered with a familiar 702 cocking lever attached to the bolt. The two-position safety sits just ahead of the triggerguard, and the shell is deeply relieved so it can be reached with no difficulty. Typical of crossbolt safeties, it is set up for right-handers and has a very positive detent to hold it in place. A tactile and audible *click* lets you know the safety has been switched on or off.

The magazine release is the most interesting adaptation that pairs function with something that looks like it came off an AR. A slightly oversize selector switch has been added to the magazine well—or what *would* be the magazine well on a real AR—and sweeping it downward drops the

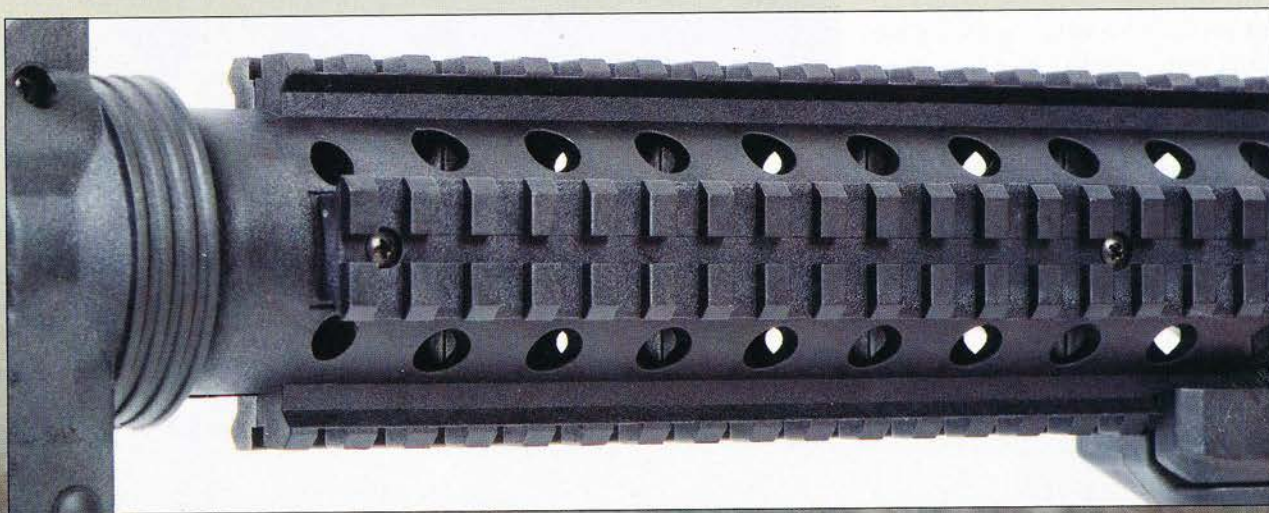
magazine. Mossberg was kind enough to the world's lefties to make it ambidextrous, putting a lever on both sides of the rifle. Unless you have really long fingers, it is tough to reach the lever, but I found that by cupping the rifle in my firing hand and sweeping the lever downward with my thumb, I could accomplish magazine changes fairly quickly. If you have time—before being swallowed whole by a screaming horde of tin cans—use your firing hand to pull back on the charging handle and your free hand to trip the release. This makes life much easier for the plastic magazine follower.

Speaking of magazines—the make-or-break accessory for all the other tactical .22 rifles out there—Mossberg stuck with what worked and used the standard 10-round version found on all its other 702 rifles. It worked fine, and spares can be purchased for less than \$20. I ran 150 rounds through

the rifle without so much as a hiccup. (At the time of printing, Mossberg had just announced a 25-round magazine configuration, offered with both adjustable- and fixed-stock options.) Getting a high-capacity magazine to actually function has been the biggest hang-up with other tactical .22s, but at least Mossberg goes the extra mile and produces both in-house. The company does not have to depend on vendors to maintain quality and function.

Two different rifle models are available. One comes with a fixed stock, and the other is fitted with a six-position adjustable model made by Advanced Technologies. Do yourself a favor and buy the version with an adjustable stock so when your kids and your friends' kids want to shoot, you can shorten the length of pull to fit them.

Unlike some other rimfire AR clones or centerfire ARs, the pistol grip,



carry handle and fore-end are one big molded piece. There is no switching out parts. This limits your options a bit, but the rifle's retail price of \$276 makes you forget about what you don't have and smile about the cash left in your pocket for ammo.

Mossberg was smart enough to mold in Mil-Std 1913 Picatinny rails on all four sides along the entire length of the fore-end for mounting all those must-have accessories. A carry-handle mount molded by Tapco is included with each rifle if you want to utilize an optic. I tried a half dozen optics, lights, vertical grips—they all worked. Some wiggled, some were tight, but my experience has been the same with custom fore-end rails that cost three times what this entire rifle cost.

The sights are plastic, but well executed and easy to adjust. The rear sight is windage and elevation adjustable with knurled knobs. Once zeroed, it might help to add a small witness mark or two to make sure they do not get inadvertently adjusted. Another cool feature is the forward sling swivel, which wraps around the barrel and is captured by the A-frame front sight assembly. It pivots any way you need it to go.

The rifle's *raison d'être* is fun, not winning matches, but it shot extremely well. Off the bench, I managed to keep most 25-yard groups under an inch with three varieties of bulk .22 LR ammo. A lot of that accuracy has to do with a good 18-inch barrel and decent sights. The trigger was pretty good as well.

Once it was zeroed, I went straight for a little prairie dog swinger target and had the thing spinning by the sixth round. From there it was ringing up a steel silhouette at 100 yards from the sitting position. Then I shot from kneeling and finally offhand, something I would never do with

overpriced centerfire ammo. What the hell, I thought, we'll try this left-handed from sitting, kneeling and offhand. *Pow. Tink. Pow. Tink. Pow. Tink.* I could have been accused of actually having fun.

The Mossberg Tactical .22 joins a

pretty cool family of rimfire AR clones. The rifle is a big can of fun waiting to be opened. It's accurate, can mount accessories and actually functions instead of jamming every seventh shot. And for \$276, you will have money left over to burn on ammo. **AR-15**

