

ON TARGET

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MAGNUM RESEARCH

.45-70 BFR

RIFLE POWER & HANDGUN PORTABILITY

RUGER'S NEW

RIMFIRE HANDGUNS

2012

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARDS

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MAGNUM RESEARCH

BFR .45-70 REVOLVER

RIFLE-POWER AND PRECISION + HANDGUN-PORTABILITY

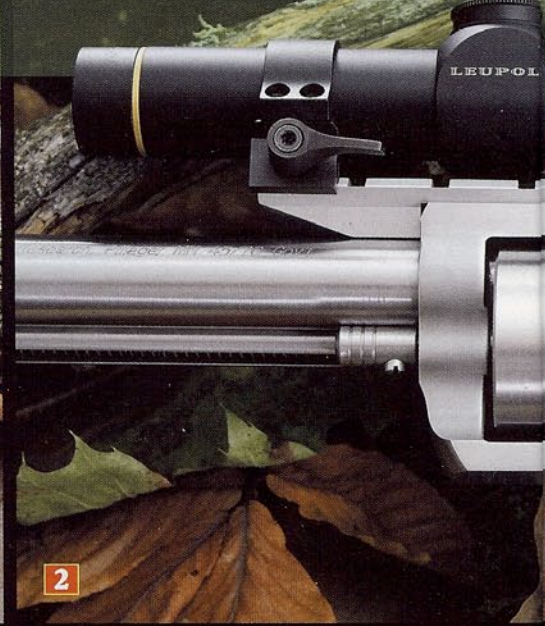


HANDGUN HUNTERS HAVE A FAIR NUMBER OF CHOICES these days in single- and double-action revolvers chambered in a wide variety magnum handgun cartridges. But they have only one choice in hunting revolvers chambered for *rifle* cartridges—the Magnum Research BFR (“Biggest, Finest Revolver”). In addition to six magnum handgun chamberings, the BFR can be had chambered in four of the all-time most popular deep-woods deer whackers: .30-30 Win., .444 Marlin, .450 Marlin and .45-70 Gov’t.

The BFR is an all-stainless-steel, single-action revolver with a 5-round cylinder. Seventeen long- and short-cylinder models are offered, with barrel lengths of 5 to 10 inches, all priced at \$1,050. What a lot of people don’t realize about the BFR is that it’s 100% made in the U. S. A.—*hand* made, that is, by real American hands at MRI’s state-of-the-art factory in Pillager, Minnesota. Quality is simply outstanding, and fit and finish are as good as it gets in a production gun. Five different alloys of stainless steel are used to build the BFR, each part being



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made from that alloy best suited to producing the strength, hardness and corrosion resistance necessary to endure a lifetime of heavy use.

Our evaluation gun was the 7.5-inch barreled .45-70. Even with the shorter 7.5-inch barrel (it's also available with a 10-inch barrel), our sample BFR tipped the scales at an imposing 4 lbs. 6.6 oz. empty. Five rounds of .45-70 brings the loaded weight up to 4 lbs. 13 oz. With its 3-inch-long unfluted cylinder, overall length measures right at 16 inches, with an overall height of 6 inches.

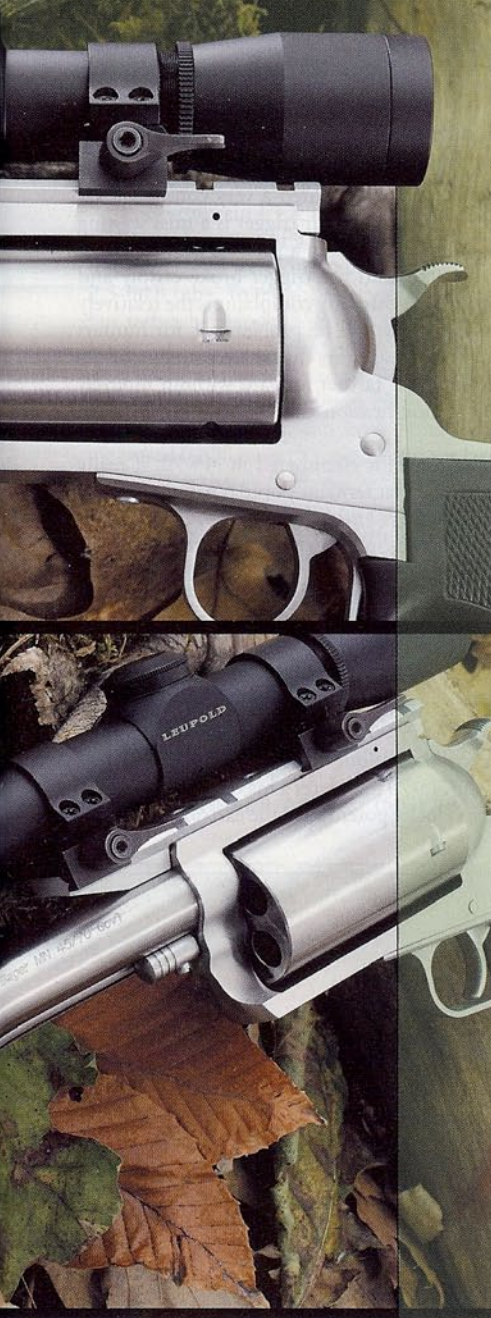
The muzzle is target crowned and blued steel open sights are provided—a ramp mounted front and fully adjustable rear—both of which are machine screwed to the gun. The massive top strap is drilled and tapped for the 5.5-inch, one-piece, machined aluminum scope mount in-

cluded with the gun, which requires that the rear sight be removed for installation. The BFR is fitted with 2-piece, hard-rubber grips that—thoughtfully—include an integral tang that drops down behind the trigger guard to prevent the knuckle of the middle finger from being bashed under recoil.

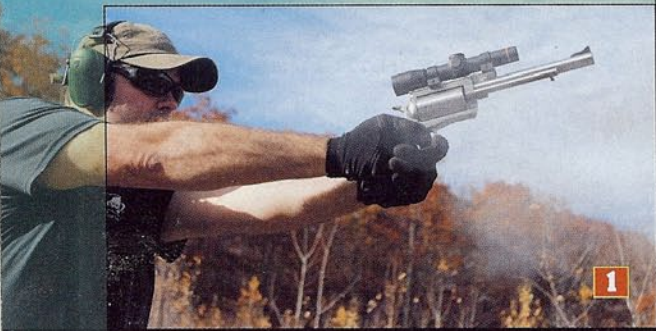
The BFR's massive cylinder (3" L x 1.75" D, 20.5 oz.) is held in place by an equally massive stainless steel cylinder pin (4.75" L x 1/4" D), which is secured in place by a set screw. The cylinder pin needs only to be withdrawn—not removed—to drop out the cylinder. Tolerances are so tight that the barrel-cylinder gap—which is held to a maximum of .005"—is hardly even visible. Barrel-cylinder alignment is held to under .002" concentricity.

Being a single-action revolver, the hammer must be cocked in order to fire

the gun, a process which is aided by the BFR's wide, serrated hammer spur that is easily reached without breaking the firing grip. The BFR employs a transfer bar safety that prevents the hammer from contacting the firing pin unless the hammer has been fully cocked, so there's no concern with having a loaded chamber positioned under the hammer. When the loading gate is swung out, the cylinder rotates freely in either direction to facilitate loading. The ejector rod—with a stroke length of 3.5 inches—makes quick work of shucking empties. MRI offers optional, interchangeable cylinders for BFRs that utilize the same diameter bullet, which means you can get a .450 Marlin cylinder for your .45-70 BFR, or vice versa. Since tolerances are so tight, however, the new cylinder has to be factory fitted. If you're going to order a BFR either through your dealer or from



- 1** A .45-70 LeveRevolution cartridge towering over its .44 Magnum brother.
- 2** A Leupold FX-II 2x20mm handgun scope and a set of Leupold Q.D. rings were entrusted with taking the .45-70 beating.
- 3** Every moving part of a BFR operates with silky-smooth precision. Hammer does not need to be half-cocked to load.
- 4** The .45-70's 7.5-inch barrel is a good compromise between portability and sufficient length.



- 1** While it fires a massive cartridge designed for a rifle platform, the big BFR was surprisingly manageable under recoil. Same goes for the more potent .450 Marlin version we tested years ago.
- 2** If you're looking for a multiple-shot, handgun-sized package, but don't want to give up rifle-power or precision, you've found it...10-shots at 50-yards.
- 3** A size comparison between the 4-5/8" barreled .44 Mag. BFR tested last year, and the .45-70 you're reading about now.

MRI, make sure to have the extra cylinder fitted at the time of production.

A hunting revolver needs to have really a good trigger, and the BFR does not disappoint in that regard. Trigger pull weight measured a very consistent 3.2 lbs.—just about perfect for a hunting revolver. A hair trigger is a miss waiting to happen in the adrenalin-fueled moment of taking a shot on game. Trigger movement was completely imperceptible, and the trigger broke crisply and cleanly every time without a hint of takeup. Our only complaint is the relatively small opening in the trigger guard, which would be problematic for hunters wearing anything but the thinnest gloves. It appears that the front edge of the trigger guard could be extended at least 1/4" farther forward without interfering with the front mounting screw, a modification that we would encourage MRI to consider.

If you're wondering why we chose the BFR chambered in .45-70, it really comes down to nostalgia for this cartridge that remains popular today after 139 years of yeoman service to American soldiers and hunters. The .45-70 Gov't. cartridge was developed by the U. S. Army's Springfield Armory for use in the then-new Springfield Model 1873 carbine, a/k/a the "Trapdoor Springfield." The cartridge was originally designated the .45-70-405 (.45 caliber, 70 grains of black powder, 405-grain bullet), but its name was later shortened to .45-70. The single-shot Trapdoor Springfield, chambered in .45-70, was the standard-issue U. S. service rifle from its adoption in 1873 until the .30-40 Krag-Jorgensen came along in 1894.

Due to its black-powder origins, the .45-70 has always been a low-pressure cartridge. Because there are still plenty of antique .45-70 arms in circulation today, the SAAMI specification for the .45-70 mandates a maximum pressure of 28,000 p.s.i., which severely limits the velocity potential of the cartridge. Even so,

commercially loaded SAAMI-spec ammunition is still capable of producing over 3,000 ft. lbs. of muzzle energy. Case in point: Hornady's 325-grain FTX LEVERevolution load, which we used for testing the BFR.

The 325-grain FTX LEVERevolution load develops 2,050 f.p.s. muzzle velocity, with muzzle energy of 3,032 ft. lbs. Bear in mind, however, that this is from a 24-inch test barrel, and we didn't expect to get anywhere near that velocity out of the BFR's 7.5-inch tube. To tell the tale, we brought in Dr. Oehler—not the good Dr. himself, but rather his Model 35P chronograph. Shooting from a sandbag rest with the sky screens set 10 feet in front of the muzzle, the 325-grain FTX LEVERevolution loads clocked an average velocity of 1,893 f.p.s. (2,587 ft. lbs.). For accuracy testing we mounted a Leupold 2x20mm FX II handgun scope in Leupold detachable rings on the BFR's scope base, and fired 5-shot groups at 25 yards. Our best 5-shot group measured 0.89" center to center, and the largest measured only 1.11". With that kind of accuracy, there's no question that the BFR has the precision to make killing shots out past 100 yards. Just for the heck of it, we sent an additional 10 rounds downrange at a target placed 50 yards away (pictured,) and the resulting ragged 10-hole group measured a rifle-like 1.90-inches—even with a "flyer." Without the flyer it was 1.40 inches. Impressive.

MRI states that the BFR in .45-70 recoils less than any .44 Magnum revolver that weighs under three pounds, and we have no reason to doubt that claim. We were expecting to get whacked pretty hard, but found perceived recoil to be surprisingly light and completely manageable. Nonetheless, we're convinced that the knuckles of our middle fingers would have taken a serious pounding without the aforementioned rubber tang that protrudes down behind the trigger guard.

See the Biggest, Finest Revolvers at a firearms retailer, or for more details contact **Magnum Research**; Tel.: (508) 635-4273; Web: www.magnumresearch.com

