

ALL NEW 10th EDITION

HANDGUNS '98

Edited by **RAY ORDORICA**

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10mm
Auto



45
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FEEDING AND TUNING YOUR SINGLE-ACTION REVOLVER

I SPOKE WITH Eddie Janis, proprietor of Peacemaker Specialists, about what to look for when handling single-action revolvers.

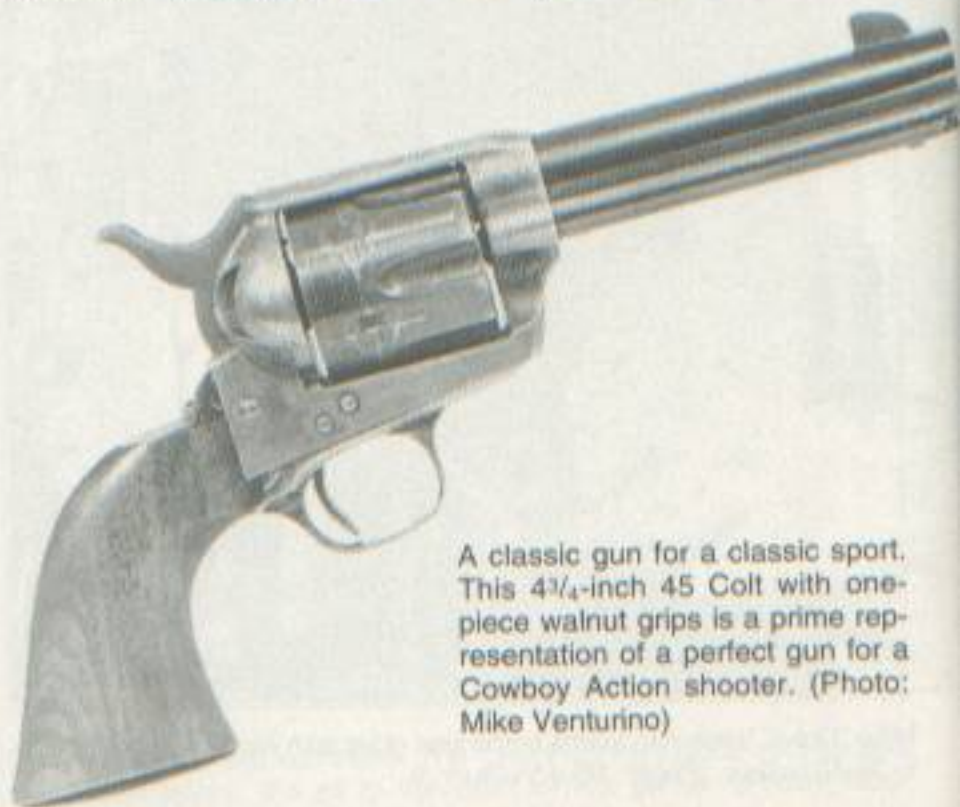
Eddie is a magician with a Colt Single Action Army, and if anyone would know what's up with a Colt, he would. I can tell you from personal experience that you can't appreciate an action job until you've felt one done by an artist, and Eddie's an artist.

He said a rough action is the number one complaint he gets from shooters who want action work done. He's quick to point out that an action job is more than just replacing springs. "There's a misconception that a simple spring replacement can be an action job. In most cases, this is wrong. Changing the hammer, sear and bolt springs can indeed lighten the trigger pull, but if your gun already has a decent pull, the spring kit can make it dangerously light. Any spring installation should be done in conjunction with a proper action job to stay out of trouble."

But can an action job do more for the gun than just make it feel better? "You bet," said Eddie. "If the gun is not abused and is timed properly when you get it, you can shoot it for a long time before any action work might be necessary. However, a good action job will make the gun last longer and be more user friendly. Less stress, wear and tear on the parts due to lighter springs, and less friction mean longer life. Slightly changing the geometry of some of the moving parts so the arc of movement is smaller translates into exercising the springs less, and again, that means longer lasting parts overall."

Eddie had some ideas about your first purchase. "Check the cylinder end shake, the back-to-front play of the cylin-

der. It should be just a tiny bit. The side-to-side rotational play of the cylinder is affected by the bolt engagement and should also be barely noticeable. The most critical part is the hammer. It is the heart of the gun. Hammer notches and the trigger sear are usually the two most abused parts on any gun. Listen when you cock the gun. The first click is the safety notch, and when it's engaged, the firing pin should not protrude through the frame. The second click is the loading or half-cock notch, and the bolt should



A classic gun for a classic sport. This 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch 45 Colt with one-piece walnut grips is a prime representation of a perfect gun for a Cowboy Action shooter. (Photo: Mike Venturino)

be withdrawn from the cylinder. The third click is the bolt popping up against the cylinder notch approach. Look out for late or early release here, since bolt timing is critical. The fourth click is the trigger sear seating into the full-cock notch on the hammer. The bolt is supposed to fully engage the cylinder notch at the same instant the trigger engages the full-cock notch on the hammer. All of this should happen in concert with each other. When the hammer is at full cock, it should be at the end of its travel mark, with no over-travel present."

Eddie said if you are contemplating the purchase of a single-action revolver, perform the above-described action check. It will give you an idea of the state of health of the revolver. Any deviation from proper timing will need immediate attention. Once you've got a gun and have taken to using it, Eddie recommends keeping what he calls a "Cowboy Survival Kit" with you. "I supply the three springs you need, the main, sear and bolt/hand springs. One of our custom-ground screwdrivers to match the screws on a Colt is also supplied and should be used every time you shoot your gun. If you don't, you'll have a golden opportunity to chase Colt parts over the countryside as the ejector unit springs free and makes a break for it!"

Lubrication is critical and Eddie recommends Break-Free. "Lube the base pin, ejector rod and especially the ratchet area. I'd do this every 100 rounds or so. Internally, the hand slot, hammer notches and anywhere else you see metal rubbing. I like to use RIG Stainless Steel Lube here since if it can stop galling on stainless, it will work great on carbon steel. It has lived up to my expectations." While you're at it, make sure to keep the outside of the gun wiped down regularly with Break-Free to keep that investment rust-free."



What it's all about. This Colt SAA 45 with 7 1/2-inch barrel and Smith & Wesson Model 3 are both fine tools for Cowboy matches. These happen to be originals from Mike Venturino's collection, but both are available as reproductions from several sources. (Photo: Mike Venturino)

Eddie offered some final thoughts. "Any Colt out there, unless it's suffered a catastrophic event in its history, is rebuildable into a cowboy shooter. Also, and I can't say this too strongly: If you're not sure of what you're doing, leave it to the professionals. I've had to repair more 'action jobs' than I care to remember."

Look for an upcoming book by Eddie covering the care and feeding of Colt Single Actions. I'm sure it will be well received by shooters everywhere.

—Roy Huntington