

The DPMS Sportical

Low Price, High Performance

Reviewed by Mike Dettly

One unintended consequence of the original 1994 Assault Weapons Ban was to kindle interest in those that had previously had no desire to own a "black gun." Just the simple fact that our own government tried to prohibit ownership of these guns was enough to send many on a mission to acquire one – often at scalper's prices. Now, four years after the sunset of the abysmally ineffectual ban, our uncertain and tumultuous political climate has renewed interest in the guns that many fear will be banned completely in the near future.

The "get 'em while you can" mindset seems pervasive and as demand climbs and supply dwindles, prices are skyrocketing. So, it did not go unnoticed, at least on my part, when DPMS introduced a brand new rifle retailing for just \$699. Experienced AR shooters, builders and competitors know that in the AR world you can expect to pay at least \$1000 for a good base gun without frills. Billed by DPMS as the bridge between sporting and tactical rifles, the Sportical has many noteworthy features but I think that shooters find its price the most salient of all.

But if you think that DPMS cut a lot of corners to hit that price point – you're wrong! DPMS uses the same lower that they do on all of their .223 rifles. It is machined from a forging of 7075-T6 aircraft grade aluminum and is hardcoat anodized and then Teflon coated. DPMS is not using any cast or foreign internals to lessen the cost. While other manufacturers are using plastic delta rings, trigger guards and magazine releases DPMS continues to use aluminum for these parts.

The Sportical's upper receiver is an extrusion of 6066-T6 aluminum and does not have a forward assist or an ejection port cover. For a game gun or a plinker I don't see this as a problem. Even for a home-defense gun that is kept in a relatively sterile environment and is cleaned after each use, it's hard to make a case for the forward assist to be a necessity. Eugene Stoner, who designed the original AR family of weapons, saw no reason to include it in his original design and protested its inclusion by the Army. I imagine that people who clean their guns regularly and use good quality ammunition won't have any problems.

DPMS ships the Sportical without any iron sights. It features a flattop receiver with a Picatinny rail and the gas block also has a railed top – so detachable iron sights can easily be attached to the rifle.

The lightweight Sportical possesses a terrific balance and it is because DPMS uses a pencil bar-



rel. It has a minimal contour from the muzzle all the way back to the receiver. If you think that will cause groups to shift or otherwise adversely affect accuracy – well, you're wrong. I fired all groups from a hot barrel and

noticed no shifting in my groups as it heated up and cooled during range "cease fires."

I was surprised to see that the lightweight 50-grain bullets shot as accurately as the heavier bullets but the 1:9" twist rate stabilized everything I put through it. To maximize the Sportical's accuracy potential I used a Tasco 2.5 –10X scope and fired the groups from a cement bench using a rifle rest. My test gun's trigger broke with reasonable crispness at 6.25 pounds.

I was so impressed with the Sportical's accuracy and handling characteristics that I decided that I would keep this gun as a home-defense rifle. I removed the Tasco scope and installed a Yankee Hill folding rear sight and a Midwest Industries folding front sight. It took me just a couple groups to get the gun sighted in at 50-yards. I then installed an Eotech 511 holographic sight on the receiver. Using the optic's windage and elevation adjustments I was able to move the red dot until it sat atop the front sight. With that accomplished I folded the iron sights down and fine-tuned the Eotech's zero.

What makes the Sportical the ideal novice gun is that its lower is built to milspec. Any aftermarket accessories can be easily fitted to the Sportical. Let's say that you decide you'd like a nice crisp match trigger. Any of the many kits available can be retrofitted to the Sportical without modification. Like the looks of the high speed-low drag operator stocks? Vltor, Mag-Pul, ACE and others can be fit to the Sportical's lower receiver. Perhaps you decide that you want to take up prairie dog hunting at some point in the future. If you purchase a long, heavy stainless barreled upper – it will drop right on to your Sportical lower without any gunsmithing. The ability to modify and accessorize the weapon is not unique to the Sportical – all milspec AR's possess this feature – but what is unique is its low price.

The versatility of the AR platform and the economy of the Sportical make it a no brainer! Get your rifle today while the price is still holding. Look for prices to climb even steeper as we get closer to the election – and most likely afterwards. I found the Sportical to possess far more accuracy than needed for shooters interested in 3-Gun competition. It also possesses all the reliability needed for a home-defense gun. Included in the Sportical's price are a hard case, two 30-round magazines and a GI cleaning kit. Priced unbelievably at just \$699, the Sportical is too good of a deal to pass by.

