# SMITH & WESSON TRR8 REVOLVER


The term "tactical revolver" sounds almost contrarian these days. Although the double-action revolver has a host of virtues, the explosion of tactical semi-automatic pistols seems to have relegated the revolver to a few select, but important, roles: concealed carry, home defense and hunting. The idea of a cutting-edge, tactical wheelgun that is a preferable tool for anticipated high-intensity encounters seems absurd when so many other choices abound. Well, not so fast.

Innovation in materials and design, coupled with a specific unanticipated problem with the semi-automatic platform, prompted Smith & Wesson's Performance Center to develop the TRR8—a revolver that meets the tactical demands of law enforcement or serves as a home-defense gun for the well-equipped homeowner.

The TRR8 is a double-action .357 Mag. built on the company's large N-frame. Although that is typical, this particular N-frame features S&W's scandium, an enhanced aluminum alloy that is as light as typical aluminum alloy, yet much stronger. As a result, the big wheelgun weighs in at 35.3 ozs., making it easier to carry and quicker to handle than an all-steel N-frame. The cylinder is of blackened stainless steel, and the barrel is steel, too.

The TRR8 incorporates today's *de rigueur* feature of tactical handguns—a rail. In fact, it features two of them, with one over the topstrap and one under the barrel. The rails attach to the barrel shroud with Allen-head screws and are easily removed. They allow the user to mount various lights, optics and lasers, customizing the gun for various tasks. One can mount a red-dot scope atop the barrel and a high-intensity light beneath it, or even replace the factory rubber stocks with Lasergrips.

Fortunately, the TRR8 retains all of the original virtues that made the wheelgun such a popular design. It is reliable. It is simple to load and operate. It is easy to check, especially in a hurry. It is not ammunition-sensitive as its operation is independent from the proper functioning of the ammunition (squib load notwithstanding). And, it is powerful.

The .357 Mag. cartridge has been around since 1935 and although there are now many more powerful chamberings, there may be nothing more effective for self-defense. After all, of all the semi-automatic loads available, it was the ballistic profile of the 125-gr. .357 Mag. that designers emulated when creating the .357 SIG cartridge.

Of course, there are some liabilities to the wheelgun relative to modern semi-automatics, but S&W addressed these with some success. The first relative weak-

## SHOOTING RESULTS (25 YDS.)

| .357 Magnum Cartridge | Vel. @ 10' (f.p.s.) | Energy (ft.-lbs.) | Group Size In Inches Smallest | Largest | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black Hills 158-gr. JHP | 1076 Avg. 26 Sd | 406 | 2.75 | 3.37 | 3.00 |
| PMC No. 367A 158-gr. JSP | 1058 Avg. 23 Sd | 393 | 2.55 | 3.91 | 3.10 |
| Winchester Super-X No. X3576P 125-gr. JHP | 1309 Avg. 19 Sd | 476 | 2.20 | 3.50 | 2.70 |
| Average Extreme Spread | | | | | 2.93 |

Measured average velocity of 10 rounds from a 5" barrel measured with an Oehler 35P chronograph. Range temperature 58° F. Humidity: 30%. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 25 yds. from a sandbag rest. Abbreviations: JHP (jacketed hollow-point), JSP (jacketed soft-point), Sd (standard deviation).

## S&W TRR8 REVOLVER

**Manufacturer:** Smith & Wesson (Dept. AR), 2100 Roosevelt Ave., Springfield, MA 01104; (800) 331-0852; www.smith-wesson.com
**Caliber:** .357 Mag. (.38 Spl.)
**Action Type:** double-action, center-fire revolver
**Frame:** scandium alloy (blackened stainless steel cylinder)
**Barrel:** 5"
**Rifling:** five-groove, 1:18" RH Twist
**Cylinder Capacity:** eight
**Sights:** interchangeable front post with brass bead; square-notch rear, adjustable for windage and elevation
**Trigger Pull:** double-action, 10 lbs., 14 ozs.; single-action, 4 lbs., 8 ozs.
**Overall Length:** 10½"
**Width:** 1¾"
**Height:** 6"
**Weight:** 35.3 ozs.
**Accessories:** aluminum case, three full-moon clips, two accessory rails
**Suggested Retail Price:** $1,414

*The TRR8 holds eight rounds of .357 Mag. ammunition and utilizes full-moon clips to speed reloading. The Picatinny rail atop the TRR8 (l.) can hold a variety of aiming devices. Like the bottom rail, it is removable.*

ness is ammunition capacity. In the age of the double-stack magazine, a six-shot revolver seems very lacking. The big N-frame, however, holds eight rounds in its cylinder—a 33 percent increase over typical wheelguns.

The other bothersome issue is the lack of speed in reloading; semi-automatics are much faster to refill. Although this is still true, the TRR8 comes with three full-moon clips. One may simply preload the clips and, when needed, drop both cartridges and clip into the gun. It's a big improvement over laboriously loading one round at a time.

Despite exhibiting many tactical-like features in its design, the question remains—why a revolver? The answer lies in the technique of bracing a tactical gun against a vertical surface. Tactical officers leading an entry team often use a ballistic shield. As they have to hold the shield with one hand, they are constrained to carry a handgun rather than a longarm. This handgun is braced against the edge of the shield. If a semi-automatic is fired with the slide braced against the shield or any other surface, it may slip out of battery, jamming. Such is not the case when bracing the barrel of a revolver.

Although this ability is understandably of critical importance to a SWAT officer, what does it mean to the armed homeowner? Well, it is conceivable that someone in a home-defense scenario might have the need or opportunity to brace a firearm against a doorframe or the corner of a wall. The resistance to jamming would be equally appreciated in such case.

The TRR8 shot well in drills and, as shown in the accompanying accuracy table, from the bench. The pebbled, rubber stocks provided good purchase and dampened felt recoil considerably. Though the lightweight frame increased muzzle rise in the unadorned gun, the installation of a light and optics reduced that problem. The added mass distinctly decreased muzzle rise, and the fully outfitted gun was quite manageable.

The TRR8's trigger pull was typical of a Performance Center gun: light, smooth and crisp. There were no malfunctions despite the variety of ammunition used, including both .38 Spl. and .357 Mag. Reloading with the full-moon clips was slightly more difficult than imagined. There was some play at the nose of the cartridges and some jiggling was required before the reload slipped into the cylinder. Removing empty cases from the clips was a chore, but a fairly easy one.

We mounted a C-More Sight Systems red-dot scope atop our sample gun. Nevertheless, there was not enough adjustment available to zero the scope at 25 yds. on this revolver. We also mounted a Streamlight M3 Tactical Light on the lower rail. It was well-positioned and easy to manipulate.

Smith & Wesson's TRR8 represents the current state-of-the-art in revolver technology and fills an unforeseen gap in tactical handguns. It keeps the double-action revolver current while also giving both lead SWAT officers and well-prepared homeowners a very good tool for their respective tasks.

# DPMS PANTHER LR-338L RIFLE

The DPMS LR-308 rifle is a scaled-up version of the AR-15 rifle designed to accommodate the .308 Win. and similar cartridges. With the increasing popularity of this rifle platform, as well as the growing popularity of hunting with AR-type rifles, DPMS expanded the LR-308 line beyond the .308 Win. to include other cartridges, such as .243 Win., .260 Rem. and .338 Federal. The LR-338L in .338 Federal is the most powerful rifle in the DPMS AR line and the best suited to a wide range of big-game hunting scenarios. The "LR" in the name stands for "Long Range" and the suffix "L" denotes "Lightweight." It is designed for hunters, although it has some tactical applications as well.

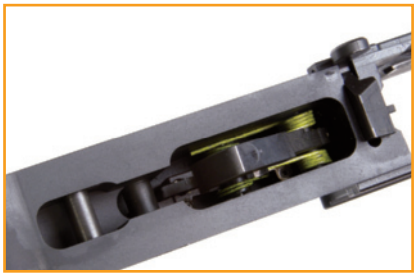
The LR-338L features a 416 stainless steel, light-contour 18" barrel, which has short and shallow 2"-long flutes between the lightweight gas block and muzzle brake. A custom muzzle brake reduces felt recoil, which is mild compared to other .338 Federal rifles.

The LR-338L uses the rotating bolt and direct-impingement gas operating system common in AR designs. The bolt carrier is 8620 heat-treated steel, and the bolt itself is heat-treated. The rifle features a round, 12½"-long carbon-fiber handguard that reduces weight and does not transfer cold or heat like a metal handguard.

The upper receiver is extruded from 6066-T6 aircraft aluminum, features right-hand ejection, a dust cover, a shell deflector and a forward assist. The top rail allows for easy mounting of optical sights.

The lower receiver, with its integral trigger guard, is milled from 6061-T6 aluminum. Both the upper and lower are anodized and coated with black Teflon. Controls include a magazine release on the right side and a bolt release on the left. The safety selector lever is on the left side. Our sample rifle was shipped with the JP adjustable trigger, which is optional for an additional $124.95. Any serious shooter should consider adding this trigger when ordering the rifle. The trigger on our sample had a bit of creep and a few hitches. Past experience with the JP trigger, however, has shown that much of that can be removed with careful adjustment and set-up of the trigger. Our sample broke at 3 lbs., 12 ozs. The gun comes with a Command Arms Tactical grip made of hard plastic with non-slip finger grooves. The grip is angled back a bit more than a standard AR grip and places the hand in good position for trigger control.

The black Zytel buttstock is skeletonized to reduce weight. It features a hard plastic, checkered buttplate with a superfluous trap



*The LR-338L has a milled lower receiver with an integral trigger guard (r., top); our sample included the JP adjustable trigger (r.). The rifle's phosphated 8620 steel bolt carrier is proportionally larger than that of a comparable .223-Rem. AR carrier (far r.).*

## SHOOTING RESULTS (100 YDS.)

| .338 Federal Cartridge | Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.) | Energy (ft.-lbs.) | Group Size In Inches Smallest | Largest | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Federal No. P338FB 210-gr. Nosler Partition | 2366 Avg. 14 Sd | 2,611 | 1.41 | 2.90 | 2.03 |
| Fusion No. F338FFS2 200-gr. SPT | 2539 Avg. 22 Sd | 2,864 | 1.25 | 2.30 | 1.71 |
| Federal No. P338FC 185-gr. Barnes TSX | 2692 Avg. 20 Sd | 2,782 | 1.30 | 2.30 | 2.44 |
| Average Extreme Spread | | | | | 2.06 |

Measured average velocity for 10 rounds from an 18" barrel. First screen of Oehler 35P Chronograph 15 ft. from muzzle. Range temperature: 40° F. Accuracy for five consecutive, five-shot groups at 100 yds. using front rest and rear sandbag. Abbreviations: SBT (spitzer boattail), TSX (Triple-Shock X-Bullet ), Sd (Standard deviation).

## DPMS PANTHER LR-338L

**Manufacturer:** DPMS-Panther Arms (Dept. AR), 3312 12th St., S.E., St. Cloud, MN 5630; (800) 578-3767; www.dpmsinc.com
**Caliber:** .338 Federal
**Action Type:** direct-impingement, gas-operated semi-automatic rifle
**Receiver:** 6066-T6 upper, 6061-T6 lower aluminum alloy; hard anodized and black Teflon coated
**Barrel Length:** 18"
**Rifling:** six-groove; 1:9" RH twist
**Magazine:** detachable box, four-round or 19-round capacity
**Sights:** none; full length Picatinny rail on receiver for scope mounting
**Trigger Pull:** single-stage; 3 lbs., 12 ozs.
**Stock:** black Zytel: length of pull, 14¼"; drop at heel, 1/2"; drop at comb, 1/2"
**Overall Length:** 39⅛"
**Weight:** 7 lbs., 14 ozs.
**Accessories:** one four-round magazine, one 19-round magazine, nylon web sling and cleaning kit
**Suggested Retail Price:** $1,499

*The LR-338L breaks down like a standard AR (l.). Its carbon-fiber handguard does not transfer heat like a metal handguard, and the Zytel buttstock and tactical grip reduce weight and aid control.*

door. The gun would be better served with a rubber recoil pad as this hard plastic with sharp diamonds and edges can be painful when shooting in warm weather and light clothing.

The gun weighs 7 lbs., 14 ozs. empty. With a Nikon Monarch 4-16X 42 mm Side Focus scope in Warne aluminum rings, which we used for accuracy testing, and with an empty four-round-capacity magazine, the gun checked in at 9 lbs, 12 ozs., with an overall length of 39⅛".

One might expect the short 18" barrel to give up some velocity, so we gauged its performance against a previous test we ran a few years ago, in which we used the available .338 Federal factory loaded ammunition in a Sako rifle with a 22 7/16" barrel. The 185-gr. Barnes load was actually faster in the DPMS rifle by 48 f.p.s., but the 180-gr. AccuBond lost 116 f.p.s. and the 200-gr. Fusion lost 113 f.p.s. in the shorter barrel.

As part of the function test we shot an R&R Racing Self Setting 8" rifle target at 250 yds. We found that by using the first circle in a Nikon BDC scope, hitting this target from hunting-type shooting positions was easy. The recoil was so manageable that the reticle was already back on target before the swinging target reset. Using the higher-capacity magazine we shot several boxes of Fusion 200-gr. ammunition (the best performing load in this rifle) without a single function problem. Although the barrel grew very hot during this shooting session, the carbon-fiber handguard did not, and the rifle could be easily held with a bare hand at anytime during the shooting. Also, we noted this swinging target handled bullet strikes from .308 Win. without a problem, but the .338 Federal hit hard enough that nearly every fifth shot knocked the target out of the frame.

The DPMS Panther LR-338L rifle is a well-made, strong and durable firearm for any hunter wishing to use a semi-automatic rifle. For the shooter looking for the tactical application of a heavy bullet with more power, or for somebody who simply wants something different to bring to the range, the DPMS Panther LR-338L is a good choice.

**The *American Rifleman* has used the phrase "Dope Bag" since at least 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."**