

LWRCI M6A2

Anyone who knows me knows that I'm not particularly enamored of piston systems for Stoner rifles. And I have not been all that happy with the LWRC company in its various guises in the previous few years. Stand back, Earthlings; all that has changed. At the most recent annual trade show, I carefully walked into the LWRC booth, expecting the same reception I'd gotten every year before.

This time, instead of vague promises from underlings, I suddenly found myself the focus of attention from the CEO, the head of marketing, the head of production and two or three marketing people. They wanted to make things right, to answer any and all questions. For a moment I thought they wanted to simply hand me a rifle off the display rack and wave as I left with it.

Dispel all thoughts or memories of the old LWRC and introduce yourself to LWRC International. They actually make rifles now, and the rifles they make, well, we'll be there shortly.

The M6A2 they sent me is a semiauto carbine, set up as a fully railed M4 clone. It comes with folding Troy front and rear sights, Magpul pistol grip and a PMag,

and Vltor stock. At a listed 7.3 pounds, the M6A2 feels heavier (a fully railed hand-guard will do that) but tips my scale, empty, at seven pounds, five ounces.

The railed forearm covers the LWRCI piston system, a short-stroke, gas-bleed system with a stout return spring. You can easily see or clean the system by unscrewing two bolts that hold the upper forearm in place.

Since they were dispensing with mil-spec in certain areas, they decided to advance beyond mil-spec any place where a superior technology could be applied. You'll notice that in the barrel, which appears to be just a decently—but not glossy—polished blue. Don't let that deceive you. The finish is a process known as NiCorr (and trademarked, too), and it is tougher than

Parkerizing—so tough the LWRCI folks abused a barrel there in the booth, showing how it could not be marred. The bolt carrier has raised pads at the lower rear to combat carrier tilt, and it is done in a proprietary nickel coating. The result is an easy-to-clean carrier—made more so by the lack of powder gases in the receiver, a lack that also precludes bolt and carrier heating.

Soon after the show, the package from LWRCI arrived. I poked a cleaning patch down the bore just to clean out any dust or oil and took it to the range. It worked just fine in preliminary testing, so I bolted on the new EOTech sight and its 3X magnifier and proceeded to do basic drills. At no time did I add lubricant. I never touched the chamber with a chamber brush, nor did I do anything to the rifle but load more magazines and shoot.

I've got a good selection of magazines in my safe, and I have yet to find a combination of magazine and ammo that the M6A2 does not feed reliably. I also have not found a magazine yet that has problems with fit.



The Nicorr treated barrel doesn't look like a mil-spec phosphatefinish, but it is tougher.

LWRCI M6A2

Type: Gas-piston semiauto
Caliber: 5.56, 6.8 SPC
Capacity: 25, 30
Barrel length: 16 in. (as tested).
Overall length: 36.5 in.
Weight: 7.3 lbs.
Stock: Vltor collapsible
Sights: Folding Troy front and rear (railed for optics)
Finish: NiCorr
MSRP: \$2,216
Maker: LWRC International
 410/901-1348, www.lwrci.com

In some rifles I've had the chore of testing or fixing, some brands of magazines were tight or very loose in the mag well. Not so the M6A2. They all slid in easily and fell of their own weight when I pressed the magazine-release button.

An interesting note on the receiver markings: The safety is not marked "Safe" and "Semi," as are so many others. Instead, the receiver on both sides is marked at all three locations with the pictograms that are now international: a bullet in a box with an "X" over it, a bullet in a box and an open-

ended box with the symbol for infinity in it. Yep, the rifle is marked as if it is a select-fire carbine. I can see them selling a bunch of rifles just on those markings alone. But it delivers more than just cool markings.

The M6A2 is plenty accurate (I'm pretty sure I'll be able to shoot another set of perfect scores at our next patrol rifle class). With the EOTech and its 3X magnifier I can get down to one MOA. If I switch to a Leupold 3.5-10X in a LaRue mount, shooting under one MOA is more a matter of the ammo than the rifle or me. The



The carrier is nickel-plated and has raised pads in the rear to deal with potential carrier-tilt issues.

ACCURACY RESULTS

Ammunition	Velocity (fps)	Average Group Size (in.)
Remington 55-gr. FMJ	2,832	1.5
Federal 69-gr. Gold Medal Match	2,569	.80
Hornady 60-gr. TAP-Urban	2,770	.75
Wolf 62-gr. FMJ	2,677	1.7
Hornady 75-gr. TAP-Precision	2,419	.75
Fiocchi 69-gr. MatchKing	2,442	.80
Winchester USA 55-gr. FMJ	2,839	1.2
Black Hills 75-gr. Heavy Match	2,597	.75

Chronographed 15 feet from the muzzle. Accuracy averaged from four five-shot 100-yard groups from a benchrest using a Leupold 3.5-10X scope.



The gas system is easy to get to and, once uncovered, easy to clean.



One big advantage of LWRC International's M6A2 is the lack of gas, meaning no gas venting out of the receiver with each shot.

match barrel, with its 1:7 twist, is up to your shooting skills unless you're an NRA High Master. And even then I'd like to see what it could do.

So far it has fired all weights well, although I didn't have a whole lot of 40-grain Blitz ammo to try in it. Some 40-grain varmint loads worked just fine, though. My efforts at group shooting were greatly aided by the crisp two-stage trigger that the rifle came with.

Just to add to the difficulties, after I had tried a mind-boggling variety of brass-cased ammo, including a cleanup of the

random-reloads aisle, I switched to a carton of steel-cased .223 ammo, something many will tell you is an invitation to malfunction. The M6A2 didn't even notice. Aside from marginally larger groups, the rifle simply chugged along, consuming ammo with the remorseless efficiency of frat boys finishing free beers and pizza, tossing empties out and to the rear.

After 2,000 rounds the gas system was only slightly grubby. Hardly enough to bother cleaning, although our editor, with his USMC background in weapons cleaning, will declare this heresy. The bolt was not at all dirty except for the bolt face, which showed some small amount of brassing and primer sealing compound left behind.

So where does this leave us? Me with a puzzled look on my face. I mean, me now becoming enamored of a piston-driven AR.

And not just because it shoots reliably; it also shoots accurately. The coatings perform as advertised, as I've tested the exterior of the barrel with some solvents and solutions you don't want to know about and it shows no signs of corrosion. I think I'd want to do some weight-saving on it, because starting with a seven-pound-plus carbine and then



The markings are 21st century pictographs. No, the selector doesn't go all the way around.

adding gear makes it a tad heavy. But 7.3 pounds for a 5.56 carbine is the new norm, and I'd best get used to it.

It leaves you in a quandary: How are you going to justify buying another rifle? Because if you try the M6A2, you'll want one. I'm going to keep putting ammo through this one in the vain attempt that I can make it malfunction or I can convince LWRC International that I've put enough ammo through it that they should write it off as worn out and sell it to me for a pittance. Fat chance. —Patrick Sweeney G&A