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THE "NEWEST" NORMAL**

SHOOTING INDUSTRY®

THE INDUSTRY'S BUSINESS MAGAZINE — EST. 1955

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2025 REVIEW

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- Potential Top Sellers

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Why "Shrink It & Pink It"
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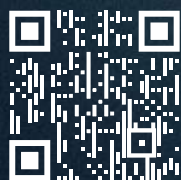
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Image: bigy9950 / Adobe Stock

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Retro Commands Your Attention

Whether it's inspired by Hollywood or simply nostalgia, there's no question — the retro market merits a close look. Inside this issue, Peter Suci and Tim Barker examine the wheelgun and lever-action rifle markets, respectively.

The wheelgun market has its faithful cadre of passionate customers ready to invest in this classic platform, according to Joshua D'Agnes, owner of the Village Gun Store in Whitefield, N.H.

"We still do have customers who just prefer the classic look, feel and performance of a revolver," he said. "Some turn up their nose at the semis and will stand at the counter and talk revolvers all day."

Industry stalwarts Ruger/Marlin, Smith & Wesson and Henry continue to innovate in the lever-action rifle segment — with their modularity beginning to mirror AR-style rifles to great effect.

"You can add whatever accessories you want, lights, lasers and accessory ammo holders," noted R.G. Stitt, Ruger director of sales. "There's so much cool stuff that can be added to them."

You're going to want to take some time and read "Iconic & Reliable" (p. 30) and "Grandpa's Gun' No More" (p. 34).

SHOT SHOW 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

The industry's biggest event of the year is in the books! SHOT Show 2025 was exceptional, featuring a record-breaking 2,850 exhibitors across the Supplier's Showcase, Venetian Expo, Caesars Forum and eXtra. *SI* Editor Jade Moldae delves into the specifics of SHOT Show week and gleans reactions from exhibitors and buyers alike.

Additionally, Massad Ayoob highlights defensive handguns debuted at SHOT that are primed to deliver the greatest sales potential this year in this month's *Personal Defense Market* column.



MARCH 2025

WHY "SHRINK IT AND PINK IT" DOESN'T WORK

It's been awhile since the "shrink it and pink it" topic has been broached in the pages of *SI*, and for good reason: the industry has made significant strides in its approach to designing and marketing products for women. However, it still happens.

This month, Annette Evans reviews how this concept is flawed — and why the industry should consider expanding its efforts to market to women.

"Instead of shrinking down an entire firearm, or simply marketing a compact, subcompact or youth version to women, consider the parts that are more likely to make a difference," she contends. "Two examples: Grips with a narrower circumference and controls that are easier to access or manipulate."

NEXT MONTH: COMPETITION HANDGUNS & MORE

The April issue is going to highlight the competition pistol segment, as well as long-range precision sales and secure storage (safes). Additionally, Ashley McGee earmarks the top products from SHOT that will appeal to women, Massad Ayoob explores the enduring appeal of .380 handguns and Michelle Scheuermann analyzes how dealers can get "more" out of their AI endeavors.

Have a comment on anything you see in this issue of *SI*? Don't hesitate to contact us: comments@shootingindustry.com. **SI**

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REACTIONS TO "CONCEALED CARRY MARKET: BOOM OR BUST?"

Editor's Note: In last month's issue, Tim Barker interviewed a panel of dealers, who shared there are signs a second "Trump Slump" may not be as pronounced as previously feared. When I reposted this story on LinkedIn, it generated a variety of responses, especially in the wake of the recent categorization of the industry's "Trump Slump 2.0" by mass media outlets. The following represents some of the feedback we received via LinkedIn.

— Jade Moldae, editor@shootingindustry.com

It's good to see a quote from our friends at Bristlecone Shooting.

— Beth Martin, General Manager
Georgia Gun Club

What we are seeing from guests we've met is there are still many people looking to get into the shooting sports! I think the reason for not purchasing has been budgets. If the economy turns around as expected, we'll see an uptick — not a slump!

— Karen Butler, Owner
SLG2

Should see a surge in Colorado to try and beat the ridiculous bill they have proposed. Other than that, business as usual. I would gather you'll see the smaller dealers close up shop in Colorado and either move elsewhere or just be done with it.

— Edward S.

IMPROVING CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE

Editor's Note: Also in last month's issue, Jim Curcuruto of the Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation penned a powerful article on the industry's pressing need to improve the cultural acceptance of gun ownership, hunting and target shooting among the general population. Contact us anytime with further feedback to "Sending A Strong & Clear Message." — Jade Moldae, editor@shootingindustry.com

It's great to see the topic of cultural acceptance getting attention. The research findings are scary, but I'm glad to see organizations like Outdoor Stewards and the NRA are already working on solutions. **SI**

— Jon Gassett, Ph.D.
Wildlife Management Institute

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Wildlife Management
Institute

HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

Let us know at comments@shootingindustry.com, facebook.com/shootingindustry or linkedin.com/company/fmg-publications



Image: Savage Arms

NSSF CELEBRATES \$1.3 BILLION TO STATES FOR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

NSSF celebrates the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) announcement that \$1.3 billion is being delivered to state conservation and wildlife access programs. The distribution of funds is derived from the Pittman-Robertson excise taxes paid by firearm and ammunition manufacturers and Dingell-Johnson excise taxes paid by the angling industry.

A total of \$886,499,121 of the \$1.3 billion of those funds are directly sourced from firearm and ammunition excise taxes paid by manufacturers. Firearm and ammunition manufacturers have paid over \$29 billion into the fund since its inception in 1937, when adjusted for inflation. These funds directly contribute to wildlife conservation through the

Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act and provide funding for conservation programs, increased access to public lands and hunter education.

"The firearm industry is tremendously proud of the contributions we make to conserving our wildlife and the habitats wildlife need to thrive for generations to come," said NSSF President and CEO Joe Bartozzi. "Our industry is at the forefront of wildlife conservation. Each time a recreational shooter or hunter purchases a firearm or ammunition, they are helping to support wildlife conservation through the excise taxes paid by our industry on the sale of those products. The American model of conservation funding is the gold standard throughout the world for

sustainable conservation and wildlife management."

The excise tax is set at 11% of the wholesale price for long guns and ammunition and 10% of the wholesale price for handguns. The excise tax, paid by manufacturers and importers, applies to all firearms and ammunition imported or sold domestically to the commercial market and federal law enforcement sales, whether the purpose is for recreational shooting, hunting or personal defense. The tax is administered by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) of the Department of the Treasury, which turns the funds over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

USFWS deposits the Pittman-Robertson excise tax revenues into a special account called the Wildlife Restoration Trust Fund administered by the USFWS. These funds are made available to states and territories the year following their collection based on a statutory formula.

These excise tax dollars collected since 1937 under the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act are specifically designated to be used by state wildlife agencies for conservation and related purposes. Collectively, purchasers of firearms and ammunition, hunters and the firearm and ammunition industry are the greatest source of wildlife conservation funding.

[/ nssf.org](http://nssf.org)

BROWNELLS LAUNCHES AFFORDABLE, EFFICIENT SHIPPING PROGRAM

Brownells introduced the Brownells Match Grade (BMG) Shipping Program, designed to provide builders and shooters with streamlined and more affordable shipping solutions. With this program, firearm enthusiasts can receive critical, lightweight parts more efficiently and at lower costs than ever.

Responding to customer feedback

and underscoring its commitment to serving the needs of the firearm community, Brownells has made significant improvements to its shipping operations. The BMG Shipping Program offers reduced rates for lightweight items, making it easier and more economical for customers to access smaller, essential components exactly when needed.

"We heard you loud and clear. Our new BMG Shipping Program is designed to be super-fast, accurate, informative, simple and more affordable. Whether it's a small spring or a



hard-to-find part, we are committed to delivering quality service every day, every time," said Pete Brownell, CEO of Brownells.

From build to range repair, the BMG Shipping Program ensures that parts ship in the most affordable manner, backed by the reliability and quality service expected from Brownells.

[/ brownells.com](http://brownells.com)

HENRY INTRODUCES SPECIAL PRODUCTS DIVISION

Henry Repeating Arms announced its new Special Products Division (SPD), a collaborative hub dedicated to pioneering advancements and exploring possibilities in firearms design and technology.

In pursuit of solving real-world problems posed by outdoorsmen, hunters and hobbyists of today and tomorrow, SPD will serve as the home for Henry's most technically advanced firearms.

"The Special Products Division represents a significant leap forward for us. Over the last few years, we've brought in some of America's brightest minds in firearms design, and developed a deeply rooted culture of exploring the unknown. This isn't about following trends; it's about leading with purpose and innovation to create new ones," said Andy Wickstrom, president of Henry Repeating Arms.

The SPD, headquartered in Rice



Launched later this spring, Henry's Special Products Division aims to lead with "purpose and innovation" to establish new trends in the market.

Lake, Wis., is focusing on advanced materials and metallurgy, cutting-edge manufacturing processes and collaborating with other leaders in their respective spaces. The new division aims to deliver practical solutions that set a new bar for end users, from backcountry hunters seeking the most rugged, ultralight, long-distance hunting rifle, to discerning hobbyists wanting the best platform for their suppressor.

"As an engineer, the unique challenges and questions being answered by those

in the Special Products Division are exhilarating. Our team is empowered with the autonomy necessary for these types of projects, and backed by an extensive array of tools, resources and connections both within and beyond the firearms industry to ensure results of the highest quality," said Nick Chappell, Henry's VP of engineering.

The company plans to roll out its first offerings under the SPD banner this spring.

[/henryusa.com](https://henryusa.com)

STREAMLIGHT PROTAC HL-X SELECTED BY FBI

Streamlight Inc. announced its distribution partner, Tactical Express (a provider of gear for federal law enforcement agencies) has been selected by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to supply the Streamlight ProTac HL-X tactical light to its agents as part of a five-year contract. Delivering up to 1,000 lumens, the light features multi-fuel capability with USB rechargeable or disposable battery options.

Under the terms of the five-year Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) (Award #15F06724A0001329, SKU 95313), the tactical light was chosen as the new agent-issued tactical handheld light for students of the Firearms Training Unit, Training Division of the FBI Academy and is also available for purchase across all other FBI divisions. Tactical Express began deliveries of the light to the FBI in November 2024.

"Streamlight and Tactical Express are very pleased to have been selected for this contract and partnership with the FBI," said Matthew J. Baker, director of

Streamlight's Military/Federal/Government sales division. "Having already shipped thousands of these high-performance lights to U.S. military police and security forces through commercial buys and using National Stock Number 6230-01626-6796 awards, we're proud to now also provide the ProTac HL-X to new FBI agents and other personnel using this BPA."

The ProTac HL-X flashlight, built for durability and a sure grip, is available as a complete rechargeable system that can use either a proprietary Streamlight SL-B26 protected li-ion USB rechargeable battery or two easily sourced CR123A disposable batteries. This multi-fuel capability offers convenient and cost-effective charging options, making it ideal for agent use in remote locations and for long-term operations such as crime scene processing or low-light training.

Offering three modes, the ProTac HL-X uses a high-power LED to deliver 1,000 lumens, 27,100 candela, a 330-meter beam distance and a run time of 1 hour and 30 minutes on high when using the SL-B26 battery; with CR123 batteries, the run time is 1 hour and 15 minutes. On low, the ProTac HL-X provides an extended 23 hours of run time, 65 lumens and 1,600



candela over an 80-meter beam distance; with CR123 batteries, the run time is 20 hours. The light's high-intensity strobe runs for 3.25 continuous hours with the SL-B26 rechargeable battery and 2.50 hours with lithium batteries.

The light's tactical tail switch permits easy, one-handed operation with firearms in-room clearing, building search and target identification at a distance situations. Measuring just 5.43", it is easily concealed under a uniform or other attire.

The light is fabricated from 6000 series machined aircraft aluminum with an anodized finish and comes packaged with a removable pocket clip and holster.

[/streamlight.com](https://streamlight.com)

SK GUNS BREAKS GROUND ON NEW FLORIDA FACILITY

SK Guns — a series-driven, limited-edition manufacturer of custom firearms — announced it broke ground on its new facility in St. Augustine, Fla.

SK Studios LLC, known as SK Guns and SK Customs, made a commitment to break ground on the new facility in 2024, and kept that promise on New Year's Eve. The new 20,000-sq. ft., state-of-the-art facility will serve as the company's headquarters and distribution center.

"St. Augustine is a beautiful city with a rich culture and history. We are excited to continue our operation here in Florida, and give back to our new community through our SK Gives Back initiatives," said Simon Khiabani, owner and founder of SK Guns.

The company is committed to working with various local 501(c)(3) nonprofits with a slate of new philanthropic



SK Guns Owner/Founder Simon Khiabani (center, right) is flanked by senior members of the SK team, as well as team members from Ladson Construction, the general contractor of the site that will house SK's 20,000 sq. ft. facility opening this fall.

partnerships in 2025 and beyond.

The facility is scheduled to finish construction in October of this year. In November, SK Gives Back will hold its first fundraising event in St. Augustine in

partnership with Kids & Clays.

More updates will be announced as the grand-opening date gets closer.

[/skguns.com](https://skguns.com)

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northamericanarms.com

OLIN WINCHESTER TO ACQUIRE AMMO INC.

Olin Corp. announced it has entered into a definitive agreement with AMMO Inc. whereby Olin will acquire AMMO's small-caliber ammunition manufacturing assets for a purchase price of \$75 million. The transaction will be funded through available liquidity. The assets will become part of Olin's Winchester Ammunition business.

The acquisition includes AMMO's brass shellcase capabilities and its world-class, 185,000-sq. ft. production facility in Manitowoc, Wis., constructed in 2022. The Manitowoc facility and its employees will complement Winchester's existing

production capabilities, enabling greater specialization and broader participation across high-margin, specialty calibers.

"The Manitowoc assets will extend Winchester's leadership position and expand the reach and value of our near-full integration. The acquired assets will enable our legacy plants to lower costs of existing high-volume products and increase our ability to participate in higher-margin specialty rounds at a cost advantage," said Brett Flaughner, president of Winchester Ammunition.

"This investment continues the Winchester acquisition strategy, which began with our White Flyer acquisition in 2023, to identify and secure small bolt-on opportunities that are highly strategic and immediately accretive to Olin," said Ken



WINCHESTER

Lane, Olin president and CEO.

Lane added the company expects the Manitowoc assets to generate \$15 million to \$20 million of incremental adjusted gross earnings in the first year.

The transaction is subject to customary terms and closing conditions, and is expected to close in the second quarter of 2025.

[/ winchester.com](http://winchester.com)

RCBS, REVELYST ANNOUNCE WEAVER MOUNTS LICENSE

RCBS and Revelyst, a collective of performance gear and precision technologies brands, announced a licensing agreement for Revelyst's iconic scope brand, Weaver Mounts.

As part of this agreement, RCBS will continue to manufacture all Weaver rings, bases and mounts in Oroville, Calif., as it has done since 2012.

"After Hodgdon Powder Co. purchased the RCBS business last year, it was a natural decision to license the Weaver brand. This agreement will leverage our

expertise in manufacturing high-quality mounting systems ... and offering our 'Made in the USA' Weaver optics mounting solutions to consumers everywhere," said Aaron Oelger, Hodgdon's VP of marketing.

Weaver rings, bases and mounts will be sold alongside RCBS reloading tools. The company began shipping Weaver mounts to retail and wholesale customers in January.

"Weaver has been an industry leader in high-performance mounting systems for more than 90 years, and is a cornerstone of quality in the shooting sports industry," said Simon Waters, president of licensing, entertainment and communications for Revelyst. "We are



confident that RCBS, with its reputation for excellence and craftsmanship, will take the brand to new heights, while preserving its legacy, through this license deal."

Founded in 1943, RCBS has grown into the industry's leading metallic reloading equipment manufacturer.

[/ rcbs.com](http://rcbs.com)

[/ revelyst.com](http://revelyst.com)

SAAMI WELCOMES NEW COMPANIES, ACCEPTS NEW CARTRIDGES

The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute Inc. (SAAMI) announced the following companies have joined the organization: Q LLC, Bachstein Consulting, Christensen Arms, Daniel Defense, Dynamic Research Technologies, HSM, Just Cause Solutions, Liberty Ammunition, General Inspection and Oehler Research Inc.

"We are very pleased to have had so many great companies join the SAAMI

family over the last few months," said Joe Bartozzi, SAAMI president and CEO. "These companies are taking their place at the forefront of promoting firearm safety by helping to create and apply the standards that ensure the safety, reliability and interchangeability of firearms, ammunition and suppressors."

Additionally, SAAMI recently announced the acceptance of three new rifle cartridges for SAAMI standardization:

- 7mm Backcountry: Introduced by Federal Premium Ammunition (The Kinetic Group), 7mm Backcountry has a 170-grain bullet that travels at a velocity of 3,000 fps and a Maximum Average Pressure of 80,000 psi.



- 25 Creedmoor: The 25 Creedmoor, introduced by Hornady Mfg. Co., has a 134-grain bullet that travels at a velocity of 2,810 fps and a Maximum Average Pressure of 62,000 psi.

- 338 Advanced Rifle Cartridge: Hornady Mfg. Co. introduced the .338 ARC, a 175-grain bullet traveling at a velocity of 2,500 fps and a Maximum Average Pressure of 52,000 psi.

[/ saami.org](http://saami.org)

CMP TO PRESENT OVER \$325,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2025

The Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP) will award over \$325,000 for the 2025–2026 school year through its annual Scholarship Program.

Each year, high school student-athletes involved in marksmanship programs are encouraged to apply for CMP Scholarships — a program that lends economic support to young marksmen and women who have shown dedication on and off the firing line.

One-time CMP Shooting Sports Scholarship amounts of \$1,000, \$3,000 and \$5,000 will be awarded, along with select four-year recurring \$5,000 scholarships

(\$20,000 per awardee).

These scholarships may be used to pursue post-secondary or vocational programs, community colleges or university educations as well as trade schools to cover a variety of interests.

Generously, the Garand Collectors Association has presented four additional \$5,000 John C. Garand Scholarships, while the family of Michael Thomas Randall has contributed three \$5,000 scholarships. The Talladega Superspeedway has also provided a sum of \$5,000 toward the CMP Scholarship Program.

Since 2005, the CMP Scholarship Program has presented scholarships to high school seniors based on merit, humanitarian efforts, extracurricular activities and marksmanship participation. Over the years, the CMP has added \$3,000 and \$5,000 scholarships as well as four



\$20,000 scholarships awarded to the top applicants. These scholarships honor past notable CMP board members Judith Legerski, Jon Bengston, Harry Sieben and the late Dr. Carolyn Hines, who were all devoted to sustaining youth activities.

Along with scholarships for marksmanship athletes, CMP Community Scholarships will also be presented to students located near CMP's facilities in Anniston and Talladega, Ala., as well as Port Clinton and Oak Harbor, Ohio. For these local scholarships, no marksmanship experience is required.

[/ thecmp.org](http://thecmp.org)



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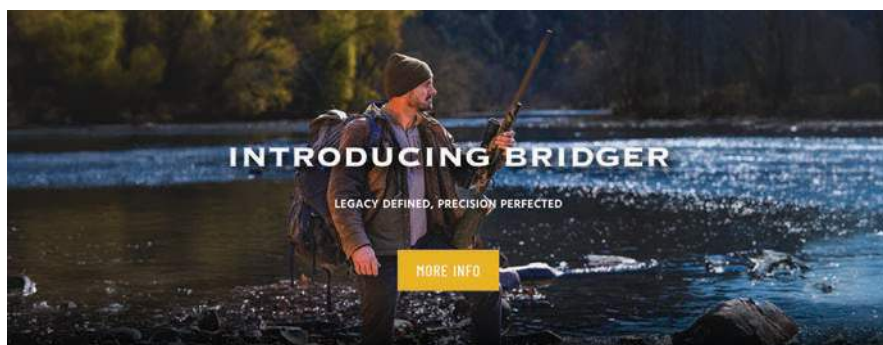
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WATCHTOWER FIREARMS UNVEILS UPDATED WEBSITE

Watchtower Firearms announced the launch of its newly remodeled website, a project that has been underway for quite some time.

Designed with the consumer in mind, the revamped online platform showcases premium, American-made Watchtower Firearms products while enhancing the shopping experience. The new website features improved navigation and valuable product resources. Every feature reflects the company's commitment to better understanding and addressing customers' needs.

Each firearm featured on the site, including standout models like the



Apache, Demolitia and Bridger, comes with detailed information on quality and craftsmanship. Essential specifications, state compliance details, community reviews, shipping times and more are now all at the consumer's fingertips.

The dedicated community pages outline everything from Watchtower's lifetime warranty to special programs for law enforcement personnel and veterans. Returning customers can now effortlessly access crucial services, whether applying for duty programs or registering

warranties.

"This new website represents our commitment to providing a superior shopping experience to firearm enthusiasts. As we move forward into 2025, we're dedicated to continually refining our online presence. We look forward to welcoming you into our digital home and showcasing what makes Watchtower Firearms truly exceptional," said Ray "Cash" Care, Watchtower CCO.

[/ watchtowerfirearms.com](https://watchtowerfirearms.com)

USCCA, INDUSTRY LEADERS LAUNCH NON-LETHAL SELF-DEFENSE COURSE

The U.S. Concealed Carry Association (USCCA) announced a partnership with industry leaders ASP, Byrna, Sabre and Taser Self Defense to launch a course in Non-Lethal Tools for Self-Defense.

This innovative program offers comprehensive training to equip responsibly armed Americans with practical knowledge and skills to use less-lethal tools effectively for personal protection.

The industry partners bring a wealth of expertise and innovative products

for non-lethal self-defense to the table, including highly effective pepper sprays/gels, OC capsule pistol launchers, strike lights, stun guns and tasers. All four partners share the USCCA's dedication to promoting the importance of training and education in self-defense.

"Non-lethal tools are an essential part of the self-defense journey. This partnership delivers a cutting-edge curriculum that empowers individuals to defend themselves confidently while prioritizing safety and preparedness," said Rob Chadwick, director of training and development and leader of the FBI's national Active Shooter Response Training Program.

The USCCA wants people to realize they will encounter situations where they



can't or don't want to use a firearm for protection. The Non-Lethal Tools for Self-Defense course will teach them how to navigate those gray areas with confidence and effectively protect themselves with deadly force alternatives.

The USCCA website includes a course locator-by-state feature.

[/ usconcealedcarry.com](https://usconcealedcarry.com)

RITON OPTICS DEBUTS TRANSFERABLE UNLIMITED LIFETIME WARRANTY

Riton Optics recently converted its Riton Promise Warranty to a transferable, unlimited, lifetime warranty.

"As hunters and shooters ourselves, we wanted to offer the highest level of support we could to our customers, but also to our network of dealers, so they can have absolute confidence in all aspects of the Riton brand," said Brian Young, VP of

sales at Riton.

The Riton Promise Warranty will require no proof of purchase to exercise and will cover any manufacturer defect as well as accidental damage or breakage. The warranty will cover variable power optics, binoculars, spotting scopes and even red-dot optics.

"We stand behind our products," said Chris Varas, assistant director of product R&D. "When we looked at our processes, we were already going above and beyond for our customers. We were already functioning like this because a quality customer experience matters so much to



us, but we weren't promoting it. There just wasn't any reason not to do this."

Like all unlimited lifetime warranties, there are exclusions to what is covered, such as loss, theft or deliberate damage. Additional details about the warranty are available on Riton's website.

[/ ritonoptics.com](https://ritonoptics.com)

RADIANS OUTDOORS, DUCKS UNLIMITED ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP

Radians Outdoors, a leading manufacturer of personal protective products for shooters and hunters, announced a licensing partnership with Ducks Unlimited, a leader in wetlands conservation.

Ducks Unlimited conserves, protects and restores wetlands across North America. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

"This collaboration combines two iconic, Memphis-based organizations that share a passion for the great outdoors and a commitment to safety and wetlands conservation," said Radians president Bill England. "This type of partnership increases visibility for both companies and reinforces our shared mission of



Available in green, the Radians Outdoors-Ducks Unlimited High-Performance Earmuffs (NRR 26) launched at SHOT Show 2025.

protecting both people and nature."

"Featuring the iconic Ducks Unlimited logo, the new line of high-performance vision and hearing protection will resonate with sporting goods distributors, retailers and customers who prioritize eye and ear safety in the field," said Wes Miller, Radians director of sporting goods.

Radians Outdoors launched the Ducks Unlimited collection at the 2025 SHOT Show in Las Vegas in January. The collection includes ANSI Z87.1 impact-resistant safety eyewear, passive and electronic earmuffs, earplugs and more.

[/ radiansoutdoors.com](https://radiansoutdoors.com)

[/ ducks.org](https://ducks.org)



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The GLOCK 19X MOS combines the best features of two of its most popular and most trusted field-tested platforms. The full-size GLOCK 17 frame and the compact GLOCK 19 slide have joined forces to produce the ideal pistol for all conditions and situations. The G19X MOS GLOCK enhances the desirability of the already near-perfect Gen5 model with the addition of the Modular Optic System (MOS). The slide is precision machined to provide a mounting system for popular optic sights. With multiple adapter plates, you can quickly and easily mount pistol optics. The 19X MOS comes in the coyote color with an improved nPVD slide coating to prevent corrosion. Additional features include the GLOCK Marksman Barrel (GMB), ambidextrous slide stop levers, Ameriglo co-witness tall sights, FBI mag release and lanyard loop. Included with the pistol is a standard 17-round magazine, two 17+2-round magazines and coyote-colored pistol case.

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SMITH & WESSON RECOGNIZES 2024 AMBASSADOR DEALERS

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. has named 10 of its distinguished retailers nationwide as Ambassador Dealers for their exemplary performance in 2024. The Smith & Wesson Ambassador Dealer program honors retailers who are dedicated advocates for the Smith & Wesson brand and who consistently contribute to the success of its product offerings.

"We sincerely value the partnership we share with our Ambassador Dealers. They consistently exemplify the core values that are fundamental to Smith & Wesson, including integrity, exceptional customer service and a commitment to

quality," said Sue Cupero, S&W VP of sales. "Their unwavering support of our brand in their retail environments aligns perfectly with our mission to deliver unparalleled products and experiences to our customers."

To be selected as a Smith & Wesson Ambassador Dealer, retailers are required to meet specific criteria of outstanding sales performance, retailer product training and more.

In recognition of these Ambassador Dealers, each was presented with an awards package and is now recognized as an Ambassador Dealer on Smith & Wesson's Dealer Locator. New Ambassador Dealer retailers are selected annually.

These stores were recognized as 2024 S&W Ambassador Dealers:



Duncan Gun Shop (Wilkesboro, N.C.),
Vance Outdoors (Lebanon, Ohio),
Maine Military Supply (Holden, Maine),
Turner's Outdoorsman (Ontario, Calif.),
Eagle Sports Range (Oak Forest, Ill.),
Tombstone Tactical (Phoenix),
The Outpost Armory (Franklin, Tenn.),
Florida Gun Exchange (Ormond Beach, Fla.),
Al's Sporting Goods (Logan, Utah)
and Top Guns (Terre Haute, Ind.).

[/ smith-wesson.com](https://smith-wesson.com)

SSSF BECOMES GOVERNING BODY FOR PPP PROGRAM

The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF) announced its new role as the governing body for the Progressive Position Pistol (PPP) program. This development marks a new chapter for the PPP program, which continues to thrive through strong, ongoing partnerships with USA Shooting, the Civilian Marksmanship Program and the Scholastic Action Shooting Program.

To celebrate the regrowth of this dynamic program, SSSF also announced the 2025 Progressive Position Pistol

Junior National Event, which will take place Aug. 1–3 this year at the Missouri Marksmanship Education Center in Columbia, Mo.

The PPP serves as a feeder program for the Intercollegiate Pistol Program, making this event a key recruiting opportunity for collegiate coaches. Graduating seniors and rising stars will have the chance to showcase their talents in front of coaches while taking their first steps toward collegiate competition.

Additionally, this program provides aspiring athletes with a pathway to represent Team USA on Junior or National Teams, with sights set on competing in the Olympics.



The 2025 Progressive Position Pistol Rule Book is now available at <https://tinyurl.com/yrv72tf5>. It contains the latest guidelines, standards and competition requirements for athletes, coaches and event organizers.

[/ sssfonline.org](https://sssfonline.org)

OTIS TECHNOLOGY CELEBRATES 40 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Otis Technology, today an internationally recognized leader in gun-cleaning products and accessories, is observing its 40th anniversary this year. Otis provides its USA-made products to the military, law enforcement and sporting goods markets.

Otis Technology began in 1985, when Doreen Williams tripped and fell in the mud while whitetail deer hunting with her father. With the barrel of her grandfather's Model 94 Winchester full of mud, the day's hunt was over for the

16-year-old. Along with her parents and three siblings, Williams endeavored to create a smarter cleaning solution for hunters.

The Williams family followed through on her vision to innovate gun care that resulted in the quality products Otis is known for. The company pioneered the breech-to-muzzle cable-cleaning concept, allowing firearm owners to clean from the breech end of the firearm without disassembling it. The round, soft-pack cleaning kits are iconic and synonymous with the Otis brand.

The company's 40th year in business continues to drive its commitment to rethink and redefine gun care, giving gun



owners better and smarter ways to keep their most cherished firearms in the best condition possible.

"What started as the Williams family at the kitchen table has grown into a workforce of 100-plus dedicated employees. We couldn't do what we do without our employees, our customers and our relationships with our community and in this industry. We look forward to another 40 years in business," said Bill Kleftis, CEO of Otis Technology.

[/ otistec.com](https://otistec.com)

GLOBAL DEFENSE LAUNCHES TURNKEY EXPORT SERVICES, CONSULTING

Global Defense announced the launch of two new services: Turnkey Export Services and Export Consulting. These solutions simplify export operations, ensure compliance and empower manufacturers and companies to expand their global reach.

Global Defense is a U.S.-based importer, exporter and wholesale distributor of firearms, components, accessories, ammunition and specialized equipment for commercial, military and law enforcement markets. The company bridges the gap between manufacturers and international procurement officials, facilitating access to industry-leading product categories.

Turnkey Export Services provide a

fully outsourced export division that manages licensing, warehousing, logistics and compliance, allowing manufacturers to focus on their core operations.

Export Consulting offers comprehensive support for manufacturers building in-house export operations, delivering tailored tools and guidance to succeed in international markets.

"Our turnkey solution is for manufacturers who want to grow internationally, but don't want to navigate the complexities on their own. Our new service packages simplify complex export operations while maintaining strict compliance with global regulations. Leveraging our deep expertise in logistics, regulatory frameworks and industry relationships, we help manufacturers access untapped global markets for their products, and drive profitability," said Global Defense CEO Jordan Young.


For companies and manufacturers looking to expand globally without



investing in costly in-house compliance officers, Turnkey Export Services offers a hassle-free solution.


For manufacturers seeking to manage export operations independently, Export Consulting provides guidance on preparing export licensing, vetting of international distributors, support with international logistics and compliance, customized international market analysis and strategies to develop tailored sales and marketing programs. **SI**

[/globaldefense.us](http://globaldefense.us)

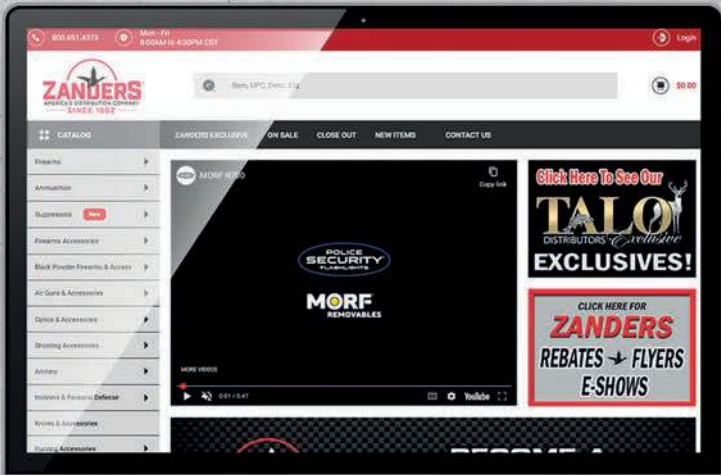



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T. SEYFERT

Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc. Appoints President/CEO

Todd W. Seyfert was appointed the new president and CEO of Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc., replacing longtime CEO Chris Killoy, who will serve as a special advisor to Seyfert and on the board of directors until his retirement in May. After which, he will remain on the board.

John A. Cosentino, Jr., chairman of the Ruger board of directors, noted, "Todd is an accomplished executive with extensive experience in the outdoor adventure and shooting sports industries. ... He will be instrumental in further strengthening Ruger's market position and delivering long-term value to shareholders, employees and customers alike."

Seyfert's career experience stems from executive leadership roles at FeraDyne Outdoors, ATK/Vista Outdoor, Magnum Research, Bushnell, Michaels of Oregon and Birchwood Laboratories.



M. NARUS

Banshee Brands Inc. Names Marketing VP

Banshee Brands Inc., the parent company of RETAY USA and Breda America Group (Breda AG), appointed Michael Narus as the VP of marketing. He will oversee all marketing operations in the U.S., focusing on elevating the presence of Banshee Brands' products and building connections with consumers and dealers alike.

Christian Handy, CEO of Banshee Brands Inc., stated, "[Narus'] wealth of industry knowledge, strategic insights and long-standing relationships make him an invaluable asset to our organization."

Narus brings over three decades of experience from roles within the shooting sports industry.



PROOF Research Selects CEO

Richard Hunter recently joined PROOF Research as the CEO.

Hunter joins PROOF Research following his tenure as CEO of Eaglepicher Technologies. Prior to that, he served as president of L3 Technologies' Defense Electronic Systems division.



J. SCHOLES

Outtech Founder Retires

After more than 45 years of dedicated service to the outdoor industry, Outtech Founder Jay Scholes is retiring.

In 1989, Scholes, along with partners Ron Rette and "Rocket" Rod Swanson, founded Outtech with the vision of revolutionizing sales representation in the outdoor industry. The company has continually grown and diversified, including the addition of Quickfire, the relaunch of Trophyline, the creation of Redline Bowhunting and the acquisition of The Sports Products Group.



Otis Tech Announces Promotions, New Hires

Otis Technology announced several key promotions and new hires within its sales, marketing and operations teams.

Kenda Campbell, who joined Otis eight years ago, was promoted to VP of commercial sales. She leads the commercial sales team as they continue their positive sales growth.

Heather Pleskach is now serving as the VP of marketing. She has been with Otis for 16 years and will continue to drive marketing and new product strategy for the organization.

Samantha Harter was hired as the new product manager.

In his new role as brand marketing manager, Jared Sturtevant is responsible for leading Otis' public relations efforts. For the past four years, Sturtevant was instrumental in driving brand awareness efforts through brand influencers, social media paid media and video content.

On the operations team, Sean Fox was promoted to production supervisor where he will oversee the entire production team. He previously held the role of area specialist. Fox has been employed at Otis for 12 years.

Shelley Lallier, former production supervisor, is now serving as the production training supervisor where she is designing, implementing and overseeing training programs for the various production departments. She has been with Otis for 21 years.



L. HODGES

Rochester Precision Optics Welcomes Bus. Dev. Manager

Rochester Precision Optics (RPO), a designer and manufacturer

of advanced optical solutions, welcomed Les Hodges as its business development manager. In this role, he will continue to advance the requirements of night vision systems capabilities through improvements in the optical performance for systems integrators and U.S. government prime contractors.

Hodges began his career as an R&D engineer before moving on to provide technical support and night vision training, and then as a national sales manager for a tactical systems distribution network. His most recent position was senior director of business development in support of USG EO/IR programs, DLA sustainment and foreign military sales for Carson Industries Night Vision.



C. OSBORN

Q LLC Names VP

Q LLC welcomed Cody Osborn as its VP of sales and marketing. He will oversee all sales and marketing initiatives, help drive strategies to grow brand recognition and expand Q's reach in the firearms market.

Kevin Brittingham, owner of Q LLC, said, "[Osborn's] not just another suit; he's one of us. With his experience and passion, Cody is the perfect fit to help us push boundaries and keep delivering the products our customers demand."

Osborn gained experience from sales and marketing roles at Walther Arms and Taurus USA, and as a competitive shooter for nearly 10 years.



J. LONG

SIGHTRON Promotes Sales Director

In his new role as the director of sales for SIGHTRON, John Long is responsible for all domestic and global sales, rep groups, marketing, product development and training.

Long has more than 27 years of experience in the shooting sports industry. Prior to joining SIGHTRON, he was the national account manager for an optics company for over 22 years.



Winchester Safes Taps National Sales Rep

Winchester Safes welcomed Eric Hawkins as the national sales representative. He will be instrumental in advancing partnerships and client relationships, helping to drive growth in both established and emerging markets.

Greg Walters, VP of sales and marketing for Winchester Safes, said, "[Hawkins'] extensive experience, dedication to clients and strategic insight will be invaluable as we continue to expand our market presence and strengthen our

commitment to providing our customers with the highest level of service."

Hawkins' decades of experience include his most recent role with Don Coffey Company.



C. GUEVARA

NSSF Welcomes Board Member

NSSF announced Carlos Guevara, VP and general counsel of GLOCK Inc., was appointed to the NSSF board of governors. Guevara brings decades of legal, operational and leadership experience within the firearm industry to his new role on the board.

Joe Bartozzi, NSSF president and CEO, stated, "[Guevara's] strong legal background, along with his operational and strategic experience in the firearm industry, will be invaluable to both NSSF and the broader industry."

Guevara currently oversees a broad range of critical functions at GLOCK, including legal compliance, HR, marketing, media relations, import/exports, finance, quality and environmental health and safety operations.

Prior to joining GLOCK in 1999, he served as corporate counsel for multinational corporations and later held the position of general counsel at Xerox Corporation's subsidiary in Colombia.



S. CUPERO

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. Sales VP Retires

Smith & Wesson Brands Inc. announced the upcoming retirement of Sue Cupero, VP of sales, after more than four decades of dedicated service to the company and the firearms industry.

Since joining Smith & Wesson in 1979, Cupero has played a pivotal role in shaping the company's sales strategies, expanding its market presence and fostering strong, lasting relationships with clients and partners.

Smith & Wesson CEO Mark Smith shared, "What truly has turned Sue into what I have described many

times as an industry icon is the fact that she has forged so many genuine friendships and strong relationships across the industry and has ensured this legacy will endure through the passionate, hardworking and dedicated Smith & Wesson sales team that she has built. On behalf of the entire Smith & Wesson team, I want to congratulate Sue on an amazing career — and wish her well as she embarks on this next chapter."



R. MOLDENHAUER

X-Vision Optics Adds To Team

In her multifaceted role at X-Vision Optics, Rachel Moldenhauer will contribute as an inventory specialist, new product developer, customer service specialist, tech support, trade show coordinator, inside sales representative and purchasing lead.

"Rachel's enthusiasm for the outdoors and her dedication to the customer journey makes her a standout addition to our team," said Mari Bodensteiner, X-Vision Optics' director of marketing.



A. STEIER

Primary Arms Optics Advances Senior Manager

Primary Arms Optics promoted Alex Steier to the role of senior manager of international sales.

"Alex's ability to understand and address the unique needs of our international customers will be invaluable," said Scott Tirman, VP of sales at Primary Arms Optics. "His capability and passion for excellence align perfectly with our mission to deliver innovative, high-quality optics worldwide."

During his time with the Primary Arms Optics marketing team, Steier has played an essential role in spearheading major optic releases, contributing to the brand's merchandising, branding and dealer resources. [S](#)



BY MASSAD AYOOB

SHOT SHOW 2025: DEFENSIVE HANDGUN STANDOUTS

It's impossible to cover all the new stuff available in this space, obviously, so we'll touch on the new defensive handguns that will be getting the most attention in the gun press and online. Hopefully they will have the most useful sales potential for your defense-minded customers.

SUPREME SEMI-AUTOS

We'll start with GLOCK, a perennial top seller, which has recognized where the carry optics market is going and done something smart. Their new COA series is done in conjunction with Aimpoint, which describes the key feature as GLOCK's "new A-CUT interface that neutralizes movement of the optic while providing a lower mount with iron sight index."

A while back, SIG led the way for gunmakers to sell pistols with red dot sights already mounted. GLOCK doing the same is big, with options from service size to slimline 9mms. My pre-SHOT test gun is a G19 Gen5 and came already sighted in and co-witnessed with the iron sights. One-stop shopping. The ACRO sight has a closed emitter to protect against the weather and a big window that makes the red dot easy for the customer to find on the first try. These are gonna sell.

GLOCK clones are everywhere and increasing in number. It may not be

long before there are as many "mock 19s" as there are 1911 clones. One such is the Shadow Systems MR920, sufficiently popular that the company has introduced a California-compliant version for 2025.

The one leading the list this year, though, has to be the Ruger RXM. Released just before SHOT, the model name describes it as a Ruger top end, G19 size, crossed with a Magpul lower that has a straight front and a flared magwell like a Gen5 GLOCK. It takes GLOCK magazines as well as the Magpul ones it ships with, comes with a \$399 MSRP and is already selling in some gun emporiums for less.

I swapped a Gen3 upper onto my RXM frame and vice versa, and both worked fine. It will fit some — but not all — GLOCK holsters. (Try the empty gun in a holster before you sell the latter to the customer.) While there are some functional clones out there, none have Ruger's reputation for quality and factory backup, so trust me: the Ruger RXM is primed to sell! I liked mine enough I bought the test sample.

Heckler & Koch came late to the micro-compact/higher capacity carry 9mm market established more than half a decade ago now by SIG with its still-best-selling P365, but it's here now. The HK CC9 (Concealed Carry 9mm) is sweet. I enjoyed shooting my pre-SHOT

◀ One of the most unique carry pistols unveiled at SHOT Show 2025, the KelTec PR57 will certainly attract interest based on its design alone.

sample and was satisfied in all respects. It lived up to the high reliability and quality standard HK fans have come to expect, and the legion of HK fans alone is reason enough to put one or more CC9 in your showcase. Price is in range, too!

UNIQUENESS SELLS, TOO

Perhaps the most intriguing new carry pistol of the year, and certainly the most unique, is the KelTec PR57, the "R" standing for its rotary barrel design. Beyond this, however, is a pistol that is super-light (13-oz. range), holds 20 rounds and carries the low MSRP of \$399.

George Kehlgrén, design genius and founder of KelTec, harkened back to his first pistol, the P10, and made this new PR57 load through the top like a Broomhandle Mauser with 10-round stripper clips.

The 5.7mm has not become a top defense cartridge yet, and wound ballistics experts are still debating whether the cartridge is effective for fighting. But the intriguing design alone will sell it to the gun collector who has to have one of everything.



1911s continue to proliferate, the new hotness being the high-cap 9mm by Staccato.

If a customer looks at the radical design and says, "That'll never catch on," my suggested answer is, "If you're right, it will become a rarity and will be a good investment gun to collect."

There is one downside you'll have to warn the customer about, though. To unload it, the user has to rack it 20 times to get the cartridges back out. (I confirmed this with KelTec.)

DOUBLE-STACK PROLIFERATION

1911s continue to proliferate, the new hotness being the high-cap 9mm by Staccato, whose earlier iteration gave the concept the name 2011.

Staccato itself has a new HD series, which I'm told now includes a passive firing pin safety to make it drop-safe.

The HD is available with a 4" or 4.5" barrel. It is high priced, but the quality is commensurate. One way to save money is to order the P-series of the HD, which works with full-size GLOCK 17 magazines.

Other 2011-type pistols newly introduced go progressively downward in price: Kimber's 2K11, Springfield Armory's Prodigy DS Compact, a new Tisas from Turkey and more.

Speaking of 1911s, originator Colt hasn't introduced a double-stack version yet, but has joined the rush to red dot sights with optics-ready 1911s as of 2025.

And a new company aptly called P7Pro is bringing out a clone of HK's iconic P7 9mm squeeze-cocker. Don't expect it to be cheap. Fortunately, P7 aficionados don't expect them to be cheap, anyway.

REVOLVER WAVE

There is a wave, though not a tsunami, of renewed interest in revolvers for self-defense.

Taurus' well-thought-of Model 856 line expands this year with a deluxe model that has one cylinder for (increasingly expensive and hard to find) .38 Special and .357 Magnum self-defense loads, and another for inexpensive 9mm ammo for practice. They quickly interchange. If your clientele includes wheelgunners who are serious about practice and training and may not roll their own ammo, at least one of these should probably be on display.

Lipseys has followed their recent introduction of special-run Smith & Wesson Ultimate Carry hammerless J-Frames in .38 Special and .32 H&R Magnum with a three-frame lineup this year of classic Smith & Wessons without the internal lock S&W purists absolutely despise.

This Classic line includes a J-Frame Chief's Special (with the suboptimal round front sight of the original 1950 version), a slim-barrel K-Frame Model 10 and N-Frames in .357 and .44 Magnum. These include a .44 Magnum Mountain Gun with tapered 4" barrel — my personal favorite S&W .44 Mag.

If your customer base includes a lot of S&W fans, or even one collector



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Mas puts the micro-compact HK CC9 through its
paces while out on the range.

who just has to own everything that hallowed company makes, well, you can get 'em from the Lipsey's team.

Diamondback has expanded their line of small double-action revolvers, as well, launching the SDR (Self Defense Revolver) in 9mm and .357 Mag.

DEFENSIVE HANDGUN AMMO

CCI announced a new economy line of jacketed hollowpoints to compete with Winchester's white box JHPs.

Blazer Brass Hollow Point, the company promises, will give adequate penetration and expansion in the common self-defense calibers. They've also expanded their Uppercut .22 Long Rifle defense load line to include .22 Magnum."

Federal tells us, "HST's new .44 Rem. Mag. load has been optimized for personal defense. It provides more energy

than 10mm Auto and .357 Magnum with a larger diameter, 230-grain projectile."

They add, "Hydra-Shok Deep will now be offered in .45 Colt and .32 H&R. The modern defense projectiles in these new loads are optimized to offer the best terminal performance for these specific cartridges, with controlled expansion that perfectly balances expansion size and penetration depth."

Finally, their American Eagle line of economy-priced training ammo will now include .32 H&R Magnum. It seems to be undergoing a definite surge in popularity among those who prefer small, lightweight revolvers.

I'm out of room here, but SHOT 2025 brought many more exciting new products. Pay attention to this space for more analysis on potential top sellers throughout the year. **SI**



BY ANNETTE EVANS

WHY “SHRINK IT & PINK IT” DOESN’T WORK

We’ve all heard it: Women are the fastest-growing demographic of gun owners. Marketing campaigns and sales efforts have responded accordingly.

Unfortunately, they haven’t all been on target. Some manufacturers and retailers have taken the easy approach and used simplistic assumptions about what attracts women to traditionally male products like guns.

The most common? “*Shrink it and pink it.*” After all, women are generally smaller than men, and they must like the most feminine of colors, right? Well ... maybe not so much.

“SHRINK IT” IS A GENERALIZATION

Let’s start with the “shrink it” idea. On average, women are expected to have smaller hands, less strength, lower weight and a more petite stature than men. Reducing the size and caliber of a gun, therefore, seems like a good first step to making it more accessible to women. It’s often done by simply pointing a shrink ray at a “normal” gun.

If done right, the end result is a firearm that’s easier to handle and shoot. Done wrong, it will make for an unpleasant — or even painful — experience. And there are so many ways to do it wrong.

A miniaturized version of a gun in the same caliber as the original will

have more felt recoil. It may be lighter to carry around or hold up, and it may seem to perfectly fit a customer’s hand, but it can rapidly become uncomfortable once they start shooting.

It may be the right choice for an experienced shooter looking for a concealed carry option, but perhaps less so for a new shooter.

Many women have significant time behind firearms and can make an informed decision to buy a tiny gun. Many don’t, however, and will have a bad time if you recommend a small gun because it seems less intimidating. If they take that adorable little gun to the range and hate shooting it, they’re not likely to keep trying to find something more appropriate.

Besides, just as some men are slight, some women are not. Some men have smaller hands and shorter arms, some women have larger hands and longer arms and those measurements don’t always match up to the stature of the people they’re attached to.

Instead of assuming a woman must need a smaller grip on a handgun or a shorter stock on a rifle or shotgun, try working with her as a unique individual to be fitted with a firearm just for her. Make suggestions based on her, not on the stereotypical generic female customer you have in mind. I promise she’ll appreciate not being Female Shopper Number 42.

◀ Annette engages her next target using a Boresight Customs GLOCK 48 outfitted with a Trijicon RMRcc optic. (Image courtesy of Tamara Keel)

“PINK IT” IS NOT SERIOUS

Then there’s the “pink it” strategy. The theory starts with black being too intimidating, too tactical, too male and not to mention, too boring. It’s a strange one in a world where little black dresses, basic black pumps and classic black trousers are wardrobe staples in many women’s closets. Black is neutral; it’s simple and clean. It’s the perfect base for colorful accessories and the perfect accessory for a sleek monochrome look.

Black is serious. It’s exactly what some women are looking for because they view firearms with the gravity owed to a dangerous tool. Guns aren’t for fun to them, so they don’t want their guns colored like toys.

That said, some women do appreciate bling in the form of colorful guns. Pink might even be their favorite color. Which pink? Well, that’s a longer conversation, and a reason why simply slapping pink paint on a gun isn’t the best way to make it attractive to women. She might love hot pink and turn up her nose at that pastel rose shade. Or she might be into delicate blush pinks and shudder at the idea of a gun the same color as bubble gum. That’s assuming she likes pink at all, which so very many women don’t.

A NUANCED APPROACH

A more nuanced approach is better. Think of “shrink it and pink it” as shorthand (and perhaps only on the inside).

Instead of shrinking down an entire firearm, or simply marketing a compact, subcompact or youth version at women, consider the parts that are more likely to make a difference. Two examples: Grips with a narrower circumference and controls that are easier to access or manipulate.

A pistol may be perfectly suited to a woman’s smaller hands if she can easily wrap her palm around the grip and take advantage of a shorter trigger reach. She may be able to pump a shotgun just fine if only the stock were shorter so that she could reach the forend more comfortably. She may be able to use more of the strength she has to rack a slide or work a charging handle if only they were larger or more textured.

These more targeted changes have the advantage of making all firearms more ergonomic for all shooters.

Then, since some particular shade of pink might not be to the taste of every potential woman customer (imagine that), an array of colors and finishes might be offered. Start with the standards: black and silver are classic for a reason, and there's no cause to start with the assumption a woman will want otherwise.

If they do want something more colorful, many popular firearms come in a variety of purples, robin's egg blues and other shades along with pink. A lucky shopper might find a glittered gun in their local shop, or one with engraved art or wild patterns. She might also find inspiration online, whether in the form of a special edition or personalizing through a custom paint job.

Manufacturers and distributors may not be able to make a dream come true, but a retailer has an

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Manufacturers and distributors may not be able to make a dream come true, but a retailer has an opportunity to make almost anything possible.

opportunity to make almost anything possible. They can recommend and coordinate getting a gun to a specialty finish provider or even provide custom paint or hydro-dipping services in-house.

REMEMBER THIS ...

The key to finding the perfect gun for a woman is to remember she is an individual.

A gun is a woman's gun because she can enjoy shooting it and she likes how it looks. Assuming a particular size, caliber, model or color is appropriate might work for some

customers, but you run the risk of getting it wrong for others.

It might be a simple failure to offer a workable solution, so the customer doesn't find the right gun for her requirements and needs to come back and try again. It might be worse: A customer so offended at being offered a "girl" gun without consideration of her unique circumstances that you risk both losing the customer and losing a new participant in the shooting sports.

It's helpful to understand the factors in play, from fit issues to use cases to style choices. Knowing the broad generalities of what different demographics might need and prefer is only a starting point. You'll need to learn more and become something of a firearms concierge to make the best recommendations among a wide selection of options. The best part? All customers will benefit from the person behind the counter being familiar with how different options fit different individuals. **\$1**



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BY CLYDE G. HOWELL

"YOU" IS THE WORD FOR SELLING

Editor's Note: As we look back on 70 years of serving the industry, several stories stood out from 1962 — we narrowed it down to one. The following article was originally published in the June 1962 issue of *Shooting Goods Retailer* (which became *The Shooting Industry* several months later). Though written back when John F. Kennedy was president, the nuggets in this article have staying power and should impact how your business is being run.

In today's market, every edge matters. Businesses that put customers at the forefront will capture sales unhelpful ones don't. A lesson from six decades ago is well worth your time — especially in the last section. So, have a seat on your "davenport" and let us know what you think: editor@shootingindustry.com.
— Jade Moldae, Editor

August Vander Ley is a master of good public relations. He does not boast, he does not preach, he does not shout and he does not talk down to his customers.

Mainly because of his genuine interest in "you" and not in "I" — "me" — "my" or "mine." He has parlayed a hobby into an enviable part-time business, one of such proportions that by 1963, the year he retires as a technician with Illinois Bell Telephone, it will have exploded into one demanding

his full attention.

THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE COUNTS

Are human relations alone the secret to his success? No, not entirely. "Van" as he is known to all his friends, is also an excellent gun mechanic and as such, he possesses another highly important requisite of successful selling ... a thorough knowledge of his product.

Of the other basic ingredients deemed so necessary for successful merchandising — effective advertising, strategic location, eye-catching window displays — there are none. His combination store and gun shop, nestled amidst a group of farm buildings out in the "sticks," is quite inaccessible to foot traffic. This means there are no "window shoppers" or "just browsing" clients here.

He has never advertised his services. Nevertheless, shooters are bringing him their guns and gun problems, even from towns of 125 miles away.

People instinctively like, admire and trust Van. And satisfied customers, by word of mouth, quickly pass on their findings to others.

SWIFT GROWTH

In 1946, Van found he had too much leisure time during many evenings and

◀ August "Van" Vander Ley (center) reaped the benefits of being attentive to customers — as well as helping them "see" the value of special equipment and customization. Several decades later, this business practice still serves retailers well.

on weekends.

"I needed something to keep myself occupied," he says, "and I decided to expand on my pre-war hobby of gunsmithing. I purchased more tools and co-rented a garage with a hobbyist friend. Word got around to several sporting goods stores and work started coming in.

"Within a few months' time, I outgrew the garage and moved to the basement of my home. This wasn't a satisfactory arrangement either. I began looking around for another site. My reason was two-fold: I wanted a gun shop of my own and I wanted a retirement home in the country."

In 1956, Van's dream began to materialize. Lawrence George, farmer, small-bore shooter and gun hobbyist, living near Plainfield, Ill., agreed to a partnership and sold him a parcel of land upon which to build. In fall of 1958, Van's home and gun shop were complete.



Van defines salesmanship with one word: Service. In order to render this service more fully, a salesman must become an expert.

The shop, and unused 20'x60' farm building, was moved a few yards adjacent to his home and treated to an attractive face-lifting finish of brick. Its interior was divided equally between sales room and workshop.

When you walk into the sales area, your first impression is this is where old friends meet. The soft-finish knotty pine walls, the living room-height ceiling, the soft fluorescent lighting, the big davenport — all of this creates an atmosphere of informality.

Almost furtively, the word was passed to shooting friends: Van's Gun Shop will be open Monday, Tuesday and Friday evenings.

TRENDS OF THE DAY

Van didn't quite know what to expect of this new location, but figured he might pick up enough business "to keep occupied" until he was released from Illinois Bell. He most certainly did!

Long before the 1961 hunting season rolled around, gun racks, tables, chairs and storage cabinets, were bristling with guns waiting for service. Repair jobs now average more than 50 a month. Judged by city standards, this may seem to be very little, but for two men on a part-time basis, it soon became necessary to "farm out" such jobs as choke installations, bolt bending and so on.

Reloading tools and components have comprised almost 50% of sales since the shop opened. Van carries a full complement of powders, primers, shot and bullets, and stocks the reloading tools for which demand is greatest.

A good representative stock of the most popular guns (Winchester, Remington, Browning, Ithaca, Colt, Smith & Wesson and Ruger) fill the gun racks and showcases. For a short time, he stocked a few foreign-made army surplus rifles, but he found that the market for them was too limited. American-made products comprise 99% of the sales.

"Most of our customers are dyed-in-the-wool shooters," Van says. "They shoot the year round and know what they want in a gun and accessories to improve their shooting."

Most used bolt-action hunting and target rifles in the shop are customized or scoped, with price tags from \$135 and up. These are his best sellers and he moves better than 12 of them in the course of a month.

HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS "SEE" VALUE

Van and partner Jake often can convince a customer to "buy up." Through suggestions, comparison and questions, they point out items that can be of great value to the customer. This includes scopes, slings, custom stocking and other custom work.

"People do not always see what they look at," Van claims. "They only see that which is pointed out to them."

Van and Jake help their customers

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June 1962 was one of the last issues of *Shooting Goods Retailer*, which rebranded to *The Shooting Industry* the following year.

"see" the value of special equipment and customizing.

This is the way of the modern, creative salesman: A person who can make people see their needs. He can convert interest into desire and create interest where there was none.

Van defines salesmanship with one word: Service. In order to render this service more fully, a salesman must become an expert. He must be able to advise every prospect, through intelligent

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People do not always see what they look at. They only see that which is pointed out to them.”

August "Van" Vander Ley

judgment and experience, on things that will be of material aid to the customer or prevent him from buying something he can not use.

His lifetime interest and practical experience in hunting, target shooting and gun repair are proving invaluable in rendering the greatest possible service to each prospective buyer.

He does not, however, rely on past experiences alone. Van keeps abreast of the changing times through reading. His favorite is *Shooting Goods Retailer*.

"It's the best in its field for keeping posted on successful selling methods employed by other gun dealers," Van claims.

Because of his interest in "you" in what "you" can use, and in what will prove most satisfactory to "you," he changes one-time buyers into steady customers — thus building a following of happy and satisfied customers. **SI**



SHOT SHOW 2025

BY JADE MOLDAE

What To Make Of Robust Showing From Industry?

AS fate would have it, SHOT Show 2025 and Inauguration Day were staged in the same week. Fears of “Trump Slump 2.0” were mere shadows trailing behind the boisterous, electric and often party-like atmosphere on display throughout the halls of The Venetian Expo

and Caesars Forum during the industry’s largest gathering of the year.

And, yes, conducting business was the focal point of SHOT Week — thanks to a record-setting 2,850 exhibitors. As noted in my column in last month’s issue, the palpable enthusiasm on display at the Supplier Showcase served as a launchpad for the rest of the week.

A strong showing at SHOT Show portends a positive outlook for the year ahead. NSSF EVP and Chief Customer Officer Chris Dolnack hailed the impact of the 47th SHOT Show and the support it received from industry companies.

“The continued growth of the SHOT Show is proof positive of our industry’s passion, commitment to supporting their trade association and their desire for an in-person event where they can see new



“The continued growth of the SHOT Show is proof positive of our industry’s passion, commitment to supporting their trade association and their desire for an in-person event.”



Chris Dolnack • EVP and Chief Customer Officer • NSSF

◀ Electronic signage greets attendees of SHOT Show 2025 as they walk through the entrance of the Caesars Forum from the pedestrian bridge connected to the LINQ and Harrah’s. Thanks to the SHOT Bridge, traversing to/from The Venetian Expo from here takes only a few minutes. (Image: NSSF)

products, network face-to-face and learn about emerging compliance and best business practices,” he said. “And the revenue generated by the SHOT Show funds NSSF’s mission to advocate, educate and communicate on behalf of our industry.”

AN UNDENIABLE SHOW “BUZZ”

The mood at SHOT Show 2025 was unlike any I had seen in my previous 13 years covering this event. Even with the prospect of a down market this year — and perhaps longer — there was a tangible excitement among exhibitors and buyers.

“The energy on the floor this year was undeniable,” said Ashley Burgess Gall, president of Laura Burgess Marketing. “People told us it felt busier than last year, and there was a real sense of optimism in the air. Many of the people we spoke with are expecting an upswing in spending for 2025 compared to 2024. Last year felt a bit flat for some, but this year, there’s a buzz things are turning around. It was great to see so many familiar faces and hear such positive feedback from our clients.”

Jessica Tucker Grubbs, president of Apollo Custom Inc., echoed Gall’s sentiments.

“SHOT Show 2025 felt more positive and upbeat than the previous few have. Our

team really loves to work in an industry full of positivity and community,” she said. “One of the most dangerous sales and networking tools is a smile and a good attitude!”

Throughout the show, the Staccato booth was packed with legions of buyers handling its new HD lineup. Staccato’s HD P4 and HD 4.5 offer enhanced ergonomics, an optimized grip profile and GLOCK-pattern magazine compatibility.

“2025 SHOT Show was phenomenal for Staccato,” said Taylor Schweitzer, Staccato CMO. “We’ve been so excited to share the HD product line with the world. We believe it’s the future of the 2011 platform, so we wanted to do the product justice by showing up big at SHOT. Our booth was packed until the show closed on Friday and the live-fire ranges [at the Caesars Forum Great Outdoors Plaza] proved to be a great investment. SHOT is consistently a massive success for us year after year.”

At the Springfield Armory booth, traffic was robust throughout the week.

“SHOT Show was a wonderful opportunity to showcase some of our latest releases — such as the Prodigy Compact 9mm 1911 DS pistol, new color variants of the Echelon 4.0C pistol and more — and we received a lot of positive feedback and interest,” said Mike Humphries, Springfield Armory media relations manager. “We plan on continuing to develop new and exciting Springfield products for 2025 — and beyond.”

STANDOUT ATTENDANCE TRENDS

According to NSSF, 54,000 industry professionals perused the expanded show floors at The Venetian Expo and Caesars Forum — which spanned more than 14 miles of exhibits. Traffic was consistent throughout the week in both halls; with NSSF making a concerted effort to ensure attendees could easily navigate between each venue with improved signage and more staff directing attendees to the SHOT Bridge, which connects both exhibit halls.

We asked NSSF for some of the attendee registration insights that stood out to them this year. Here are three standout trends at SHOT Show 2025:

- Attendees from 126 countries were represented at SHOT. According to Melissa Schilling, NSSF managing director, exhibitions and exhibits, this total is “nine

more than what we had last year, and the highest number we had in several years.” There’s no question: there is untapped potential in international markets for our industry. The Biden administration undermined firearms exports for U.S. businesses; there’s hope the Trump administration’s policies will level the playing field.

- More than a third (34%) of buyers were first-time attendees. Schilling shared in the Dec. 2023 issue of *SI* this is a relatively new trend — 33% of buyers at SHOT Show that year were first-time buyers, which has been consistent with the trends observed in 2024 and this year. “New blood” at events like this will certainly help keep buying perspectives fresh, while giving exhibitors an additional pool of prospective customers.

- The highest percentage of SHOT Show 2025 attendees were between 35–44 years old. According to Schilling, this age demographic represented a total of 29.21% of registrants. (This is also a recent shift for the show — this age range became the largest demographic at SHOT Show 2024.) At SHOT Show 2025, attendees in the 45–54 age demographic were the next highest group. Together, these groups combined to make up 56.4% of attendees who shared their demographic information.

Evidenced by the trends above, the industry has gone some way to shed its “pale, stale, male” stereotype. Walking through the halls at SHOT certainly was proof of that — but there is still more work to be done in better welcoming younger, diverse and urban groups.

MARQUEE EVENTS

There were several events staged outside and throughout the halls of SHOT Show during SHOT Week.

Sunday, Jan. 19, the NSSF/Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) Golf Classic kicked off the week to raise money in support of HAVA, a firearm industry-run charitable organization that helps in the healing of disabled combat veterans and their families through participation in hunting and the shooting sports.

Jan. 20, Industry Day at the Range was held at the Boulder Rifle & Pistol Club in Boulder City, Nev. This year’s event featured more than 135 exhibitors and over 2,350 media members and buyers — record-high attendance, according to NSSF.

An impressive 605 material suppliers assembled on the fifth floor of The Venetian Expo during the two-day Supplier Showcase. This event can no longer lay claim to being the ‘worst-kept secret’ at the show — it’s

firmly in the ‘must-attend’ category. The Supplier Showcase has more than doubled since its debut at the 2017 SHOT Show, which featured 260+ exhibitors.

The sixth annual “Women of the Gun” reception was held Jan. 22. Retired competitive shooter Vera Koo headlined the event, sharing her inspiring story with those in attendance — including FMG Digital Content Editor and Marketing Director Ashley McGee.

“The Women of the Gun reception continues to be a vital event at SHOT Show, providing a space for women to celebrate their achievements, connect with peers and inspire the next generation. Koo’s story served as a powerful reminder that success in shooting sports — and in life — comes from dedication, hard work and a refusal to let obstacles stand in the way,” noted McGee in her coverage. (It’s available online: <https://tinyurl.com/yckpfm3t>.)

Another two-day event, held Weds. and Thurs. during SHOT Show, made its mark. The eXtra Pavilion gave first-time exhibitors an opportunity to make an impression with attendees.

The Archery Business Pavilion, held in Caesars Forum, expanded its footprint after its introduction to SHOT Show last year.

SHOT Show has gained a foothold among elected officials who realize the opportunity in having strong ties to an \$8.9 billion industry that supports 384,000 jobs nationwide with a total economic impact of more than \$90.1 billion. Six governors attended the fourth annual Governors’ Forum, while the Attorneys General Forum generated significant attention in its second year.

“The SHOT Show is fantastic, and each time I come I just get amazed. It’s really, really important to stand up for what we believe in — the Second Amendment. It’s a big, big deal,” said Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen.

EDUCATION EFFORTS

Dealers had numerous opportunities to discover new



Dealers were able to get hands-on with Smith & Wesson’s newest offerings at SHOT Show 2025 — including the Model 1854 Stealth Hunter Series and the Classic Series No-Lock Revolvers developed in conjunction with Lipsey’s. (Image: NSSF)



A common sight throughout the show: buyers meeting with exhibitors to further their business connections. The Sports South booth was one of more than 2,850 for dealers to visit! (Image: NSSF)

business practices or refine existing ones thanks to 19 engaging offerings at SHOT University. Topics included maximizing sales with suppressors (judging by booth traffic at SilencerCo, HUXWRX, Rugged Suppressors and Dead Air, among others, this segment seems primed for growth this year), the benefits of performance groups, harnessing AI for retail success and more.

At the invitation of Bill Brassard, NSSF senior communications director, I attended the SHOT University session on new efforts in the industry's fight to reduce suicide. NSSF and its partners have made significant strides in building awareness on this topic in recent years. The NSSF-AFSP (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) suicide toolkit and Gun Storage Check Week are two examples.

Brassard hosted a panel with several leaders of this effort: Ryan Price (AFSP Director of Special Projects), Waco Hoover (Chair of American Legion's "Be The One" platform), Caleb Morse (FFL Owner of Rustic Renegade and Co-Founder of The Armory Project), Gale True (Co-Founder of The Armory Project) and Russell Lemle (Senior Policy Analyst for the Veterans Healthcare Policy

“ This event can no longer lay claim to being the ‘worst-kept secret’ at the show — it’s firmly in the ‘must-attend’ category.

”

Institute).

There will be a story published here in *SI* in an issue later this year talking about how dealers can get involved in these meaningful endeavors.

Law enforcement professionals had a separate forum for education at the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). For the second year in a row, NSSF partnered with FMG Publications' *American COP* to co-sponsor this event and deliver more than a dozen sessions for those invested in serving their communities.

“Yes, SHOT is about seeing the new equipment and weapons, establishing relationships with manufacturers,

distributors, retailers and other end users — and transferring information and knowledge. While some of this happens in the aisles and booths, these sessions allow for a greater level of detail,” shared Erick Gelhaus, *American COP* editor.

The NSSF Research Breakfast, traditionally held Wednesday morning during SHOT Week, is another forum where attendees can hear firsthand from leading researchers in our industry. This event should garner more attention — as it provides rich information in a condensed format.

Speakers at the NSSF Research Breakfast were Southwick Associates' Rob Southwick, GunBroker.com VP of PR and Brand Management Allen Forkner, USFWS' Swanny Evans and NSSF Director of Research Salam Fatohi.

During his presentation, Southwick noted “firearms and accessories will not sell themselves” in this new market. He contends companies will find success if they can remind people to get out and shoot, focus on innovation, tell their brand stories effectively and understand their “new” customers by embracing and welcoming them to the shooting sports.

Forkner highlighted the power of GunBroker's Outdoor Analytics and its ability to help dealers and brands research market share, refine product pricing and break customers down into granular buyer demographics. (And an enhanced NICS tool, available now to NSSF members — more info on that in a future issue.)

Presenting findings from recent projects, Fatohi shared several more will be available to members in the near future, such as studies on the silencer and ammunition markets.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Plans are already underway for the 48th SHOT Show, which is set to return to Las Vegas Jan. 20–23, 2026. Based on the evidence of the previous few years, the firearms industry's calendar continues to revolve around the SHOT Show axis — and it doesn't appear to be slowing anytime soon. **SI**



By Peter Suci

Iconic & Reliable

Wheelguns Remain A Timeless Option For The Range & Self-Defense

While revolving barrel matchlock pistols first appeared in Europe in the 16th century, the Colt Paterson revolver has the distinction of being the first practical, mass-produced revolving cylinder handgun. Patented in 1836, it was an innovative leap forward in firearm design.

Nearly two centuries later, the principles of the wheelgun remain largely unchanged. Even in the era of polymer-framed semi-autos, the iconic revolver retains a place in the gun cabinet, in the everyday carry holster and, notably, at the range.

THE STATE OF SALES

The wheelgun is simple yet not simplistic, and forever timeless in its design. This is why it continues to have its supporters, even if demand wasn't nearly as strong in 2024 as it was for semi-autos. However, multiple shops across the country reported there remains a faithful clientele.

"Revolvers do have their calling here, for sure," said Joshua D'Agnese, owner of the Village Gun Store in Whitefield, N.H., one of the oldest New England firearms shops still in business.

"We do sell more of the semi-auto handguns, of course, but we stock and sell a decent amount of revolvers," D'Agnese shared. "Snub-nose revolvers seem to be the most popular for everyday carry and some for home defense. We have a decent number of women who prefer them, usually middle-aged or older, just because

of their simplicity. Some who have arthritic issues in their hands do seem to prefer revolvers. They don't have to worry about racking the slide or dealing with any issues and disassembly the autos can face."

Among the top sellers at the Village Gun Shop are the Ruger LCR/LCRx, Charter Arms Mag Pug and Undercover, Smith & Wesson 642, Taurus 856 and the Kimber K6 line.

Over in Amsterdam, N.Y., at Frank's Gun & Tackle Shop, Owner John Havlick said S&W, Colt and Ruger have remained the top sellers — and mostly for self-defense and daily carry. And for the same reasons as already stated.

"The majority of our customers like wheelguns for self-defense more than target shooting or hunting," Havlick explained. "They're a popular option for older shooters who may have arthritis. The shooter knows there is no jamming, and it makes it more reliable."

SALES SLOWER IN THE MIDWEST

For Daryl Upole, owner of Ohio Guns, wheelguns aren't in strong demand, he told *Shooting Industry*.

"In prior years, the Ruger LCR was good until the price increases," noted Upole. "The lightweight Taurus revolvers did well primarily due to the price."

The audience is a bit different in the Buckeye State, where it is mostly range shooters and collectors.

"Most self-defense buyers have moved to pistols primarily, in my opinion, due to cost and weight," Upole added. "Those who want a wheelgun for self-defense are concerned with costs. The least expensive are too heavy and bulky for the most part."

The price tag was cited as the biggest detriment, suggested Upole, who said a "good" wheelgun for carry is likely two times the cost of a "good" pistol.

"The market for reasonably priced wheelguns is good but the high cost of quality new revolvers

significantly limits the interest," he continued.

POPULAR FOR PLINKING

Prices for ordnance of all levels have "stabilized" since the great ammunition shortage that followed the global pandemic. Yet, given the high prices at the grocery store and for other goods, ammunition can still be a luxury for many individuals. Those who wanted to do some shooting at the range or out in the field without breaking the bank saw .22 LR remained the best bet — and there are plenty of wheelgun options in the popular plinking caliber.



Ruger Wrangler

"We also sell a decent amount of .22-caliber revolvers for plinking, pest control and also for trappers who need to dispatch a critter that may still be alive in a trap on their trap line. .22 revolvers like the Heritage Rough Riders and the Ruger Wrangler do also make a great gift and we do have a decent amount of customers who purchase them as such, especially around Christmas," noted D'Agnese.

A TRUE "AMERICAN" FIREARM

Wheelguns are also arguably as American as apple pie and fireworks on the Fourth of July. It's why many old-timers stand by them — perhaps not trusting the European brands with their polymer frames.

"We still do have customers who just prefer the classic look, feel and performance of a revolver," D'Agnese continued. "Some turn their nose up at the semis and will stand at the counter and talk revolvers all day. We don't persuade any of our customers away from

what they truly want. We do suggest better alternatives for protection when we encounter the 'I just need a .22 revolver to shoot into the ground to protect myself against a bear.'"

With former suburbanites moving to the country, D'Agnese said it happens "quite a lot."

THANK YOU, POP CULTURE

Popular culture has put a new spotlight on the revolvers once again. Just as "Dirty Harry" put the Smith & Wesson Model 29 in the spotlight in 1971, TV shows, video games and movies continue to serve as free advertising for wheelguns to the under-30 market.

"We've seen a few younger buyers express interest in the Colt Python and .357 Magnum revolvers thanks to 'The Walking Dead,'" Havlick told *Shooting Industry*.

For many customers of wheelguns, it isn't about shooting "walkers" (zombies), but rather the equally dangerous wildlife of New England.

“I don't see revolvers going anywhere anytime soon and we will always carry and happily sell them. Everything has its place for sure. And hey, revolvers do have a certain 'sexiness' to them.”

Joshua D'Agnese, Owner
The Village Gun Store
Whitefield, N.H.



Joshua D'Agnese, pictured with his wife Sabrina, maintains a robust selection of wheelguns at the Village Gun Store. Snub-nosed revolvers are most popular among customers, especially among those with weaker hands who prefer the simplicity of the platform.

"We're in the White Mountains in northern New Hampshire and we have some big critters," D'Agnese acknowledged, which is why he does offer advice based on personal experience. "So for those who hike, camp, hunt, fish, etc., most like to have something that's substantially able to take down a large animal if need be. When my wife and I are in the woods, we both carry S&W 686 .357 Magnums with 180-grain hard

“Wheelguns are also arguably as American as apple pie and fireworks on the Fourth of July. It's why many old-timers stand by them.”

cast rounds. Those with 4–6" barrels are all popular with our customers."

D'Agnese told *Shooting Industry* the most popular medium-to-large-frame revolvers last year included the Rossi RP63, Taurus 66, Taurus 44, S&W 686, S&W 500, Ruger GP100, Ruger Blackhawk and Ruger Redhawk.

A "CLASSIC, TRUSTWORTHY" REPUTATION

Many of the sentiments shared by the firearm retailers are the same as those from the manufacturers.

Rachel Stilwell, marketing manager for North American Arms, told *Shooting Industry* wheelguns retain a place in 2025 and beyond thanks to their simplicity and reliability.

"Wheelguns are point-and-shoot. There's no slide to rack, no external safeties to disengage — just a straightforward pull of the trigger," she explained. "Unlike semi-automatics, revolvers don't jam or misfeed, even when exposed to dirt,

lint or pocket debris. This makes them dependable in high-pressure situations. A revolver will still fire every time."

North American Arms is just one of several makers that offer ultra-compact wheelguns. These include the Pug and Black Widow, which are small enough for pocket carry, ankle holsters or even belt-buckle holsters.

"While mini revolvers do require a small amount of maintenance, there isn't as much need for detailed cleaning like a semi-automatic," added Stilwell. "Wheelguns can be stored for extended periods and remain ready to fire when needed."

There are other selling points, notably fewer legal hassles and no capacity limits.



Smith & Wesson Model 36 Classic – No Internal Lock

"Revolvers are naturally compliant with laws limiting magazine capacity, giving them a unique edge in states with stricter gun laws in places like California," she asserted. "Revolvers have a 'classic' and 'trustworthy' reputation, often seen as less intimidating to new users compared to tactical semi-autos. Though some might underestimate the power of smaller calibers, multiple accurate shots from a reliable revolver are more than capable of neutralizing a threat."

It is those reasons why D'Agnese said his shop will continue to cater to the market.

"I don't see revolvers going anywhere anytime soon and we will always carry and happily sell them," he concluded. "Everything has its place for sure. And hey, revolvers do have a certain 'sexiness' to them." **SI**



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BY TIM BARKER

“GRANDPA’S GUN” NO MORE



Burgeoning Lever-Action Segment Buoyed By Innovation

Hammaker, co-owner of Guns Plus in Duncannon, Pa., also includes a weekly spotlight on

very other Saturday afternoon, Duane Hammaker hosts a radio show on a local AM station. The hour-long show covers a wide range of shooting themes, including historical topics, safety and what’s new from manufacturers.

one of the many Henry rifles in stock or on the way to his shop. Such was the case when he covered their new magazine-fed Lever Action Supreme Rifle.

The response was immediate. Calls and emails flooded the store from customers eager to learn more and grab one of the unique firearms. During the initial rollout, he was able to secure nearly 80 rifles. They only lasted a few days.

“I sold everything I had,” Hammaker confirmed.

Such is life these days with a lever-action segment that is slowly, but steadily, shedding its sleepy past. A rifle once associated with the Old West and cowboy movies is making a claim for a piece of the modern firearms market.

“

Indeed, there's just something different about these rifles.

They allow the creation of a hybrid that mixes the DNA of a traditional Western firearm with all the bells and whistles of modern shooting.



Holding an Iron-Frame Original Henry (H011F) in .44-70 with a case-colored receiver, Duane Hammaker stands in Guns Plus' exclusive "Henry Repeating Arms Shop" — giving in-store guests a rich selection of Henrys to choose from. It's been an effective sales tool, as Guns Plus is a Top 100 Henry Dealer.

HOLLYWOOD'S IMPACT

Guns Plus has a front-row seat for this evolution, through its in-store Henry Shop featuring more than 160 of the company's SKUs. The change is reflected in customer attitudes and interests.

"It used to be 'Grandpa's gun,'" Hammaker explained, "but now I'm seeing a lot of younger people in their early 20s coming in with a fascination for lever guns."

Determining the turning point for any trend can be difficult, but this one may be traced — like a few others — to Hollywood.

In 2015's box office hit "Jurassic World," the dinosaur wrangler played by Chris Pratt was seen carrying an unusual stainless lever action (Marlin's 1895SBL) with a laminate stock and scope. It was an attention grabber, said Jason Gentz, industry veteran and owner of Gentz Sporting Arms in Lakeville, Minn.

"That was kind of the beginning of the evolution of modern lever actions," he suggested.

The trend continued from there, with the same rifle being carried by actor Jeremy Renner in 2017's modern-day Western "Wind River." The following year, the hit TV series "Yellowstone" debuted, with lever actions appearing sporadically throughout its run.

During this same period, both Marlin (Dark Series) and Henry (Big Boy X) launched popular lines catering to the needs and interests of modern shooters. Chambered in a range of calibers, they sport polymer stocks, threaded barrels, optic/scope mounts and the ability to add other accessories not typically associated with the

gun carried by legendary Western actor John Wayne.

Throw in the continuing demand from Cowboy Action shooters, and you have the perfect cocktail for maintaining and growing demand for these iconic rifles.

HUNTING INROADS

There's no reason to think the nostalgia driver is going anywhere, with Cowboy Action remaining popular across the country, contends Jen Beery, a salesperson at Buffalo Arms in Ponderay, Idaho. And while lever guns may not be the first choice of hunters, it doesn't mean there's no role for them.

"You know, you can go hunting with some of the more modern guns, and it's easy," she reasoned. "Some people are looking for a new challenge. Whether it's black powder or a lever gun, it's just not as easy."

The variety of caliber options in lever guns — everything between .22 rimfire to .45-70 — means these rifles can be used for a wide range of game.

Henry's new mag-fed Lever Action Supreme Rifle is currently offered in .223 Rem./5.56 NATO and .300 BLK (both come with five-round limiters), giving it considerable versatility.

"You could easily consider it a deer hunting rifle or mid-sized game rifle, depending on how you load it," Hammaker shared.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

At the same time, manufacturers are finding new ways to attract people who want more than a repackaging of rifles that had their heyday prior to 1900. Consider some of the recent developments in the segment:

- Henry's Lever Action Supreme Rifle features a threaded barrel and scope mount, and it is fed by AR-style magazines, making it faster to load and eliminating concerns about limited ammo capacity in lever-action rifles.

- Smith & Wesson rejoined the lever market after a 170-year absence, with its 1854 Stealth Hunter Series. The rifle features a threaded barrel, polymer stock, scope/optic mount and an M-LOK handguard.

- Bond Arms, known for its beefy derringers, is set to debut a new lever rifle with all the furniture of a modern sporting rifle, including a 30-round magazine.

- Marlin's Dark Series is back — following a hiatus while the brand was absorbed by Ruger — with a polymer stock, threaded barrel, muzzle brake, adjustable cheek riser and M-LOK handguard.

For Ruger, the immediate challenge is keeping up with the demand for the Dark Series, even as it prepares to debut additional calibers (.38 Special/.357 Magnum and .44 Rem. Mag./.44 Special) this year.

"These levers are a little different than everything else," said R.G. Stitt, the company's director of sales. "It's taking extra effort for us. We're clearly selling them as fast as we can build them."

With new entrants into the market, it makes you wonder who else might consider dipping a toe in the lever pool. It's unlikely we'll see someone like GLOCK jump in. But Hammaker expects to see more new entrants — particularly if the market responds to what's being offered.

As demonstrated by Henry's recent decision to start making revolvers, manufacturers are willing to step outside of their comfort zones if there's money to be made.

"That was a great divergence from what Henry typically does," he remarked. "I think everybody's

going to look at it [the lever segment] to see if they can grab a piece of the market share and grow their business."

Stitt agrees, pointing to a market demand that hasn't been fully met by the current players.

"So, would I be surprised if somebody else gets into it? Not a bit," he stated.

MEETING IN THE MIDDLE

Perhaps nothing has done more for this burgeoning market than the aesthetic/functional changes that appeal to younger shooters and those who have enjoyed the modularity of modern sporting rifles.

Hammaker expects to see companies that make AR accessories start paying more attention to this segment, particularly with the AR market saturated. We already see this happening with the Henry Big Boy X line and the Marlin Dark rifles.

There is a wide range of aftermarket parts available for anyone wanting to customize a rifle. This includes replacement grips, handguards, sights, cartridge holders, muzzle brakes, hammer extensions, trigger kits and optic mounts.

Hammaker is most familiar with the demand for the Henry Big Boy X line. But there's the potential for similar competitors to fill the same niche.

"It's a tremendously well-selling line," Hammaker acknowledged. "It meets the middle between the guy who wants the nostalgia lever action and the guy who wants the plastic gun."

Indeed, there's just something different about these rifles. They allow the creation of a hybrid that mixes the DNA of a traditional Western firearm with all the bells and whistles of modern shooting.

"You can add whatever accessories you want, lights, lasers and accessory ammo holders," Stitt said. "There's so much cool stuff that can be added to them." **SI**

“

There's no reason to think the nostalgia driver is going anywhere, with Cowboy Action remaining popular across the country."

Jen Beery, Salesperson
Buffalo Arms
Ponderay, Idaho



While not immediately thought of as a hunting rifle by some customers, lever-action rifles are beginning to find their place among hunters at Buffalo Arms. (Pictured: Aja Gullo, director of marketing for Buffalo Arms. Hey, we know that magazine listed on the chalkboard!)

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By Bryan Hendricks

Want More Customers?

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E-Commerce Expands Reach, Boosts Sales

With its global saturation, the world wide web enables small firearms retailers to compete successfully with giant corporate retailers.

Some retailers use the web to access an unlimited international market, while others use it to increase exposure among their existing customers. Regardless of the method, an effective e-commerce strategy translates to sales and profits.

Simmons Sporting Goods in

Bastrop, La., is a popular outlet for hunters in northeast Louisiana, as well as those from neighboring areas in Arkansas and Mississippi. Like all local retailers, Simmons competes with similar-size retailers for the same customers, and all of them compete with big corporate retailers.

Lindsey Curtis, Simmons' CFO, aggressively embraces e-commerce to expand Simmons' footprint far beyond its remote geographic location.

"Our store is 80,000 square feet," Curtis said. "We try to offer almost everything. We can get guns nobody else can get. We do customer service well, and we're competitive on prices. We do all those things to compete with bigger people."

LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED

Curtis has worked for the company for 15 years. She is also a Millennial who is steeped in online culture and methodology. She oversees a multi-faceted web marketing strategy that incorporates a dynamic website, targeted emails and a continuous stream of new content on social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and Reddit.

Reddit, an open forum for virtually every topic under the sun, is gospel to Gen Z. To reach that demographic, Curtis says it is vital to have a presence on the platform.

"One of my online guys does a lot on Reddit," Curtis said. "It has chat rooms with people who are looking for something, and we let

them know we have it. We get 50 or 60 orders (a year) from Reddit.”

According to Curtis, Simmons’ website is the centerpiece of the company’s e-marketing campaign. She noted many customers prefer to buy a product from the website instead of buying them in-store. This is hard for older managers to grasp, but it’s how younger people buy things.

“Kids [Gen Z] would rather search online for 30 minutes than make a 30-second phone call,” Curtis contended. “People where we live buy guns online when they get off work, and we also ship guns all over the country. We’ve seen huge — big, big — growth in this area.”

ADVERTISING HURDLES

Navigating firearms-related policies of the various social media platforms can be challenging, Curtis acknowledged. Facebook is notoriously restrictive to gun-related content, as was Twitter before its reboot.

“We struggle the most with trying to advertise online because there are so many restrictions from social media,” Curtis said.

Television stations and newspapers have websites, and they partner with businesses like Simmons Sporting Goods to place web ads. Curtis shared cross-platform advertising with print and broadcast partners is an important part of Simmons’ web presence, but it gets complicated if a web ad conflicts with a media partner’s advertising policy.

“Some of my television stations have taken the stance they’re not going to advertise any AR-15s on their station,” Curtis said. “It’s changing all the time about who will let you do what gun-related.”

Because social media is in a constant state of flux, Curtis’ staff must stay current on which social media platforms are hot and which are not. Ironically, 30-something Curtis says she relies on 20-something employees to keep current on these trends.

“Ask somebody who’s younger than you,” Curtis stated. “First it was Facebook and then it was Instagram. Now we’re doing a lot of YouTube.

We’ve got guys who do podcasts, and they’re putting those on YouTube. And, YouTube is more lenient about what we can talk about.”

YouTube is also the gathering place for the most avid segment of the gun-buying demographic.

Email is dinosaur technology in many quarters, but Curtis said e-mails targeted to existing customers are effective.

“We do a lot of email marketing because we can send it directly to customers who want those kinds of emails,” Curtis shared.



“The firearm industry is still an in-person completion, but if we’re going to capture a younger audience, they’re shopping online. You need to be where they are.”

Tim Shoopman
Director of Brand Communications
H&H Shooting Sports • Oklahoma City

HAVE A PURPOSE

Tim Shoopman, director of brand communications for H&H Shooting Sports in Oklahoma City, uses the web to generate local traffic for his company’s myriad products and services.

Web marketing is especially useful, Shoopman said, for bringing customers to the H&H indoor shooting range. However, the company’s outreach efforts also provide access to H&H’s full suite of products and services.

“If you click a link to our firearms training courses, it’s going to pivot to product and price point for brands

like Smith & Wesson and Walther,” Shoopman noted. “From there, we can mix in our own internal campaigns, like our ‘Sweetheart Special’ on the range for Valentine’s. Maybe you’d like to come in for a range date. It really does make it easier if you can find an activity that utilizes the gun range.”

Like Simmons Sporting Goods, H&H partners with local media outlets to expose its website to larger and more diverse demographics.

“We do make it a priority to optimize the website and drive traffic,” Shoopman said. “We use services through our media partners for search engine optimization and general web display ads.”

Currently, H&H is running web display ads driving traffic back to its firearms training classes.

“If somebody on our local CBS affiliate website is reading a news article, there’s a pretty good chance they’re going to see our display ad,” Shoopman added. “Click the image, and it redirects you back to our site.”

Like Curtis, Shoopman must also navigate firearms-related sensitivities that can result in a web ad being blocked. Oklahoma City is a much bigger media market than Monroe, La. (Bastrop). Advertising on a media website owned by a media conglomerate is more complicated than doing business with an independently owned media outlet, he said.

“We work very selectively with our media partners given the fact our industry gets blacklisted and shadow banned,” Shoopman stated. “We’re very conscientious about who we want to work with. We make sure they are aware we are going to show firearms and drive traffic back to a firearms website.”

KEEP IT FRESH

With so much traffic bouncing back to a website, a website must perform. The design must be dynamic, eye-catching, interactive and user-friendly, according to Shoopman.

“The visual is definitely the most important part,” Shoopman affirmed. “We got the highest amount of clicks on our ads with on-range photography

— still images of shooters on the firing lanes.”

Curiously, sometimes a random, seemingly inconsequential image generates traffic.

“People really like the gun safe image Browning provided where their safe is on fire,” he remarked. “It got a lot of click-back traffic.”

Curtis noted Simmons’ website prominently incorporates traditional, successful elements of the company’s presence and image.

“We have a blog that creates content people want to look at,” she said. “We have a big buck contest. The standings are updated every week, and thousands of deer are brought in. People go to the website every day to check the standings and look at pictures of the deer that are brought in. They might not buy something every time, but it gets people to go there multiple times. It’s a huge draw to our business.”

It’s important to change the presentation frequently to keep repetitive visitors engaged, but Shoopman says a website should maintain a consistent look in order to contribute to the company’s brand.



“We do a lot of email marketing because we can send it directly to customers who want those kinds of emails.”

Lindsey Curtis • CFO
Simmons Sporting Goods • Bastrop, La.

“We try to rotate campaigning and imagery on a four- to six-week window,” Shoopman said. “We do flash sales. We see clicks and traffic spike. If we run the same content all the way through, people get blind to it. We keep it fresh to keep new eyes on it.”

In agreement, Curtis added frequent updates are vital to maintaining a website’s relevance.

“It’s always changing,” Curtis said. “Only so many people live in or close to

Bastrop. If we’re going to grow bigger, we have to reach people who cannot drive here. The only way to do that is online.”

LOOK FOR INSPIRATION

Of course, an effective website must have conspicuous static elements, like hours and location, Shoopman said. A website should facilitate easy purchases, but it should not overload a visitor with information. Good examples abound, and Shoopman does not mind borrowing effective ideas from other sites.

“I will freely admit I like to go to the NSSF website,” Shoopman declared. “I look at every bit of every information they have on five-star and four-star ranges. I take what information I can to use for our site. It’s always a good idea to look at the industry and see how you can better yourself.”

How do you evaluate a website’s effectiveness? Is it worth the time and effort?

“We can track direct e-commerce sales, but if I can use analytics and see online sales are higher this month than last month, then I can always marry trends and look at the same information for in-store point of sale,” Shoopman said. “When visitors come to our website, they’re coming for a specific reason. If you can provide a video of the gun range — for your very first time in, this is what you can expect — it answers their question and solves their problem.”

It’s also time you don’t have to spend on the phone instead of tending to a customer who’s in the store.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is this: Generations X and Y (Millennials) are the mature and ascendant markets. They get their information online and they do business online. If you’re not conspicuous in that arena, you will lose customers to retailers who are conspicuous in that arena.

“The firearm industry is still an in-person completion, but if we’re going to capture a younger audience, they’re shopping online,” Shoopman said. “You need to be where they are.” **SI**



Simmons Sporting Goods offers 80,000 sq. ft. of firearms, hunting gear and apparel to a national market with an aggressive web marketing campaign that integrates YouTube, X and Instagram with its website.



MENTAL HEALTH: IT'S OK TO TALK ABOUT IT.

Everyone struggles sometimes.
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As firearms owners, we often have a tough time admitting when we need help, and that is particularly true with our psychological struggles. One great way to check in on yourself and your mental state is to take a free and anonymous screening.

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NEW PRODUCTS

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By Jenna Buckley



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Chambered in 9mm, the **KYMERA** from KRISS USA is an optics-ready, DA/SA hammer-fired pistol engineered for ultimate customization by the end user. Its modular grip offers replaceable modules with different angles and sizes, all compatible with the original magazines. This design allows shooters to choose the configuration that perfectly aligns with their natural point of aim and enhances their overall shooting experience. The KYMERA has a slide with precision cuts for a licensed Agency Optic System (AOS) plate designed in collaboration with Agency Arms, complete with an integral rear sight cut for enhanced adaptability.



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The Lyman **1500 TURBO PRO TUMBLER** offers approximately 25% greater capacity than its popular 1200 model. This larger capacity will clean up to 500 9mm cases or 200 .223 cases per cycle. The bowl features unique spiral agitators for an aggressive tumbling action. It is equipped with a transparent polycarbonate lid that tightly seals against the bowl for dust-free operation, and an in-line on/off switch. A wide base with rubber feet keeps the tumbler anchored in one spot.

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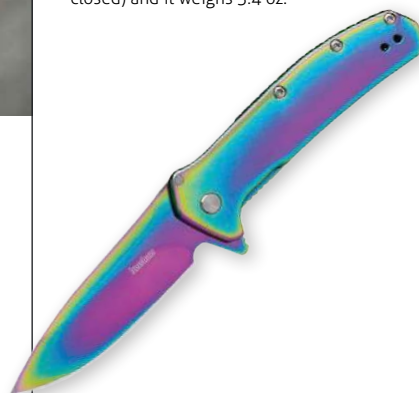
Using the RCBS **MATCHMASTER POWDER FUNNEL KIT** and its system of adapters, reloaders can speed up their charging process while powder grains do not get left behind. The design of the funnel helps propellant flow quickly without bridging or static while the proprietary adapter system lets handloaders choose the best fit on any case mouth diameter from .17 cal. up to .50 cal. The funnel kit comes complete with the MatchMaster funnel, six adapters in popular calibers and a storage box.



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kershaw.kaiusa.com

Both the blade and handle of the **OUTCOME** from Kershaw Knives feature an eye-catching, polished rainbow PVD finish. It opens with assisted opening, and the 2.8"-drop point blade will handle almost any work task. The Outcome locks securely in place with a steel frame lock. Added jimping delivers a secure grip while unlocking the knife. The polished rainbow PVD deep-carry pocket clip is easily reversible for left/right carry. OAL is 6.7" (3.9" closed) and it weighs 3.4 oz.



FN AMERICA

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fnamerica.com

FN America expands its FN Reflex micro-compact, semiautomatic pistol line with the **FN REFLEX XL MRD**. Features include two interchangeable grip backstraps, new palm swell, enhanced trigger guard undercut and an extended beavertail. It measures 6.75" long, weighs 20 oz., and has a 3.8" cold hammer-forged barrel. A high-visibility tritium front night sight is paired with an all-black, U-notch rear sight. It is designed to be compatible with popular red dot optics, including micro red dots sharing the Shield RMSc or Holosun 507K footprints. It comes with a 15-round standard-capacity magazine and an 18-round extended magazine and is available in both black and FDE finishes.



FIOCCHI

(417) 725-4118
fiocchiusa.com

For 2025, Fiocchi announced the addition of **6.5 CREEDMOOR, 6 PRC AND 7 PRC** loads to its Hyperformance Match line. Tailored for long-range competition shooters, the loads boast ultra-precision construction, premium components and Nosler's RDF (Reduced Drag Factor) projectile. They are offered in the following load configurations: 6mm Creedmoor — 105 grains, 3,025 fps, #6CMRD; 6.5 PRC — 140 grains, 2,980 fps, #65PRCD; and 7mm PRC — 185 grains, 2,750 fps, #7PRCD.



SAFARILAND GROUP

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The Safariland **SX HP** (pictured) is the thinnest, lightest and most protective hybrid ballistic armor ever developed. Engineered with groundbreaking technologies and cutting-edge materials from Avient, Honeywell and Dupont, it provides a 20% weight reduction and a 20% increase in ballistic performance. It is available in male and female unstructured styles, with an additional female structured option for precise, tailored protection. The updated design enhances concealability and ergonomics, ensuring maximum comfort.

The **HARDWIRE LEVEL 3A .57 PPSF** system is significantly lighter and thinner than the previous model while remaining the world's lightest ballistic panel. Hardwire's stitchless design, shock absorption technology and high-pressure construction are now infused with a stronger, next-generation fiber. Available styles include the NIJ Model No. BA-3A00S-SXHP and BA-3A00S-SXHPF and the NIJ Model No. BA-3A00S-HW01.

TRISTAR ARMS

(816) 421-1400
tristararms.com

TriStar Arms' semi-automatic, gas-operated **RAPTOR II** boasts a redesigned stock and forearm to ensure a secure grip and a streamlined appearance, while the oversized bolt release and operating handle make it easy to handle in any condition. A fiber optic front sight facilitates quick and precise target acquisition. It has a chrome-lined chamber and barrel and is compatible with Beretta/Benelli Mobil-style choke tubes. The Raptor II is available in 12 GA (28" barrel), 20 GA (26" barrel) and Compact 20 GA (24" barrel) models in three finish options: synthetic, walnut or Mossy Oak Country Roots Camo.



BENELLI USA

(800) 264-4962
benelliusa.com

Benelli expands its Lupo lineup with the **LUPO CHARRED TIMBER**. For all-weather durability, it comes with a subdued Labrador Grey Benelli Surface Treatment (B.E.S.T.) on the barreled action. This proprietary, impenetrable DLC coating protects treated surfaces. A one-piece Picatinny rail gives hunters diverse scope mounting options plus a multi-port muzzle brake to tame recoil and to provide faster target reacquisition. All rifles come standard with Benelli's three-lug, one-piece bolt with a short 60-degree throw, adjustable trigger, Progressive Comfort recoil management, LOP adjustability, detachable double-stack box magazine and integrated swivel mounts. Caliber and barrel length combinations for the Lupo Charred Timber include .308 Win./22", .30-06 Spr./22", .300 Win./24", 6.5 Creedmoor/24" and 7mm PRC/24".



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The Otis **AIRGUN MAINTENANCE & CLEANING KIT** includes a silicone-based lubricant and silicone gun cloth to lubricate and protect an airgun while maintaining the integrity of O-rings, seals and gaskets. A seven-piece micro hex key set aids in disassembly for maintenance work. A bent pick helps remove O-rings while the AP Brush and end brush offer detailed cleaning and lubricant application. The kit also includes Breech-to-Muzzle cleaning gear and a lead cleaning hand wipe to cleanse heavy metals from hands and skin.



STREAMLIGHT INC.

(800) 523-7488
streamlight.com

From Streamlight, the **TLR RM 1 HL-X** tactical weapon light for long guns features up to 1,000 lumens and 22,000 candela. The light is powered by an SL-B9 USB-C rechargeable battery pack or a CR123A lithium battery and it securely attaches to any long gun with MIL-STD-1913 Picatinny rails. Fabricated from 6000 series machined aluminum with a black anodized finish, the TLR RM 1 HL-X has a switch housing made from impact- and chemical-resistant engineered polymer. It features an IPX7-rated design, making it waterproof to 1 meter for 30 minutes.

Continued from p. 46

open and ready for business — images of customers having fun on the range is relatively simple, and will do wonders. Or, if a particular hunting season is on the horizon, tee up online guests with images of their favorite game and let them know of an upcoming sale.

By the way, each of these examples has nothing to do with self-defense or fear-based buying. Fostering a joy of the shooting sports and hunting will be vital for the long-term stability of our industry — especially now.

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE!

Using SHOT Show 2025 as evidence, there's a general sense of excitement around our industry. Innovative individuals and brands are viewing this “new” market as one ripe with opportunity.

“

In a few words, he was accentuating the positive, and eliminating the negative from his thinking.”

Dick Miller

“Selling The Shooting Sports,” July 1962

Before you scoff at more optimism, I wanted to call attention to this month's *Best Practices* column. I hope you read it — it's from the June 1962 issue of *SP's* predecessor, *Shooting Goods Retailer*, and still speaks to business owners today.

Before landing on “You' Is The Word For Selling,” I was tempted to select another story from 1962. In the July issue of that year, long-time contributor Dick Miller's “Selling The Shooting Sports” column had a perspective that mirrors my outlook on things: unapologetic positivity.

Miller notes the song “Ac-Cent-Tchu-



Shot Spot in Carrollton, Ga., regularly posts pictures of guests enjoying its facilities on social media channels, and prominently on its website. In today's tech environment, online avenues most often serve as the first impression — with images like this, it makes it a welcoming one!

Ate the Positive” — written by Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer in 1944, later recorded by Bing Crosby, Perry Como and others over the years — likely wasn't written for shooting goods retailers, but it “gave us some good and much-needed advice.”

In a tale of two stores, Miller highlights a conversation he had with one business owner who lamented a dwindling market, while another was focused on *growing* his business — rather than worrying about it.

Miller writes, “He [the second dealer] felt that there was business to be done, and he was doing it. Sure, he agreed, he might do more business if certain conditions did not exist, but his goal was to get his share of the business that was to be done, and he was doing that.

“In a few words, he was accentuating the positive, and eliminating the negative from his thinking.”

Closing his article, Miller challenged dealers to change their way of thinking in what was a down market at that time.

“What about you, Mr. Shooting Goods Retailer? Are you doing business by accentuating the positive, or are you

sitting in a chair behind the counter, giving out negative pronouncements on everything from motherhood to Christmas?

“Now that this column is written, I suddenly remember that it is directed at the wrong people. The shooting goods retailer who regularly reads this magazine would not be guilty of negative thinking. I apologize.”

Six decades later, I couldn't agree with Miller's assertion more; this mindset will be good for business owners this year, and every year.

(We'll run the full version of Miller's July 1962 column online before this issue publishes. Send me an email at editor@shootingindustry.com if you missed it.)

If there's one takeaway from this issue, let it be there's opportunity available to those who are open, adaptable, enthusiastic and welcoming to customers of all kinds who walk in their doors. **SI**

Agree/disagree? I want to hear from you: editor@shootingindustry.com.



BY JADE MOLDAE

TAKING STOCK OF THE “NEWEST” NORMAL

From a business planning perspective, SHOT Show 2025 arrived at the perfect time for our industry.

“Uncertainty” was the theme of business leading up to Election Day. In the 77 days between Nov. 5, 2024 and the opening morning of SHOT Show (Jan. 21), the industry has been able to significantly reset expectations now that President Trump’s second term is up and running.

WHAT WE CAN EXPECT

Fear-based buying will be down (except in states with an anti-firearms tilt), which will invite innovation and promotional pricing to drive interest from consumers. This is certainly the case in the short term, and perhaps — barring another seismic event — for the next four years.

President Trump didn’t waste much time demonstrating his support for the Second Amendment and our industry by signing an executive order Feb. 7, less than 20 days after his return to office. In a fact sheet accompanying the president’s signing of the “Protecting Second Amendment Rights” executive order, the White House stated it would “[end] the attacks on law-abiding gun owners and gun businesses.”

After four years of being labeled “the enemy,” facing a so-called “zero-

tolerance” policy from the ATF and numerous examples of financial discrimination, it’s a swift, refreshing shift in policy.

And, even though our industry is likely to experience a contraction in sales this year, there’s significant encouragement thanks to these changes at the federal level of government. This was certainly one of the primary sources fueling the boisterous mood on display at SHOT Show 2025.

“What we are seeing from guests we’ve met is there are still many people looking to get into the shooting sports!” observed Karen Butler, owner of SLG2, in reaction to *SI*’s online coverage of SHOT Show. “I think the reason for not purchasing has been budgets. If the economy turns around as expected, we’ll see an uptick — not a slump!”

There is some uncertainty as to how the market will react to President Trump’s recent tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. Everytown for Gun Safety heralded the possibility of rising gun prices in recent social media posts with a closing remark of “things aren’t looking good for the gun industry.”

Call me an optimist, but I disagree ... our industry is arguably in a healthier position now than four years ago.

ARE YOU DOING THIS?

Noted earlier in this issue (and

◀ With fear-based buying likely on the downswing this year and beyond, highlighting the fun side of the shooting sports will be key to attracting new customers. (Image: Howard Communications)

even in coverage of SHOT Show last year), Rob Southwick’s assertion that companies need to 1) remind customers to go out and shoot; 2) innovate to drive sales; 3) tell their brand stories effectively; and 4) better understand and welcome their “new” customers is vital for success.

In some ways, it’s helpful 2024 wasn’t marked by intense fear-based buying, as it was in the lead-up to the 2016 presidential election. By and large, businesses were more conservative with inventory planning. Customers, too, weren’t as active in the market.

So, without a significant drop-off, businesses should be in a better condition to reaffirm connections with customers. (As opposed to being distracted with “rightsizing” or blowout sales to shed excess inventory.)

“

Fostering a joy of the shooting sports and hunting will be vital for the long-term stability of our industry — especially now.

Dealers, make sure you’re actively participating in places where your customers are already. In this month’s story on e-commerce tips, H&H’s Tim Shoopman shared what drives most traffic back to the store’s website.

“The visual is definitely the most important part,” Shoopman affirmed. “We got the highest amount of clicks on our ads with on-range photography — still images of shooters on the firing lanes.”

This relates to Southwick’s first point above: if you’re a range operator, remind customers your range is

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