



**AYOOB: WHEN YOUR SHOT CAN KILL YOU**

**AMERICAN**

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

# HANDGUNNER

SMITH & WESSON'S  
**M&P 380**  
**SHIELD EZ**  
ULTIMATE CCW

ROCK RIVER ARMS:  
**POLY 1911**

REBIRTH OF  
**COLT**  
SAA

**WIN!**  
**GLOCK**  
**GENS**  
PACKAGE  
YOUR CHOICE  
GLOCK 43

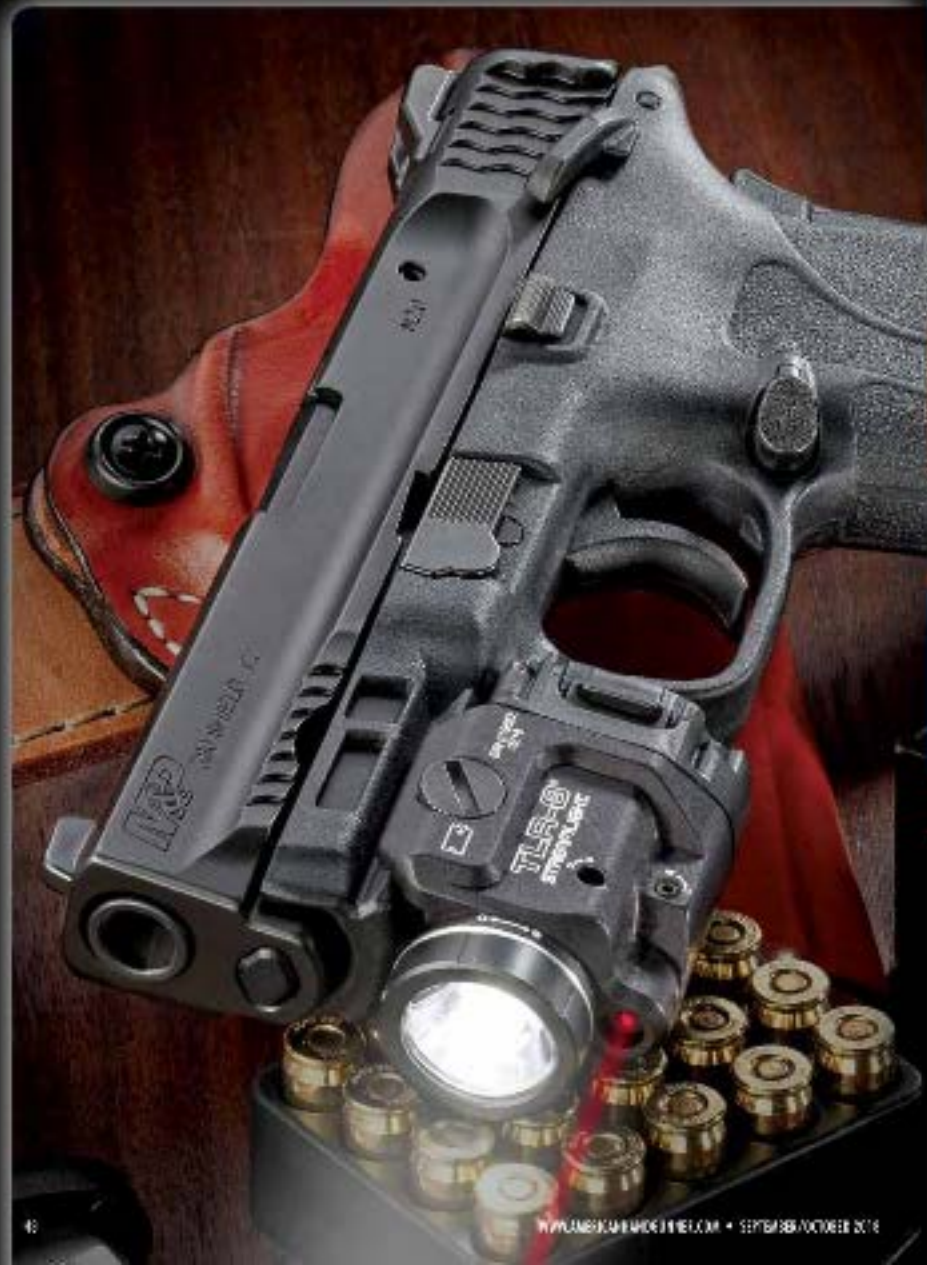
**S&W SEMI-AUTO**

**VIVIDLY CAPABLE**  
**TAURUS .380**  
**SPECTRUM**

**FOCUS:**

SINGUNNER: LIGHT .44 LOADS  
BALLISTIC GEL: FACT VS. FICTION  
SHOOTING IRON: ARTILLERY LUGER  
HANDGUN HUNTING: STEADY THAT SHOT!

**S&W'S PRO**  
**SERIES 1911**



# S&W M&P 380 SHIELD EZ

**A CARRY QUANDARY – QUASHED!** BY HAMILTON  
FROM THE AUGUST 2012 ISSUE

**T**he call went something like this: "Hey Ray, can you back free for a quick run-down to S&W for a new gun buy?" — it was Matt Spelard, their article liaison guy. "We're announcing something very cool and want to make sure *Firearms* is there to cover it."

"Um... ok..." I said, doing my best writer impression. "Firearms, it's not a problem, three days and I'll come."

"Oh, I've got you on that, so now you have to come. Looking forward to seeing you soon, Ray."

For some reason I kept thinking I'd just been led by a professional. I also learned on Mike Hernandez, the executive editor here. Imagine if I had to suffer through it, so would he. And just so we're clear — I don't mind paymen-



*Another M&P feature is the built-in tactical light.*



# S&W M&P SHIELD EZ .380



AMERICAN  
**HANDGUNNER**



slide, and I even own some. I'm just always washing and keeping guns organized around do something nice with the concept. We'd see, wouldn't we?

### The Big Day

I usually don't talk about the whole "visit the factory" thing as it's just the vehicle to get into it. But this time was different. Of the arrangements were identical, the "thump-thump-thump" homebake normal, over the meeting room had a PowerPoint waiting breathlessly to get our attention. But it's what happened over the next couple of hours that counts.

Oh, and here's the part where I say what an idiot I am by the way.

After the drinks and a few new products were shown, there was a sort of look. Then Jim Miodak, general manager of Smith & Wesson and M&P brands, told the PowerPoint version better up, pointed it at the computer. There was a collective lot of head-bobbing—and he nodded his head.

A black polymer-framed semi-auto appeared magically on the screen.

The machine was said to be a three-second longer than a long, red-sounding high-velocity about 15 inches and taller.

But we were all wrong. And sure, like me, were more wrong than others.

Jim expected this I think. He smiled broadly and announced, "The new M&P .380 SHIELD EZ."

A .380? But it was big. This wasn't like the Bodyguard at all, or the two dozen pocket .38s currently offered "out there." It was like a regular SHIELD, sorta (but it had a funny bump on the back of the grip) and right here even been a .38 caliber. But it was a .380—begging the question hanging in the air in the room.

"But why?"

There were murmurs, muffled coughs as throats were cleared—and a small amount of shoulder shrugging across the room, including me.

"Mike," I said, quaking behind my hand, "Am I being stupid or is this a silly idea for a new gun?"

"I sure don't just say," whispered Mike. But he may have just been being kind to me since I'm technically his boss. Or he actually didn't act it. Which turned out to be the case. And like me.

### The Gun

The brief presentation of a .380 EZ in each and every one of us as we sat at the tables. There were mini-frames of various in guns came out, were cleaned and then closely examined. I earnestly pointed how easy the slide ran.

"You see," said Jim, "many of our customers are getting older or we inform or otherwise find it difficult to operate a full-power slide, like one on a Smith or even a small, pocket .380."

I shook my head. "So we thought," he continued, "let's do something different here and make a gun easier to operate and come to control, better advantage of the lower recoil of the .380. Hence the SHIELD .380 EZ name."

We even saw a still modified. So we have a "Big .380" essentially. But who would carry it? Who would buy it? Why not just get a full SHIELD and learn to live with the slide? I'd taught older people to do that very thing. But as I thought about it, it also recalled how they often dropped things. And this gun's name is, after all—EZ. Get it?

Outside during a break, S&W's Jim Luger smiled up at me saying, "Well, what do you think?" He seemed proud of what they'd done.

I confessed to him I wasn't "getting" it and just saw a big .380 with a polymer frame.

"Wait until you shoot it and get to know it better," he said, smiling. It was what I'd call a "knowing" smile. I began to doubt my initial thoughts.

### Changing Minds

We moved to the range area at the S&W Academy and, while we shot our way through a good-natured cross-competition with a cross-section of new guns, we got to know the EZ. The more I shot it, the more I liked it—and the more I understood what was going on. After about 200 rounds I understood exactly why this was, that I say it—a brilliant idea. On the range, Mike called up next to me, firing his muffs, saying, "I get it now. Do you?"

He-He. We all were getting it.



The EZ slide had almost identical dimensions—but the grip was different.

He-ran the line about me being an idiot here. But that was before—now I was an advocate.

Ask any gun store sales guy what does he do when a "Uh, we'd like to look at a home defense gun but we don't know anything about guns" customer comes in. He points them at everything from 22 Autos and 4" .58 revolvers to standard sized Pump primers guns. None even show them small-frame revolvers and tiny .38s—shame on them, by the way. Factor in older people—even experienced older shooters—the infirm, needy women, younger shooters, etc. and you realize usually most of those guns are "too mild" for them.

If you'd ask me before, what I'd recommend I'd have gone down that same list, the thought, the way "idea" of what

NEW introduced, and never entered into my Steve Libe brain. Why not a bigger .380 with no way to run slide, loaded recoil and adequate stopping power? These were a nice few in years pasted, but none at the time would't up to snuff, as we basically ignored them. And they lacked some modern features. Add a light rail, external safety and even a grip safety and you have a dilemma into my beamer's small frame.

I realized I was holding an answer to all these challenges.

### The Specifics

I've been living with this particular SHIELD .380 EZ for about four months at the time of writing. I've put around 550 to 600 rounds of all sorts of ammo through it. I almost hesitate to say this fearing you won't believe me, but it's





**SHIELD** but would conceal easily.

The grip safety pivots on the bottom (like an old 1911 Colt pocket pistol) and regardless of how I gripped the gun — including using the external safety with my thumb — the end of my hand always depressed the grip safety just fine. There's a bit of a beavertail built into the frame and it really promotes a high grip, which is good. There's also small ledges built right into the very top of the slide to help you get a grip when you're the chlo. A noticeably clean touch, especially for older, weaker or arthritic fingers.

The magazine has little notches on either side of the follower allowing you to pull the follower down as you load. Again, it makes the chore much easier. Honestly, why don't all guns have these?

The gun is actually hammer-fired and not a striker gun, so it's technically simple action. You can get it without the external thumb safety but you do need the grip safety to don't think about pulling it down. The grip safety on the EZ won't allow the gun to fire unless it's depressed and the trigger is pulled fully to the rear. The designers knew how to do this one.

The sights are white, 1-to-4 and the rear is adjustable for windage using a supplied tool. Interestingly, you get to it under the sight, in the rear of the slide. A small tool screw is loosened, sight adjusted, then tightened again. The EZ

comes with two 8-round magazines and both actually hold eight rounds. They're well-constructed, have bright orange followers and are clearly marked for round count. All of this goes toward the "keep it simple" concept.

### But Wait, There's More

This slide really is easy to run and it impresses me every time. There's also a loaded chamber indicator you can feel as well as see. The grip texture is like a SHIELD. It's less secure than rubber in women. I really like it, and it felt like very fine, slightly worn wallpaper.

The magazine release is reversible, but not ambid, so you can put it on the side you favor. Disassembly is easy too, and you don't need to pull the trigger to get it started. Lock the slide back, rotate the take-down lever and the slide/barrel comes right off forward. Easy. Done that 100?

There's the normal light rail, and I found none of the all sorts of lights I had on-hand, so it won't be an issue finding one fitting your budget easily. I actually recommended S&W offer a sort of "Home Defense Kit" to include a simple light. We'll see.

The stainless steel and 1.57" barrel are coated with something S&W calls Amramite — a "keep it from getting rusty" coating. Between that and the polymer frame, there's no need to worry about the fully guard of concealed carry laws. Toward this end, my sample gun weighs 18.7 oz. on my postal scale, with an empty magazine inserted. It's light but not so light you can't feel it in your hand. It's a great lightweight gun for home defense for me "average" people with some time under our belts.

### Shooting Surprises

I had better I admit that I did down to do some serious targetting. In previous months I'd kept the EZ on my desk and now and again I'd take it outside and bang away at a variety of plinks I keep handy just to get marks through it. I had fired it off-hand at targets and found it always seemed to hit a bit high and to be left, although it always ran true regardless of the load. Careful targeting at 25 yards showed it does indeed shoot a bit high and to the left, but also enough "for someone new" so my dad used to say. It'll be easy to move the rear the windage once I settle on a load I like best.

The three surprising me was how accurate the EZ actually is. It's currently Black Hills 50-gr. HoneyBadger (a solid copper, flat lead) and the S&W 90-gr. M-Crown lead. The HoneyBadger averaged about 1,210 fps over my

Continued on page 26



# SW 1911 PRO SERIES 9MM

PERSONAL, PACKABLE & POWERFUL

**W**hile at S&W I also got to shoot

Pro Series 1911 during the usual match we shot. The funny thing is it shot like a "big" gun, not perfectly (normal for a short slide 1911) and had a slide surprisingly easy to run. Not quite in the same easy league as the 380 EZ, I might still owe the dust to someone who wears smaller 1911s but makes with this pudgy slide as a .45. The

Word of Performance Forum know-how, engineering and parts, coupled with precision on the factory floor means you get a gun sort of "in-between" a mass production pistol and a MIL-spec Performance Centennial.

This translates to affordability and performance at the same time. I think this gun so much I just had to show it to you here, the combination of "00sm" steel round butt gun holding eight rounds of your favorite flamm, and the short overall length (6.5" with 3" barrel) make it's easy to carry. The S&W frame makes it light, and fun easy to run slide is just a delight to use. I put about 450 rounds through my sample gun and I ran out. I shot light out 2" velocity groups at 25 yards with a bunch of different ammo types, and being a Gen. model was easy to change.

This is a compact, appealing little gun, weighing only 26 oz. in spite of its stainless slide and barrel. Think CCW use, travel defense, weekend IDA type competition for fun and a nice alternative to be in a holster if you love one of these classic 10-round mag guns having fun. It's great to be put into a single IWB holster or belt slide and make your everyday gun. It's what a personal pistol should be. No MIL M&P of SW 330 45 essentially a custom, clipped, 9mm — for a production gun price.

for more info: [www.smithwesson.com/index.cfm?SW\\_H:1911\\_330\\_032](http://www.smithwesson.com/index.cfm?SW_H:1911_330_032)



loosely never bobbed, even once, and in retrospect, I don't recall any of the sample guns or S&W shaking either.

There's something inherent in the world of the 380 and I'm thinking it has to do with the longer slide and "bigger" frame. Feeding any gun is all about timing, and being able to run a long slide likely means a slightly slower slide velocity, translating to a easier time into the chamber. This for extraction and ejection. It's why most 5" 1911s are

more reliably than the shorter ones.

The mechanics are simple and contribute to the success of the concept. It's got an 18-degree grip angle. It's a 1911, and the trigger on my gun over-rides around the 2-in. range and isn't too far for a polymer gun. It even has an over-travel stop built into the trigger guard. It also has a top-plate trigger and no center "safety" trigger thingy. It's a nice, wide, solid trigger. At 6.5" long, the EZ's a bit longer than a standard

1911. The sights are white, 1-to-4 and the rear is adjustable for windage using a supplied tool. Interestingly, you get to it under the sight, in the rear of the slide. A small tool screw is loosened, sight adjusted, then tightened again. The EZ



Left: Right grip with Black Hills 50-gr. HoneyBadger 380 A&P 50-gr. solid copper flat lead. Middle: Right grip with S&W 90-gr. M-Crown lead. Right: Left grip with S&W 90-gr. M-Crown lead. Bottom: Right grip with S&W 90-gr. M-Crown lead. All 25-yard groups are 2.5" or less. All 25-yard groups are 2.5" or less. All 25-yard groups are 2.5" or less.