



**SECURE YOUR  
SCOPES!**

A Guide  
to Rings  
and Bases

**TOP AFTERMARKET  
TRIGGERS**

For ARs  
and Bolt  
Guns



# Gun Digest

WE KNOW GUNS SO YOU KNOW GUNS

THE MAGAZINE

JUNE 2021  
VOLUME 38 • ISSUE 08

# Give Me Liberty

**SOLGW'S  
M4-76**

**PLUS**

Southpaw Swag:  
CCW Gear for Lefties

Review: Rimfire  
Reloading Kit

CCW Legal: Mistake-of-Fact  
Shooting

Beware the Beast:  
The AR-15's .458 SOCOM

AR Cartridges:  
What's Right  
for You?

**DIRTY  
CANS**

How  
to Clean  
Suppressors

**FIX IT!**

6.4 Pounds of Benchrest  
Accuracy





# CONTENTS

## DEPARTMENTS

- 6 First Shot
- 8 Know Your Cartridge

## COLUMNS

- 10 Defensive Handgunning RICHARD MANN
- 12 Hardware Talk PATRICK SWEENEY
- 14 Modern Gunnery GD EDITORS
- 16 Drawing Conclusions MARTY HAYES, J.D.
- 18 Reloading Bench PHIL MASSARO
- 20 Precision Rifle Shooting FRANK GALLI
- 22 Guns & Gear GD EDITORS
- 114 Testfire GD EDITORS

## FEATURES

- 24 Give Me Liberty: Sons of Liberty Gun Works' M4-76.  
PATRICK ROBERTS
- 32 Aftermarket Trigger Tweaking: Top Triggers for ARs and Bolt-Action Rifles.  
JOSH WAYNER
- 40 A Ring for Every Occasion: A Guide to Riflescope Rings and Bases.  
PHIL MASSARO
- 48 Q Fix: The Lightweight Rifle that Shoots Like a Benchrest Gun.  
JOSH WAYNER
- 56 The Family Tree: .223 Remington and its AR-Compatible Offspring.  
RICHARD MANN
- 94 Beware the Beast: The AR-15 Goes .458 SOCOM.  
PATRICK SWEENEY
- 100 Feeling the Heat: Understanding and Managing Heat Buildup in Your AR.  
JOSH WAYNER
- 108 Dirty Cans: How and Why to Clean Your Silencers.  
ALEXANDER CROWN

## THE BEST GUN LIST IN PRINT

- 67 Show & Auction Listings
- 80 The Gun Digest Marketplace



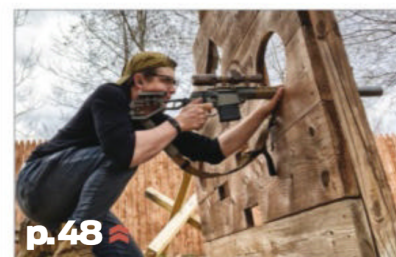
p.24



p.32



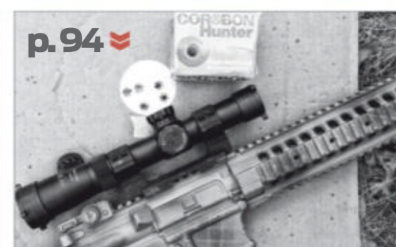
p.40



p.48



p.56



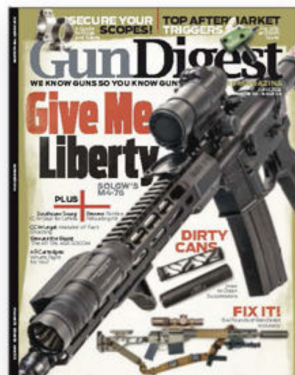
p.94



p.100



p.108



Gun Digest the Magazine (ISSN 1938-5943) is published monthly by Caribou Media dba Gun Digest Media, LLC. Corporate Headquarters is 5600 W. Grande Market Dr., Suite 100, Appleton, WI 54913. Periodicals postage paid at Appleton, WI 54913 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Gun Digest the Magazine, P.O. Box 460220, Escondido, CA 92046. Copyright © 2021 Gun Digest Media. GUN DIGEST THE MAGAZINE and its logo are registered trademarks. Other names and logos referred to or displayed in editorial or advertising content may be trademarked or copyrighted. The publisher and advertisers are not liable for typographical errors that may appear in prices or descriptions in advertisements.



# GIVE ME LIBERTY

## Sons of Liberty Gun Works M4-76.

**L**ike it or not, not all AR-15s are created equal.

Some rifle manufacturers are content with putting out guns that are just *good enough* to have the misleading “mil-spec” marketing label slapped on them. Consumers sometimes read that as some mark of

quality, but the truth is that the mil-spec claim is nothing more than a flashy way of saying, “This *might* work with other mil-spec things.”

The reality is, few manufacturers build their M4-like carbines to a standard even remotely close to the actual military specification for the M4A1, MIL-DTL-

71186B. Fewer still will take the rifle to the next level of hard-use performance.

The boys at Sons of Liberty Gun Works (SOLGW) make that list. As much as I want to gush about my personal M4-76 rifle, the story of how the Sons came to be is equally as impressive.

The 13-inch M76 hand-guard is perfect for the 13.7-inch barrel and NOX muzzle device combo.





## HUMBLE ORIGINS

Sons of Liberty Gun Works is the American dream. Let's be real about it: If you reduce the company's start to a Netflix show description, it sounds too ridiculous to be a true story.

"With only \$7,000 in his pocket after selling his car, Mike partnered up with a

friend in the basement of a lumber yard to take on the biggest AR-15 manufacturers in the world. His quest? To become the best rifle company. Either they sell the whole batch of 10 rifles, or it will be game over."

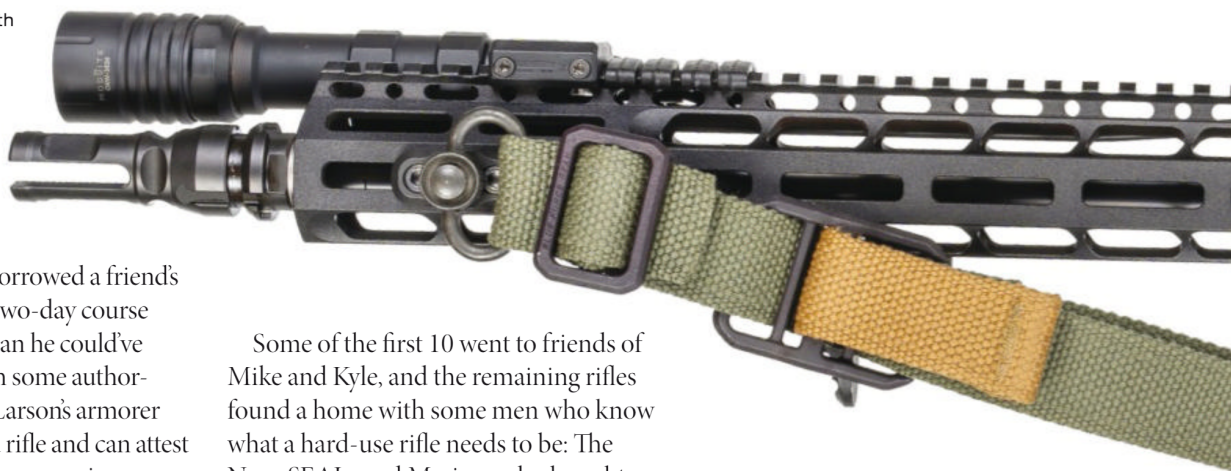
Pure insanity, but it's the truth.

Like any good story, there's a moment that speaks to our hero and motivates them to do something epic; in this case, it was an armorer's course taught by the late Will Larson of Semper Paratus





The rifle was configured with the Sig Tango6T 1-6 power scope for the majority of the testing and performed beautifully.



Arms. Mike Mihalski borrowed a friend's AR-15, enrolled in the two-day course and learned far more than he could've imagined. I say this with some authority, because I also took Larson's armorer course with a borrowed rifle and can attest to it being an eye-opening experience.

Mike saw the AR-15 in a new light and decided he wanted to get into the gun business. His dream of starting a gun company—building the best AR-15s he possibly could—started floating around in his head. Talking more about it with his best friend, a Navy SEAL, he eventually was introduced to Kyle Grothues; the trio had big dreams about taking on the big names in the AR industry. Mike sold his car, netting him \$7,000, and Kyle brought a little more cash to the table and some space in the family owned lumber company his great-grandfather founded in 1933.

With limited funds and no standing purchase orders, the boys had some serious work ahead of them. The limited funds were a pretty significant hurdle initially, especially since most of the suppliers of components that Mike felt acceptable enough to put in a rifle he was building had order minimums in the hundreds. The Sons only had the cash for 10 guns worth of parts. Rather than let his standards slip, Mike hounded suppliers and willed those first 10 rifles into existence.

Some of the first 10 went to friends of Mike and Kyle, and the remaining rifles found a home with some men who know what a hard-use rifle needs to be: The Navy SEALs and Marines who bought one of the Sons' first rifles spread the good word. It didn't take long for other guys looking for a no-nonsense duty rifle to reach out to Sons of Liberty; the endorsement of Navy SEALs and Marines can be a powerful marketing tool.

Orders for more guns came rolling in.

#### MAKING THEIR MARK

You might be wondering what's so damned special about some dudes in a lumberyard with an FFL and a few AR-15 parts. The Sons saw a gap in the market for hard-use rifles suitable for defensive

or duty use that could be customized. Until now, if you wanted a hard-use rifle, the most ideal move was to buy something like a Colt 6920 and replace half the rifle to get it to where you wanted. The Sons' crazy idea was to offer the same quality as Colt, but with the addition of allowing the end-user to configure their rifle how they wanted direct from the manufacturer.

Through continued research, daily conversations with Will Larson and their

The M4-76 is quickly becoming a favorite rifle to shoot, thanks to the no-frills approach and compact size.







Topping the 13.7-inch M4-76 with a LPVO creates the ability to make precise shots out past 500 yards without much trouble.

Common sense upgrades to the time-proven M4 design, like making the takedown pin lugs a bit wider than TDP standards, create an incredibly smooth-firing rifle.



rifle rebuild program, Mike gathered data on what worked well and what didn't. Eventually, Sons of Liberty Gun Works took what they learned and started developing parts of their very own, with the goal of building the best damn rifle in America.

At the core of their success is the qual-

ity control that goes into each and every rifle. It isn't just grabbing parts from a bin and slapping a rifle together; each part is inspected multiple times to ensure it's within acceptable specs. If the part isn't up to their high standards, it isn't used.

Their commitment to quality goes beyond just measuring parts. More durable anodizing, slightly tweaked upper receiver dimensions to remove the wobble found on almost every AR-15, and ensuring their components are made of the best materials for that particular use, take the SOLGW rifles and components to the next level.

Once you have top-tier components, the only thing holding a rifle back from being the best it possibly can be is how

those parts are assembled—you can't just slap a rifle together at your kitchen table and expect world-class performance. I was given a chance to visit the SOLGW factory, and I can't overstate the meticulous care given to each and every stage of the build process.

Everyone knew proper torque values at the snap of a finger—and why each one was important. The tools they were using weren't the cheapest thing they could get, and every rifle went together with the same level of attention. I was especially fascinated with their endplate staking. Mike and I see eye to eye on the importance of staking, but he took it a bit further and incorporated Forward Controls Design castle nuts that allow *three* places





to stake rather than the two required to meet MIL-STD-DTL-71186B.

### THE SOLGW M4-76

If, for some reason, I had to choose only one rifle to be my companion in some real-life version of *I Am Legend*, there's only one choice: a 13.7-inch-barreled Sons of Liberty Gun Works M4-76 with their nine-position A5 buffer tube paired with a VLTOR A5 Buffer and their NOX muzzle device pinned and welded to bring it to non-NFA length. For a pure fighting rifle, I struggle to think of a more versatile option.

As you unbox your rifle, you're met with a soft-side rifle case inside the cardboard box rather than a bunch of foam, which is fantastic for those who don't have several rifle bags or cases already. On the outside of that soft case are three stainless steel magazines in the mag pouches, complete with SOLGW-marked floorplates and a small baggie containing a single fired case, a small bottle of lube and a Sons of Liberty Gun Works patch.

Nestled inside your soft case is the rifle. Remove the case from the box and you'll find a lifetime warranty certificate signed by four people: the armorer who built your gun, the person who inspected the finished product and test-fired it, and the two owners of the company—stating that if you don't start “fixing” your rifle by swapping parts around, they'll fix the gun for life regardless of round count. Yes, that includes gas rings, barrel, bolt carrier group and springs.

I installed a SIG Sauer Tango6T 1-6x24mm scope in an old Warne mount that wasn't doing anything in my gun room. The only other accessories I added were a Modlite OKW paired with a ModButton Lite and an Arisaka inline mount, and a Blue Force Gear Vickers sling.

During the zero process, the first several rounds I sent downrange surprised me. There was near no recoil. We can thank SOLGW for taking gas port size seriously and not building

rifles to run on any random ammunition you can find. Will it run the cheap stuff? Probably. I was elated that it wasn't heavily over-gassed like many commercial rifles.

But recoil mitigation isn't just about gas-port sizing: The mid-length gas system, highly efficient NOX muzzle device, a SpringCo green buffer spring, nine-position A5 buffer tube and VLTOR A5-H2 buffer all play a role in keeping the rifle on target during fast strings of fire. All my shooting was faster-paced drills at 25 yards, and I

## M4-76 BUILD

### Upper Receiver

- Sons of Liberty (SOLGW) Upper Receiver
- 13.7-Inch Sons of Liberty Gun Works Combat Grade Barrel
- SOLGW Bolt Carrier Group
- Pinned and Welded Sons of Liberty Gun Works NOX Flash Hider
- 13-Inch SOLGW M76 Wedge Lock Handguard
- SOLGW Marked Radian Raptor LT Charging Handle
- SOLGW 4140 Steel M-LOK QD Socket
- SOLGW .750-Inch Low Profile Gas Block

### Lower Receiver

- SOLGW M4 Lower
- SOLGW Loyal 9 A5 Buffer Tube
- SOLGW QD End Plate
- Forward Controls Design CNF Castle Nut
- VLTOR A5-H2 Buffer
- SpringCo Green Action Spring
- SOLGW Blaster Guts Lower Parts with Liberty Fighting Trigger
- B5 Systems Trigger Guard
- B5 Systems Type 23 P-Grip
- B5 Systems Bravo Stock

### Optics

- Sig Sauer Tango6T DWLR6 Reticle
- Sig Sauer Tango6T Throw Lever
- Warne XSKEL 30mm MSR Mount

### Other Accessories

- Blue Force Gear Vickers Sling
- Modlite 18650 OKW
- Modlite ModButton Lite
- Arisaka Inline M-LOK Scout Light Mount
- True North Concepts MLOK Gripstop
- LaRue Tactical Index Clips (Wire Management)



The Sons of Liberty Gun Works NOX is more than a cool flash hider; it also accepts Dead Air KeyMo-equipped suppressors.



haven't seen a single malfunction.

The rifle is reasonably light, shoots soft and flat, is more than accurate at the defensive distances the average citizen would likely see if they were unfortunate enough to need to use a firearm in defense of their life, and it handles like a dream thanks to that 13.7-inch barrel with the pinned and welded NOX flash hider. Overall, this is the best AR-15 carbine I've had the pleasure to shoot to date.

#### THEY DO GOD'S WORK

There just isn't enough room here to talk about all the 2nd Amendment advocacy work Mike, Kyle and the Sons of Liberty Gun Works crew do. Never mind the massive amount of support they give law enforcement, their involvement in politics at all levels, support for gun-

loving Americans or the Sons of Liberty Gun Works Carbine Series competition. They're some of the most active and amazing people in the firearms industry.

As for my experience with the M4-76 rifle, I fully intend on purchasing a second and possibly third copy of the very same rifle for my son's first AR-15 and maybe one for the wife ... *maybe*. **GDTM**



Little touches, like the laser engraved logo on the charging handle or the Rebellious Stripes milled into the upper, take the Sons' rifles to the next level.

