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discernible play. Its barrel locked up solidly at the front and rear, and the trigger displayed neither vertical nor horizontal play, and breaks crisply at 4-3/4 pounds. For feed reliability, the barrel is heavily throated and polished to a mirror-like finish, as is the frame's feed ramp. I also noted that the extractor is radiused and polished. Cosmetics of the pistol are excellent. The entire gun is given a consistent bead blasting for a frosted silver finish. The red rosewood grips add a dramatic splash of color to the pistol.

With its sloped rear slide top, the original Combat Master was designed to be carried with the hammer down on a loaded chamber, so that it could be easily thumb cocked when brought into action. Looking through the new Detonics USA Combat Master's owner's manual, I found that it recommends only one other method of carry besides the cocked and locked condition – and that's with the hammer down on an empty chamber. The manual, by exclusion, does not recommend carrying the pistol with a round in the chamber and the hammer down, though Ahern says that the firing pin spring is the strongest in the industry and that the gun will easily pass California's drop test. Your method of carry will be dictated by your personal needs and comfort level. For me, condition one or "cocked and locked" works best.

Even though the gun uses an extra-strength firing pin spring, there were no misfires or light firing pin strikes. Despite the gun's petite size, it uses a full-size mainspring housing and mainspring that supplies the hammer with plenty of force to overcome the strength of the firing pin spring. Reliability was 100 percent during my 300-round evaluation that includ-

ed factory FMJ's, hot defense loads and even some lead handloads. With the forward position of the rear sight and shortened sight radius, I didn't think that I'd be able to shoot any tight groups with the Combat Master. I was wrong! I'm far sighted and the position of the rear sight actually helped me obtain a sharper sight picture. This, combined with the gun's excellent trigger, made it possible to shoot some very respectable 15-yard groups. Of all of the loads tested, the Winchester 185-grain Silvertips were the softest shooting and produced the best accuracy, grouping five rounds into a neat cluster just 1.15" in diameter.

Even shooting the pistol from a rest with hot defense loads was not uncomfortable, and I have to credit the pistol's three-spring recoil system. This set-up gives the gun all of the spring mass necessary to cycle correctly, yet it remains controllable. Even with the three-spring recoil system it was easy to cycle the slide by hand to chamber a round.

I'm impressed with the Detonics USA Combat Master! It's an extremely well built pistol that provides full-size performance in a compact package. Quality – especially in an American-made gun – doesn't come cheap, however. Suggested retail of the Combat Master is \$1200. But, as Detonics USA's literature says, "Not a bargain alternative to the traditional 1911-style semi-automatic, Detonics USA is the logical refinement."

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