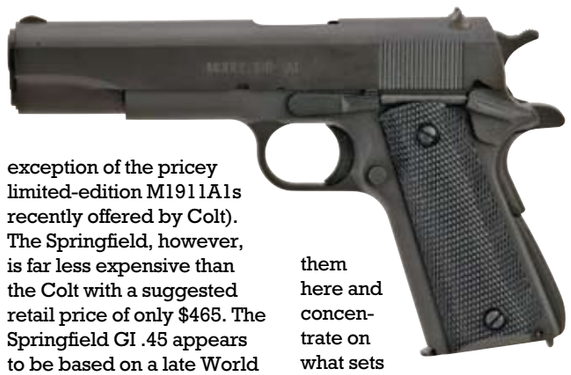
Springfield Armory GI .45 M1911-A1

Springfield's Parkerized GI .45 M1911-A1 replicates the look and feel of the U.S. Model M1911A1.

With the end of World War II, production of U.S. M1911A1 pistols also ceased. In recent years, interest in and the collectibility of vintage M1911A1 pistols in original condition has increased, and the prices for World War II-issue guns has steadily climbed. Demand was such that production of replica World War II G.I.-style M1911A1 pistols has been undertaken by quite a few firms—the most recent of which is Springfield, Inc., and its GI .45 M1911-A1.

Externally, the new Springfield product is arguably the most accurate G.I. replica M1911A1 ever offered (with the possible exception of the pricey limited-edition M1911A1s recently offered by Colt). The Springfield, however, is far less expensive than the Colt with a suggested retail price of only $465. The Springfield GI .45 appears to be based on a late World War II production M1911A1, with a serrated hammer, slide stop and mainspring housing. The serrations were done in lieu of knurling, and that change was introduced in 1943-1944, depending upon the original manufacturer.



As the basic workings of the M1911A1 are well known, we'll dispense with them here and concentrate on what sets the GI .45 apart. The slide is hand-lapped and serially numbered to the frame. This is not a custom pistol in the sense of Springfield's TRP or Professional model, but the slide is tight and without perceptible play on the frame. The trigger of our test pistol broke cleanly at just over 4½ lbs. with a bit of overtravel, but there was no perceptible creep. The action of the sample pistol was extremely smooth, which is rare in a pistol in this price range, although one could feel a slight bumpiness as the slide's engraved serial number passed over the disconnector.

With a few exceptions, the GI .45 is true to the originals. The first very welcome difference is that the GI .45 fed with every type of ammunition we fired—not just hardball. We tried full-metal-jacket loads, several types of jacketed hollow points and even some match semi-wadcutter cartridges during function firing. The Springfield gobbled all of them up without a single stoppage.

Springfield wanted the replica to be as close as possible to the original, so rather than add a firing pin safety mechanism, a lightweight titanium firing pin was incorporated. The titanium part does not have as much inertia when dropped as a steel one, so the gun passes the drop test required on imported pistols (the gun is made by Brazil's IMBEL).

The GI .45's safety catch isn't an exact duplicate of World War II pistols, either. Original pistols had a much smaller thumb pad at the forward edge of the safety lever, but this isn't a major fault. The final, most obvious departure from the original is the integral key lock at the upper end of the mainspring housing, which is incorporated in all Springfield's M1911s. But it, too, is unobtrusive.

Although many GI .45s will be sold to reenactors and shooters who want a pistol that is as close to the original as possible, the reliability of the gun with any type of ammunition warrants its consideration for personal protection and law enforcement use. The replica has no beveled magazine well or lowered and flared ejection port, but these aren't really mandatory for defensive use. Beveled magazine wells and lowered and flared ejection ports enhance a pistol's operation, but the operative word is "enhance"; they aren't really necessary. The GI .45 is a handgun worthy of consideration for serious work.

Other than its ability to reliably digest any type of ammunition we could find for it, shooting Springfield's M1911-A1 brought no real surprises. In our accuracy testing, it delivered groups on a par with far more expensive M1911-type pistols. Our sample Springfield GI .45, though, was acceptably accurate as can be seen from the accompanying table.

Springfield's GI .45 pistol is arguably the best replica of its type, remaining as true to the original as possible while incorporating improvements in safety and reliability. About all that we'd like to see done is to mark the pistol more in keeping with an original with "Springfield Armory" on the left side of the slide and "M1911A1 US Army" on the right of the frame, but those are minor cosmetic issues.

This is a pistol that can be removed from the box and, if necessary, taken into harm's way with total confidence, while at the same time offering the shooter, reenactor and collector a pistol that provides the look and feel of an American original.

SHOOTING RESULTS

.45 ACP. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches Smallest	Largest	Average
Black Hills 230-gr. GDHP	820 Avg. 14 Sd	343	3.03	4.07	3.52
Summit 185-gr JHP	1032 Avg. 33 Sd	437	3.53	4.52	4.05
Winchester 230-gr. Ranger JHP-SXT	881 Avg. 16 Sd	396	3.50	4.01	3.75
Average Extreme Spread:					3.77

Average velocity from a 5" barrel for 10 shots using Competitive Edge Dynamics Millennium chronograph. Range temperature: 53° F. Humidity: 53%. Accuracy for average of five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. from an MTM Pistol Rest. Abbreviations: FMJ (full metal jacket), GDHP (Gold Dot hollow-point), JHP (jacketed hollow-point), Sd (Standard Deviation).

SPRINGFIELD GI .45

IMPORTER: Springfield, Inc. (Dept. AR), 420 W. Main St., Geneseo, IL 61254; (309) 944-5631; www.springfield-armory.com.
CALIBER: .45 ACP
ACTION TYPE: single-action, recoil-operated, center-fire, semi-automatic pistol
FRAME: forged carbon steel
BARREL: 5"
RIFLING: six-groove, 1:16" LH twist
MAGAZINE: seven-round, single-column, detachable box
SIGHTS: fixed front blade; rear notch drift-adjustable for windage
TRIGGER: single-action; 4-lb., 8-oz. pull
OVERALL LENGTH: 8½"
WIDTH: 1⅝"
HEIGHT: 5¼"
WEIGHT: 2 lbs., 8 ozs.
ACCESSORIES: cleaning rod
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $465

The GI .45, with few exceptions, is just the basic M1911A1 and doesn't include all of the fancy bells and whistles seen in many M1911s today.

The frame (above) has the finger cuts and the shorter trigger of the original M1911A1 (as compared to those of the the U.S. M1911), and our test gun's single-action trigger broke at a crisp 4½ lbs.

The hammer (l.), safety and slide stop are serrated like late World War II production M1911A1s. Sights are faithful to the original U.S.-issue "G.I." units.

The American Rifleman has used the phrase "Dope Bag" at least since 1921, when Col. Townsend Whelen first titled his column with it. Even then, it had been in use for years, referring to a sack used by target shooters to hold ammunition and accessories on the firing line. "Sight dope" also was a traditional marksman's term for sight adjustment information, while judging wind speed and direction was called "doping the wind."

DPMS Panther 308 Long Range

The Panther 308 is DPMS' first .308 Win.-cal. semi-automatic rifle built on the firm's basic A-15 platform.

DPMS began life in the mid-1980s as Defense Procurement Manufacturing Services, Inc., acting as a consultant and manufacturer of military rifle components for the Department of Defense. DPMS now offers to the civilian market just about every conceivable variation of its .223 Rem. A-15 rifles from tactical versions to full-blown match guns to plinkers, as well as .22 LR uppers and whole guns on the A-15 platform. And now, it steps up to the .308 Win. chambering with its Panther .308.

At its core, the Panther 308, like Knight's SR-25 and Armalite's AR-10, is essentially a "bigger brother" to the AR-15. But DPMS didn't merely copy the competition; the Panther 308 is a separate design that shares little with similar rifles from other manufacturers. The upper and lower receivers are unique to the Panther 308, and the latter is milled from a solid aircraft-aluminum forging, while the upper is extruded from the same material. Both components are hard-coat anodized then Teflon coated to enhance appearance and lubricity.

Like all DPMS rifles we've tried, the front and rear pivot pins are machined to an extremely close tolerance to enhance accuracy. The fit is so close that the upper and lower receivers must be compressed slightly to remove the rear pin without difficulty.

The rifle is configured with a standard "A2"-type buttstock, and the 24" bull barrel is of 416 stainless steel with a 1:10" right-hand twist to accommodate heavier bullets. The muzzle is nicely crowned with the bore protected in a deep recess. The barrel is fully free-floated inside a ribbed aluminum tubular handguard.

The magazine and bolt releases on the receiver are recessed to prevent accidental engagement, but there is no "fence" around the magazine release; it is in a recess that makes it a flush fit with the lower receiver surface. There is no dust cover on the Panther 308's ejection port.

The bolt carrier is somewhat different from those of similar rifles, as well. First, it is machined from Carpenter 158 chrome molybdenum steel and hard chrome-plated. There are three longitudinal flat surfaces on either side of the bolt carrier.

While the Panther 308 upper receiver is a unique component, the lower is generally standard AR-15 size, save for the magazine well, which is designed to accept Knight's Armament SR-25 .308 Win. magazines. The supplied 10-round-capacity SR-25-type magazines are manufactured for DPMS, and the gun can accept pre-1994 20-round SR-25 magazines.

There are no fixed sights on the Panther 308 as the rifle is designed and intended for use solely with optical sights. The upper receiver is of the "flat top" variety with an M1913 Picatinny rail for accepting Weaver-type mounts.

The Panther 308's gas system is also very similar to that of the AR-10, and fire control is a direct carry-over from the standard AR-15 to include the bolt stop, trigger, sear, safety mechanism and hammer.

PANTHER 308

MANUFACTURER: DPMS, Inc. (Dept. AR), 3312 12th St. S.E., St. Cloud, MN 56304; (320) 258-4448; www.dpmsinc.com
CALIBER: .308 Win. (7.62x51 mm)
ACTION TYPE: gas-operated semi-automatic rifle
RECEIVER: forged aluminum lower; extruded aluminum upper
BARREL: 24" stainless steel
RIFLING: four-groove, 1:10" RH twist
MAGAZINE: 10 rounds
SIGHTS: flat-top M1913 Picatinny rail
TRIGGER: single-stage; 3-lb., 8-oz. pull
STOCK: synthetic A2; length of pull, 13½"; drop at heel, 1/2"; drop at comb, 1/2"
OVERALL LENGTH: 44"
WEIGHT: 12 lbs.
ACCESSORIES: two 10-round-capacity magazines; JP Trigger, $129.95 plus $30 installation
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $1,149

SHOOTING RESULTS

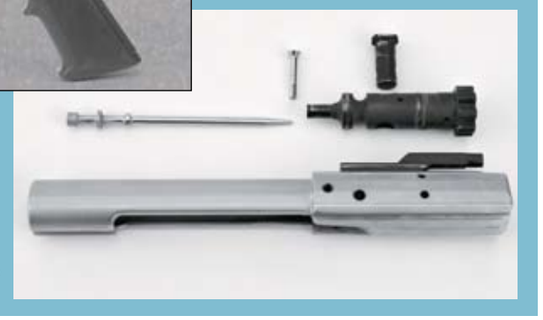
.308 Win. Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Energy (ft.-lbs.)	Group Size In Inches Smallest	Largest	Average
Black Hills 168-gr. Match HPBT	2570 Avg. 20 Sd	2,463	0.90	1.20	1.07
Hornady 168-gr. TAP A-Max	2645 Avg. 12 Sd	2,229	0.72	0.90	0.79
Lapua 167-gr. Afficionado+ HPBT	2720 Avg. 18 Sd	2743	0.54	0.86	0.73
PMC 168-gr. Match HPBT	2590 Avg. 9 Sd	2,502	0.44	0.93	0.68
Average Extreme Spread:					0.81

Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from a 24" barrel. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. from a bipod. Range temperature 67° F. Humidity: 71%. Abbreviations: HPBT: (hollow-point boat tail), Sd (Standard deviation), TAP (Tactical Application Police).

The fire-control parts are standard DPMS A-15 parts, including the hammer, sear, bolt stop safety and trigger.

There is no dust cover on the Panther 308's upper receiver as DPMS believes one is not necessary on a rifle of this type.

Our test rifle was equipped with the standard single-stage trigger, which broke at 3½ lbs. with no creep or backlash. An optional JP Enterprises two-stage unit is offered and adds precision-ground sear geometry and adjustments for overtravel and sear engagement.



The Panther 308's bolt carrier (r.) is somewhat different from those of other .308 AR-based rifles. The carrier is machined from Carpenter 158 chrome molybdenum steel and hard chrome-plated. The bolt itself is dimensionally similar to those of other .308 AR-10-type rifles.

We fitted our Panther 308 with a Horus Vision 4-16X variable scope with the unique Horus reticle that eliminates dialing in "come-ups" and gives the shooter virtual assurance of a first-round hit over the effective range of the rifle without ever touching the windage or elevation knobs. We tested the Panther 308 for accuracy at 100 yds. with several brands of match grade ammunition, including Black Hills, Hornady TAP, Lapua and PMC. The results we obtained place the gun solidly into the precision rifle category.

We found the rifle to be absolutely reliable and remarkably accurate. During testing, we did not experience a single failure of any kind. The Panther 308's handling and ergonomics are excellent and, for anyone who is experienced with an AR-type rifle, there is no learning curve whatsoever. The quality of manufacture, including the fit and finish of the rifle's components, is outstanding.

The DPMS Panther 308 is an excellent long-range match rifle, and the individual seeking a high-quality precision semi-automatic rifle should give it serious consideration.

RCBS Grand Shotshell Loader

Designed to produce a large quantity of quality reloads in a short time, the RCBS Grand is a progressive-style loader that, once the shell plate is full, loads a completed round with each cycle of the lever. Massive and well thought out, the Grand promises much and delivers most of it. Like other RCBS presses, the Grand is sturdily built. The operating lever and ram that cycles the tool are equally massive, and there appears to be little that even the most ham-handed operator could break.

When RCBS designed the Grand, its engineers incorporated the best attributes of some of the other popular progressive shotshell loaders, while trying to eliminate their difficulties. Perhaps no other aspect of progressive loaders bedevils the operator more than spilled shot and powder. Forget to put in a hull, and then not turn off the powder and shot when the empty slot passes those stations, and you've got a mess. The Grand won't drop either shot or powder unless a hull is under the drop tube—a great innovation. If attention is not paid to keeping the primer tray full, however, and a hull goes past the priming station without a primer being inserted, the powder will drop, but it falls through the shell plate onto the flat base, where it can be easily removed.

Set-up from the box is simple. The Grand goes right on the front of the bench, and there is an optional accessory riser to raise the press higher, making its use more comfortable for taller operators. Shot and powder bushings are quick and easy to remove and replace. Pull the pin, slide the bar out, remove and replace the bushings, and that's it. In operation, powder drops are very uniform. To drain the shot and/or powder, just push the supplied plastic tube onto the boss below the hopper, turn it to the drain position and the powder or shot drains through the tube into a receptacle.

Hulls are slid onto the shell plate under the spring-activated claws that hold them as they move from station to station. Unique to the Grand is that both hull and wad are inserted at the same time, and all loading operations, except priming, are done on the downstroke of the operating lever. The upstroke moves the shell plate to the next position and inserts the new primer. Different too, is that the wad is inserted at one station and the shot charged at the next.

In operation, a couple of things became evident. Care must be taken to ensure that the removable primer tray that operates off the cycling of the charge bar remains in the full-down position. If it drifts up during loading, primers will not drop, and the unprimed hulls will allow the powder to drop through. The test Grand was in 20 gauge, and we used some then-new, two-piece Winchester AA Super-Sport once-fired hulls. Despite continued adjustment of the shot-drop tube and crimp die, it was impossible to load these hulls without them buckling or, worse, sticking in the crimp die. The Grand compressed the wad on top of the powder with the shot-drop tube; and, unless the wad was heavily compressed atop the powder, hulls would buckle at the crimp station.

Since our initial test, RCBS has modified the Grand to use the new AA hulls with no difficulties, and subsequent testing with both 12 and 20 gauge Grands went without a hitch.

That having been noted, the RCBS Grand is a heavy-duty, well-thought-out and extremely user-friendly loader that's available in both 12 or 20 gauge.

Available from: RCBS (Dept. AR), 605 Oro Dam Blvd., Oroville, CA 95965; (800) 533-5000; www. rcbs.com. Suggested retail price: $795.

Zeiss Z-Point

With rapid-acquisition sighting systems steadily gaining favor in both military and sporting circles, the interest in such products is growing exponentially. The Zeiss Z-Point represents not only that highly respected manufacturer's entry into that market, but also a unique and interesting approach to the product category. The Z-Point, originally developed for the German military, is used as an optional sighting system for the H&K MP7 PDW. The Z-Point was designed by Hensoldt, which is owned by Carl Zeiss Optical, Inc.

It is a non-magnifying reflex sight that does not use holographic technology nor emit a beam. The diode that produces the "red dot" is located in the unit's rear glass pane. The Z-Point has a polymer housing with an integrated tube body of high-strength aluminum that makes for a lightweight and impact-resistant sight—as well as one that is extremely compact. The optic weighs a mere 3½ ozs. and measures a scant 2½" long, 1¾" high and 1½" wide.

One innovative technical aspect of the Z-Point is its illumination system. It utilizes a hybrid power supply that operates from both a solar cell and a conventional lithium battery, and it features an illumination regulation system that automatically adjusts the brightness of the dot. Depending on how much light is available, the built-in sensor—located in the solar panel—determines whether the unit should draw current from the battery or from the solar cell. If the unit is pointed at a bright background the dot becomes instantly brighter; if pointed at a dark background it becomes instantly dimmer. The brightness of the dot can also be adjusted manually, but then no longer automatically adjusts until the unit is reset by being restarted. Also, the dot switches off automatically after three hours of disuse.

The Z-Point is designed to easily snap on and off any standard Picatinny rail by way of a single, spring-loaded, push-button clamp that "rocks" over the rail. The push pad on the side of the unit acts as both the on/off switch and the dot intensity regulator. One button press turns the unit on, another press and hold turns the unit off. A double press and hold increases the dot's brightness and a triple press and hold decreases the dot's brightness.

For testing we mounted the Z-Point on a flat-top DPMS A-15 rifle. The optic attached easily and proved simple to use. Also, the illumination regulation system worked effectively in both bright and dark surroundings. For adjustments to point of aim/impact, the Z-Point utilizes simple set screws, which fix the windage and elevation changes. Audible or mechanical clicks are not part of the design.

As Zeiss claims that the Z-Point is waterproof, we immersed it in 110 degree water for 10 minutes and then placed it in a freezer for 10 more. There was no leakage, bubbling or fogging.

The Z-Point represents an interesting approach to the rapid-acquisition sight, and it has a lot going for it. It is small, light and incredibly simple to use.

Available from: Carl Zeiss Optical, Inc. (Dept. AR), 13005 N. Kingston Ave., Chester, VA 23836; (800) 441-3005; www. zeiss.com. Price: $450.

The Z-Point sight is powered on and off, and its dot brightness is regulated by way of the single Zeiss banner button (above), which is located on the unit's left side.

The Z-Point is designed to easily snap on and off any standard Picatinny rail by way of a single, spring-loaded, push-button clamp that "rocks" over the rail.

The Z-Point utilizes a hybrid power supply that employs both a lithium battery and a solar cell.

For adjustment of point of aim/impact, the Z-Point has simple set-screw windage and elevation adjustments. Audible or mechanical clicks are not part of the design.