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SPECIFICATIONS

DESERT EAGLE

Manufacturer:	Magnum Research, Inc. www.magnumresearch.com
Type:	Gas-operated autoloader
Caliber:	.50 AE (as tested), also available in .44 Magnum and .357 Magnum
Magazine Capacity:	7 rounds (.50 AE)
Barrel:	6 in.; rifling: polygonal, 1:19 RH twist
Overall Length:	10.75 in.
Width:	1.25 in.
Height:	6.25 in.
Weight, empty:	70 oz.
Grips:	Hogue rubber
Finish:	Titanium Gold with Tiger Stripes (as tested)
Sights:	Fixed; Picatinny top rail for optics
Trigger:	7-lb. pull (as tested)
Safety:	Ambidextrous manual safety
Price:	\$2,264



PHOTOS BY MIKE ANSCHUETZ

DOUBLE
FEATURE

THE ICONIC **PUNISHER**

Even if it isn't your usual cup of tea when it comes to handguns, you might find that MRI's big .50-caliber Desert Eagle holds some interest.

BY JOEL J. HUTCHCROFT, EDITOR





The Desert Eagle utilizes a bolt that looks more like one for a tactical rifle. Its lugs interlock with corresponding mortises in the chamber end of the barrel.

THE IMPETUS FOR THIS MONTH'S COVER STORIES IS A STATEMENT that our ballistics editor, Allan Jones, made in his recent column on the .375 H&H. He referred to the .375's reputation for "killing on one end and maiming on the other." Well, that got me to thinking about auto pistol cartridges that could be characterized that same way. There are a few of them out there, but it just so happens there are two new versions of guns for two of them. I'm referring to the .50 AE Desert Eagle and the 10mm Auto Glock G29. I'll cover the Desert Eagle in this report, and Greg Rodriguez offers all the details on the new Glock in his article beginning on page 46.

Now, I have to admit that I never was much of a fan of the Desert Eagle. And most of you regular readers of *Shooting Times* know that I have always had a penchant for traditional handguns (1911s, DA and SA revolvers, and such), so a gold, tiger-striped, mammoth hand cannon is just about the last thing I wanted to shoot. But that's the newest version of the Desert Eagle, and I have to be honest here, after unpacking the new pistol, the more I handled this big, flashy boomer, the more excited I got about taking it out and shooting the heck out of it. So, even if this isn't your usual interest in handguns, give this report a read. You just might find yourself giving the big Desert Eagle its due.

The Pistol

The current Desert Eagle is called the Mark XIX. Prior models included the Mark I and the Mark VII. All versions are gas operated, and unlike the barrels of recoil-operated semiautos, Desert Eagle barrels are fixed. Here's a simplified explanation of how the pistol operates:

Upon firing, once the bullet has passed a gas port located near the breech, gases travel through a tube under the barrel and pass to a piston that's fixed at the front of the slide. The gases force the piston to push the slide assembly toward the rear, unlocking the pistol's rotating bolt. At this point the extractor removes the fired case, and a spring-loaded ejector throws it out to the right.

The slide assembly is returned to battery via a dual captive recoil spring assembly, stripping a new round from the magazine and chambering it. The bolt then interlocks with the barrel for firing. As you can see in the accompanying photo, the bolt looks like one from a tactical rifle, and you can see how its lugs mate with the corresponding mortises in the chamber end of the barrel.

The trigger mechanism is single action, and it is a two-stage trigger.

Some of the Desert Eagle's other features include an ambidextrous thumb safety that blocks the firing pin and disconnects the trigger, chrome-plated chamber, combat-style trigger guard to facilitate two-handed shooting, combat-style fixed sights, and an integral optics-ready Picatinny rail. The review sample came with a 6-inch barrel, but you can also get a 10-inch barrel if you prefer. The 6-inch-barreled version weighs 70 ounces and is 10.75 inches long overall. Magazine capacity is seven rounds of .50 AE ammo.

Some of the optional finishes available are black, brushed chrome, matte chrome, polished chrome, bright



The newest version of the Desert Eagle wears a titanium gold with tiger stripes finish, and it features an ambidextrous manual safety and integral Picatinny optics rail.

nickel, satin nickel, 24K gold, titanium gold, and titanium gold with tiger stripes in .50. You can get some of the models with a muzzle brake. Other caliber options are .357 Magnum and .44 Magnum.

The Cartridge

The .50 Action Express has a rebated rim that is the same dimensions as the case head of the .44 Mag. (.460 inches in diameter), but its body is big enough to hold .500-inch bullets. The .50 AE was designed to fit specifically in the Desert Eagle auto pistol back in the late 1980s, and it was “domesticated” by CCI-Speer and offered as a commercial round in 1991. Today, Hornady also produces factory ammo.

The cartridge’s originator was Evan Whilden, and it was created to drop metallic silhouette targets and big game in its tracks. Original ammo was loaded with .510-inch bullets, but production pistols now require .500-inch bullets. Industry maximum pressure is 35,000 psi, and velocities of factory ammunition generally run around 1,475 for 300-grain loadings and 1,400 fps for 350-grain offerings. At those speeds, the big .50 AE auto pistol cartridge has as much down-range energy at 100 yards as a typical .44 Mag. load does at the muzzle.

Continued on Page 44

HOLLYWOOD LOVES THE DESERT EAGLE

Almost 25 years ago, when I was earning my master’s degree, I learned that to much of the world, the Colt single-action revolver symbolized the American experience. We have been perceived as a gunfighter nation, if you will, and even long after the gangster era of full-auto Tommy guns and semiauto pistols, to the rest of the world, the good old sixgun was our icon.

Now, I have no problem with that because I do believe that the gun is a central part of our American heritage, and I think the single-action revolver can take care of just about every handgunning chore that may arise. Hollywood, however, has been trying to change that. Which I find to be a bit ironic since Hollywood had a lot to do with the world viewing the USA in terms of the SA revolver anyway. So much of the world has only seen our popular culture through the lenses of movie directors, and that is certainly true of the period that was the heyday of the B-movie westerns (the mid-20th century). Those movies shown abroad had a huge influence on how generations of foreigners perceived the United States.

What’s all that have to do with the Magnum Research Desert Eagle, which is the topic of this article, you ask? Well, because of Hollywood again, and in conjunction with the video game developers, the Desert Eagle, whether you like it or not, has come to symbolize the same unique American character that has long been represented by the SA revolver.

Hollywood loves the Desert Eagle because it’s big, it’s bad, and it takes a “real” man or woman to handle it.

Here’s a short list of movies that feature the Desert Eagle, and it doesn’t even include the numerous TV appearances of the big bruiser in various forms:

- *Commando*
- *Extreme Prejudice*
- *RoboCop 1, 2 & 3*
- *Black Rain*
- *Another 48 Hours*
- *Predator 2*
- *New Jack City*
- *If Looks Could Kill*
- *Universal Soldier*
- *Cliffhanger*
- *Addams Family Values*
- *Last Action Hero*
- *Natural Born Killers*
- *The Getaway*
- *Desperado*
- *Bad Boys*
- *The Long Kiss Goodnight*
- *Eraser*
- *Barb Wire*
- *Escape from LA*
- *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*
- *The Boondock Saints*
- *The Matrix*
- *Snatch*
- *Austin Powers in Goldmember*
- *The Rundown*
- *Underworld*
- *Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle*
- *The Ladykillers*
- *Resident Evil*
- *Doom*
- *Alien vs. Predator*
- *Four Brothers*
- *Crank*
- *Lucky Number Slevin*
- *Shoot ‘Em Up*
- *Get Smart*

—Joel J. Hutchcraft

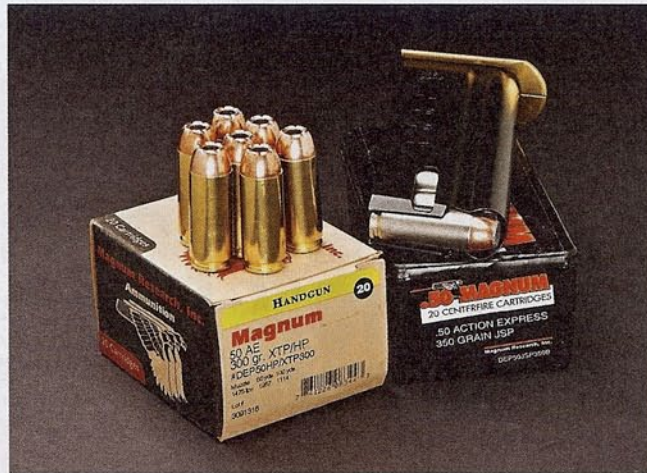
The Shooting Results

The heart of every *Shooting Times* gun review is the shooting session. When we, the in-house editors, decided to do this article, the first question we asked was, “Who’s going to do the article?” I have to believe it was a veiled attempt to actually figure out who *wasn’t* going to do the shooting, and it kind of lingered unanswered for several days. During those days, I had the big .50 pistol out on my desk, and I handled it and considered it from every point of view that I could think of. Initially, I was somewhat reluctant to do the shooting, but I slowly came around to actually wanting to shoot it. And so that’s how I decided to do the article myself.

I have to say I actually enjoyed shooting the brute.

At slightly more than 4 pounds in weight, the big machine really isn’t awful in terms of recoil. Calculated recoil of the factory loads I fired was about 24 ft-lbs. That’s just about 2 ft-lbs more than the .44 Mag. loaded with 300-grain bullets at a muzzle velocity of 1,150 fps. Now, don’t get me wrong, I don’t plan on making the .50 AE Desert Eagle my plinking pistol, and I sure won’t be spending hours shooting lots of handloads with it either. I’m just saying that it isn’t as punishing as some of you might think it is. MRI does provide some good guidelines for how to shoot the .50-caliber pistol, and I suggest you follow them.

While the gun is oversized for my medium-sized hands, I found it to be kind of fun to shoot. Though I only went through a couple of boxes each of



Magazine capacity of the big .50 AE Desert Eagle is seven rounds. The author fired 300-grain and 350-grain factory ammo for this report.

the two factory loads I was able to get my hands on for this report (about 80 rounds total), I think I could have easily fired a couple more if I’d had them.

Accuracy-wise, the two factory loads (300-grain XTP and 350-grain JSP) were pretty good at 25 yards. Both averaged less than 3.50 inches, which beats the standard for off-the-shelf handguns by a good margin. My single best five-shot group measured an easy 1.5 inches, and it came with the 300-grain loading. The smooth trigger pull (7 pounds, as tested) obviously contributed to those good results. This is a two-stage trigger, so there is a fair amount of “take-up,” but on the sample gun it was consistent. By the way, for the accuracy shooting, I mounted a Bushnell 2-6X Elite handgun scope, but I also shot a few five-round groups with the factory sights, and I did pretty well. That was more of a test of my old eyes than the pistol.

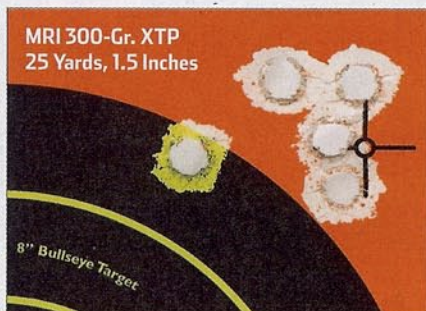
And just for the record, I didn’t have a single misfeed or failure to eject during the entire shooting session.

Were I to buy a Desert Eagle, I do believe I’d pick the .50 AE chambering, but as distinctive—and well done—as the gold tiger-striped finish is on this new version, I think I’d go for the black finish. I’m not a flashy kind of guy, and so I prefer the low-key black finish—as if any version of the Desert Eagle could be considered low key.

Low key it is not, but extremely well designed and well built it is. The Desert Eagle is a unique firearm in some ways (size, styling, and potency), and in other ways—the ways that really matter to *Shooting Times* readers (well built, reliable, and accurate)—it’s what serious gun guys demand. **ST**

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SHOOTING THE .50 AE DESERT EAGLE

Ammunition	Velocity (fps)	Extreme Spread (fps)	Standard Deviation (fps)	Muzzle Energy (ft-lbs)	Recoil (ft-lbs)	25-Yard Accuracy (Inches)
MRI 300-gr. XTP	1380	13	6	1268	23.7	2.50
MRI 350-gr. JSP	1230	33	14	1185	22.4	3.25

NOTES: Accuracy is the average of three, five-shot groups fired from a sandbag benchrest. Velocity is the average of 10 rounds measured 15 feet from the gun’s muzzle. Muzzle Energy and Recoil are calculated, using the obtained average velocity.