

# RIMFIRES

STORY: Holt Bodinson

## VARMINTS BEWARE!

### Mitchell's Black Lightning .22 WMR delivers power and accuracy.

It's a rarity in the gun world when the name of a new model captures the spirit of the firearm. There are just too many A7s, 7s, 70s, 75s, 77s, 700s, 750s and 770s out there. What is this industry fixation with assigning non-descriptive numbers to their firearms, particularly if the model number is derived from the root of 7? That's why it was refreshing to see Mitchell's Mausers market a sleek, ultra-modern, semi-auto .22 WMR with the fast-stepping name, "Black Lightning." Composed of stainless steel cloaked in black polymer, it does indeed give the impression of a fast, flashy, potent little rimfire, and indeed, it is.

Long known as a unique source for pristine condition Mausers, Lugers, P-38s, 1911s and military sniper rifles, Mitchell's Mausers has earned a solid

reputation for marketing unusual, interesting and classy firearms. Well, the Black Lightning certainly has class and style. It's a racy, spacey-



The toggle safety and bolt release button are handy, but not "thumb handy."

looking rimfire magnum and frankly, it's been too long since we've seen a new, semi-auto chambered for the hot-performing .22 WMR.

#### Improved Performance

The .22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire, as debuted in 1959, was designed at Winchester to do one thing well—kill something. It's not a plinking round. It's not a target round. It's not cheap. Loaded with jacketed hollowpoints, softpoints, polymer tipped missiles and even solids, shot



Varmints and predators: beware the Black Lightning. Mitchell includes a handy-dandy magazine loading tool (below, left) that depresses the follower and spring. While rather unconventional in style, the pistol grip stock (below, right) proved to be a comfortable, stable platform.



and lead-free projectiles, the .22 WMR is more accurate, faster and more versatile than it's ever been in the 52 years of its existence. In power and performance, the .22 WMR is closer to .22 Hornet than it is to the .22 Long Rifle. The little Maggie is a terrific cartridge to be chambered in Mitchell's Black Lightning.

Looking at this combination, it's a good marriage between a gun and

a cartridge. The Black Lightning is designed as a sporter with target rifle leanings. The first quality of the rifle to catch your eye is its 18" fluted, stainless steel bull barrel. According to my micrometer, has a diameter of .880" from chamber to muzzle, and the flutes extend about 5-1/2" from just behind the muzzle to just aft of the fore-end tip. In short, the barrel is heavy, stiff and designed to deliver

top-drawer accuracy from the .22 WMR, which it did.

The remainder of the action and fire control system is composed of 17-4 stainless steel as well, but you don't see much more than the loading port and the bolt because the barreled action is encased in both a durable, glass reinforced, polymer, pistol grip stock and a wrap-around, aluminum Picatinny rail.

The solid, 18" Picatinny rail lends versatility to the Black Lightning unusual in the rimfire world. With Mitchell's high rings, the Black Lightning can be set up with a normal scope sight or outfitted as "scout rifle" with a long-eye-relief scope. Add a detachable bipod to the front sight swivel stud, and you're ready for some long-distance varminting.

### New Look

Swapping out the optics with Mitchell's M-16-type carry handle and rear sight matched with Mitchell's M-16-type front sight, the Black Lightning takes on a completely new tactical look. Adding Mitchell's integral laser to the M-16 front sight, converts the Black Lightning into a full dress, little tactical machine. God bless the ordnance engineers who developed the Picatinny rail!



*In a minute, the Black Lightning can be switched from a conventional rifle into a "Scout" (top) or into racy, tactical AR-type firearm (bottom). The 18" Picatinny rail of the Black Lightning provides a wide choice of sighting options.*



The fire control system of the Black Lightning works well. The bolt is held open after the last round fired, alerting the shooter the magazine is empty. Just forward of the trigger, a bolt release cycles the bolt forward when depressed. The toggle-type, manual safety on the left side just forward of the trigger is just a bit too high to manipulate with your thumb when your hand is wrapped around the pistol grip, but it functions perfectly as does an integral firing-pin block.

### BLACK LIGHTNING

MAKER: MITCHELL'S MAUSERS  
P.O. BOX 9295, FOUNTAIN VALLEY, CA 92728  
(800) 274-4124  
WWW.GUNSMAGAZINE.COM/MITCHELLS-MAUSERS

**ACTION TYPE:** Semi-auto, blowback, **CALIBER:** .22 WMR, **CAPACITY:** 9, **BARREL LENGTH:** 18", **OVERALL LENGTH:** 33", **WEIGHT:** 6 pounds, 14 ounces (w/o sights), **FINISH:** Stainless steel, **SIGHTS:** None; Picatinny rail provided, **STOCK:** Black, glass reinforced polymer, **PRICE:** \$595

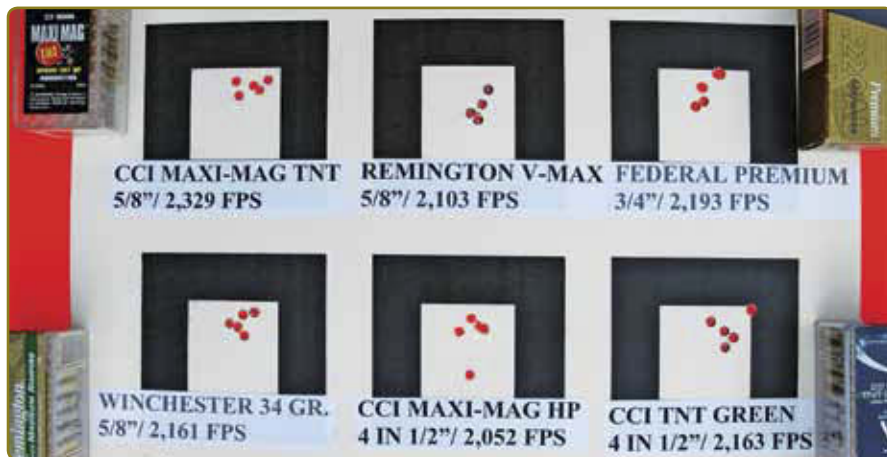
The 2-stage trigger is a bit mushy and measured 8 pounds on a Lyman electronic scale, but the rifle's wide trigger shoe helps in making it manageable in letting off the shot.

The Black Lightning proved to be one of the most consistently accurate

.22 WMRs I have ever worked with. It didn't matter what the bullet design or weight was or what the velocity was. At 50 yards, it was capable of grouping most brands within 5/8" for five shots, and if yours truly hadn't pulled two shots on the comparison target, there were have been some 1/2" groups to brag about.

Three loads were rather interesting. CCI's Maxi-Mag TNT was the absolute speed champ at 2,329 fps. Winchester's inexpensive 200 round, bulk pack with its 34-grain HP bullet produced the most uniform 5/8" groups, so never pass up a big-box

*The Mitchell Black Lightning proved very accurate at 50 yards with a wide variety of .22 WMR ammunition.*



store bargain. CCI's TNT Green surprises me every time I shoot it. It is one of the most accurate .22 WMR rounds available and more than passes muster for use in those restricted, lead-free zones.

The Black Lightning really delivers, especially as a semi-automatic rifle. It's a classy, accurate, high-quality rimfire with an inherent flexibility to fulfill multiple roles. It's certainly a worthy addition to the Mitchell's stable of fine firearms.