



THE TOP

10

MOST INFLUENTIAL
WEAPONS OF ALL
TIME

BY MICHAEL WARE

MY LIST OF the 10 most influential weapons of all time you ask? Wow. That's a tough one to tackle. Being a true gun junkie, I'd lobby hard to squeeze about fifty weapons into the Top 10 list. When I tried this angle with my publisher and friend Patrick, he assured me this was "The Iowa Sportsman" and not "Michael's Gun Magazine" so I'll try to keep the list at the magical '10' mark..



#10 HENRY REPEATING RIFLE

This handy weapon was and remains arguably one of the most noticeable weapons in any collection. It doesn't matter what my friends pick up. They may be holding a 94 Winchester, or the Marlin 336, but those not in the know remark about how many Henry Rifles I have. From the production beginning in the early 1860s to now, you'd have to be a mechanical engineer to find much different between those built currently in Wisconsin by Henry Repeating Arms. It was neither the most powerful nor was it the first, but the stamp left by the Henry rifle endures today and everyone needs one in his or her collection. Maybe two... Besides, who isn't oddly attracted to a shiny brass framed lever gun?



#8 MG42

Also known as "Hitler's Buzzsaw" this belt fed machine gun was not only highly effective, but simple. There are a lot of high cyclic rate belt feds out there, but prior to this model, finding a weapon this fast and this simple that had a genuine quick change barrel capability was darned rare. The speed at which these operated alone struck fear into all those meeting it, which led to its nickname. The "Maschinengewehr 42" typically operated at 1200 rounds per minute with 7.92x57mm Mauser ammunition, also known as 8mm Mauser. Compared to the Vickers and the Browning at well under 600rpm, you can envision how significant this was on the battlefield. Not only is a belt fed machine gun used for stopping an enemy with mortality, but also they are just as frequently used for suppressive fire. Employing a weapon with a cyclic rate that fast tends to persuade just about anybody advancing to seriously reconsider his or her forward motion.

While the roller locked mechanism was recoil operated with a gas assist and in kind rare at the time, the barrel change capability helps set it apart as well. Experienced users could easily swap barrels in seconds. Granted, the barrels coming out were extremely hot in many cases, but even with gloves or mittens a barrel swap can still be completed in just a few seconds. We have built and rebuilt many of these through our shop and if they aren't set up and properly aligned when riveted and welded you'll see major problems that result in major kabooms! In case you didn't know, "kabooms" are slang around the CCA shop for firing sequence gone horribly wrong. Yet, in the hands of a skilled builder with the proper tooling these are hard to not build well. The MG42 is a testament to thorough engineering.

first name for him than "Gaston." His labor of love for this polymer frame pistol is a real tribute to simple engineering. With great irony, Gaston, the lead engineer on the pistol project, had no knowledge of firearms at all when he began. He was a super freak, if there is such a thing, with polymers however, and was the first we know of to "Tenifer" their metal surfaces via ferritic nitrocarburization to keep corrosion and wear in check. Remember the Star Wars scene where Han Solo is lowered into the pit and gets frozen in carbon and comes out looking like a big domino? Ferritic nitrocarburization is similar, but not the same as Han's ordeal.

Since the introduction of the Glock 17 to the U.S. market in 1980s, Glock has continued to produce and distribute extremely safe and reliable weapons all over the America. The newest versions like the Glock 42, a single stack compact 380, range in use from pocket carry weapons, to police duty, and war fighting. The "plastic" pistol managed to put to rest the myth that polymer weapons couldn't withstand the test of durability, reliability, and longevity. The Glock "safe action" pistol with internal safeties and as few as 36 total parts set the market on fire and forever changed the direction of pistol design.



#9 UZI

Uziel Gal, a major in the Israeli Army left his home in Germany as the Nazis took power in 1933. His travels landed him smack dab in prison in 1946, for carrying a weapon no less. Thankfully he was pardoned after only a portion of his 6-year sentence. The influence of the Thompson submachine gun, also known as the "Tommy Gun" can't be denied in the subtle Uzi features. However, the lightweight stamped steel receiver design shrouding extremely simple internals is really nothing short of a masterpiece. The Uzi is ultra-reliable, versatile, and durable as the day is long. The design characteristics of the Uzi can be seen in a myriad of weapons that followed it. There's a reason Ruger had Uziel Gal consult and help them design their MP-9 Subgun. Whether you're interested in a carbine, pistol, or submachine gun, the Uzi platform exists from the 'standard' size, with mini, and micro version following it. Popular in both 9mm and 45ACP, the impact the Uzi made on subsequent weapon designs and the fact it is still heavily utilized today both in sporting, security, police, and military circles speaks volumes.



#6 M2 BROWNING

John Moses Browning – what can I say? He was a visionary. 128 weapon patents??? Yeah, he was that good. While there are many machine guns he was involved with and either developed or helped develop like the early M1895 "Potato Digger" it was his larger work that most intrigued me. There are many who would advocate the 1919A4 as the pinnacle of his work, but if you threw that belt fed weapon on the copy machine and upsized it 30% you'd have the M2 or "Ma Deuce" as it is known throughout the world.

I give the nod to the M2 over the many other belt feds for a simple reason – longevity. He managed to not only produce the 50BMG (Browning Machine Gun) round himself which was essentially and upsized 30-06 chambering, but he put



#7 GLOCK

Gaston Glock was pretty shrewd. In fact, from what I've learned about him, simplicity was probably a better

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■ The Top 10 Most Influential Weapons of All Time



together an extremely reliable weapon that was capable of monster power. There is nobody who forgets the sound and results of the M2 when having seen it in action. There are few weapons that saw complete use prior to WWII that are present in today's U.S. Military other than the M2. This is a unique weapon size compared to the many like it. It is small enough to not require an entire crew to run it; while it is large enough to do serious damage to most all it encounters on the field of battle. The M2 has been air cooled, water cooled, used as a sniper rifle, tripod mounted, vehicle mounted, ship mounted, and aircraft mounted in single configurations through quad mounts. I'd bet there might have been a space shuttle mount considered at some point. OK, maybe not, but if I owned a space shuttle you can bet there would be a turret ring atop it with an M2 linked and ready to roll. There is no replacement for a weapon like this and is my firm opinion that every red-blooded American man and woman should fire one of these at least once.



#5 M1 GARAND

When General George S. Patton remarks that the Garand was "the greatest battle implement ever devised," that is a pretty darned hard endorsement to ignore. This rifle had a pretty short service life in the U.S. Military from only 1936 to 1957, but you wouldn't know it from the worldwide popularity with foreign militaries and in our own citizen marksman program. Leaving the bolt action rifles behind and fed with an 8 round internal clip this semi-automatic rifle was powerful, easy to use, and could send devastating fire down range at a faster rate than many others on the battlefield. Who hasn't smiled when they heard the familiar PING of the Garand as the last round is spent and the empty clip is automatically ejected?

The departure from the slower operated bolt-action rifle to this platform began a huge transition into semi-automatic and fully automatic weapons that has never reversed. Without the success of the M1 Garand I question if we'd maintained a foothold in what most would call modern weaponry at that point in history.



#4 AK47

Mikhail Kalashnikov was a tinkerer from the time he was very small and

worked everything mechanical he could get his hands on. From sewing machines to tanks, he was very talented. While the Red Army didn't adopt his first weapon, a submachine gun, his path was clear and he was given a clean slate to design a superior weapon for his country. Dubbed the "Avtomat Kalashnikova model 1947" the AK47 was adopted by the Red Army as their chief assault rifle and the AK platform was officially born in the 7.62x39 chambering.

The weapon itself was very simple and wasn't particularly expensive to build. It also gave the Red Army a really great position on the battlefield as they truly had a force multiplier in a light recoiling caliber and high capacity magazines capable of being changed quickly. While the AK47 itself was only used for 10 years as production problems forced receivers to be machined rather than stamped from steel, the AKM was nearly the same and the copies and variants began coming out of the woodwork. The AKM was the perfected stamped steel receiver the AK47 was originally designed to utilize. You couldn't throw a rock by the 1970s without hitting a nation using an AK variant or copying the design, tweaking it slightly, and placing a new name on it. Can you blame them? When you have a weapon that simple, using magazines that are nearly flawless, why wouldn't you choose to use it or copy it? Hardly a country in Asia, Eastern Europe, or Africa doesn't use them today. It wasn't until 1974 that the AK74 was adopted. The AK74 simply used a smaller chambering of 5.45x39, which compared with the U.S. 5.56NATO round. It proved to be a marginal force multiplier but didn't actually gain much capacity overall and saved almost no weight.



#3 MODEL 70 WINCHESTER

The Rifleman's Rifle as it has become known originated in 1936 and still wins our hearts today. With parallels to the Mauser in many ways the original Model 70 used a claw type non-rotating extractor and can be counted on to be rock solid in reliability and durability. While there were simple changes along the way with some push feed magazines over the years, it remained engraved in the marksmen of America. Another staple of this weapon was the ultra-simple trigger design. It isn't uncommon for the inner-tinkerer in all of us to look at something

like the trigger on the Model 70, scratch our heads, and think to ourselves “I could have come up with that.” Yet, none of us did. The trigger is truly a work of art and hard to ignore as such. Two curved pieces, a screw with set and jam nuts, and a coil spring was all it took and it still works beautifully today.

The model 70 was built for 70 years from 1936 to 2006 in New Haven Connecticut, by Winchester Repeating Arms Company with a short stint by U.S. Repeating Arms near the end. The Belgian FN Herstal Company picked up Winchester in 2007 and has continued to build them in the Columbia, South Carolina facility to date. The Win 70 is one of my favorite actions to build custom rifles upon, and it was also my very first centerfire rifle as a pup. I can still remember bringing home my 7STW chambered heavy barrel Model 70 Classic Laredo and the feeling I had when using my ‘bean field rifle’ for the first time. I hold no wonder why these smooth and sexy bolt guns have been so popular for so long.



#2 COLT SINGLE ACTION ARMY

The wheel guns never get enough credit in my opinion and the “Peacemaker” is at the top of my list. Everyone recognizes this weapon. The Peacemaker was supplied to the U.S. Army from 1873 to 1891, which is a very short time for its popularity, but it carried far beyond and can still be purchased today from Colt. Originally chambered in .45 Colt this vision was brought forth to reality by a pair of engineers within Colt, William Mason and Charles Brinckerhoff Richards. You see this weapon everywhere in history and film. Sturdy and simple, the original Peacemaker sported a 7.5” barrel and was routinely carried by John Wayne in most of his movies. Patton carried one during WWII along with countless other icons in American history. This weapon has a long reputation for

reliability and its well-balanced and accurate performance has stood the test of time.

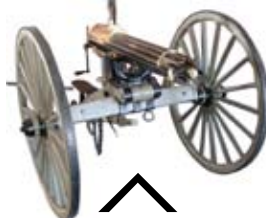
We have customers who come in the shop with other revolvers and we put lots of time, parts, and energy into Vaqueros and Rugers, as well as Smith & Wessons, to make them feel, operate, and handle like the early Colts. I’d submit there isn’t a complete collection for anyone out there that doesn’t include a really great wheel gun, and the trusty Colt is top of the list.



#1 1911

John Moses Browning in the headlines again... How good do you have to be to design a pistol, designate it for the year of development, and still see it used routinely today? Everyone knows that answer. The M1911 was adopted by U.S. Military in 1924 and still sees use today. A recent Marine contract for thousands of the M45s was just put into place. That’ll easily take the 1911, which had a recent 100-year anniversary, up to and past the 100-year mark for military service. Show me another pistol like that and you’ll be the proverbial finder of hen’s teeth.

The citizen market makes the military market for this weapon look like tinker toys. The local market for 1911s is hotter than it has ever been. The segment of 1911 sales and support is absolutely insane with variety and value. You can buy new 1911s for \$375.00 all the way through \$20,000.00. There are double stack versions now, twin firing versions that are essentially siamesed weapons, and you can get a 1911 chambered in all kinds of different calibers. We do as much 1911 work now as we’ve ever done and there appears to be no end in sight. With micro pistols through full sized weapons and all points in between the 1911 design just feels right. Pick one up and handle it. The weight, the size, and the power are all right there. People hold the 1911 and say the same thing all the time. “This just feels right.” I know! I agree!



#1 PLUS ONE: GATLING GUN

Yeah, I know I said I’d stick to 10 guns, but I like to sneak a few things passed

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my publisher when the opportunity presents itself. There aren't many as well known as the Gatling Gun when you think back to the first rapid fire weapons in history. This design set the stage for the modern machine gun believe it or not. With a gravity fed hopper that resembles an inverted magazine, you'd simply crank the weapon by hand to spin the mechanism that turned the barrel assembly. Each round would fire, extract, and reload through a relatively simple conglomeration of inclined planes and ramps. While these stages of operation were taking place as the assembly rotated, other barrels were being fired and advanced. Early versions only utilized a single hopper but after just 10 years the "Bruce" feeding system was adopted in 1881. This allowed the twin stick magazine to be used so a full magazine could be inserted and used while another one was loaded making it truly capable of sustained fire without stopping.

Another first for this type of weapon comes with manpower. You're probably visualizing one guy to crank the weapon, thus firing it, and another to keep it loaded. Nope. This was not only the first rapid fire weapon like it with large success but became at the same time a genuine crew serviced weapon as well. The same could be said for canons and others on the battlefield at the time, but nothing like the Gatling Gun. Crews as large as 4 soldiers were the minimum to keep this running. Sustained fire rates were claimed to be nearly 1200 rounds per minute, but you'd have to be pretty spry to pull that off for any length of time and actually average more like 400rpm.

Somebody got the bright idea to quit rotating barrels around to be fed with ammo, and moved the ammo to feed the barrel, which provided us with both the semi-automatic and full automatic weapons we

know today. However, don't think the Gatling died at that point. The ability to keep a spinning array of barrels cool while feeding them extremely fast was only handicapped by the poor guy turning the crank. When the electric motor was recently added to this beast we saw some of the most powerful and devastating weapons in modern military being spawned. The GAU-8 Avenger 30mm seven barrel rotary cannon was built specifically to shred things like tanks and surface-to-air missiles, and the A-10 Thunderbolt Aircraft commonly known as the "Warthog", was quite literally built around this massive weapon due to its highly effective performance. The "Mini-gun" like the Dillon Aero 134, chambered in 7.62x51NATO, sustains rates of fire at 2000rpm and 6000rpm with a simple flip of a toggle switch. Both of these weapons are still in heavy use today.

I often wonder what contribution I can make that would compare with these designs. The prototypes these forward thinkers built back then have radically altered and shaped our world today. One thing seems to be congruent though. Simplicity leans towards durability and reliability. You don't see complex weapon designs that stand the test of time. When you attain durability and reliability in a simple package, you have achieved the foundation for longevity, and that is the continuity present in all eleven of my Top 10. Shoot straight friends, and shoot often. ;) 