

M3A1 Semi-Automatic Carbine

**Text & Photos
by Jeff W. Zimba**



Another .45ACP Powerhouse From Valkyrie Arms

There are only a handful of firearms that are instantly recognizable by the general public. This is most likely due to their exposure to Hollywood. Everything else seems to be lumped together and referred to by names that sound familiar. If I had a nickel for every time I was handling an M10 or a Sten in the past only to be asked, "Is that an Uzi?" I could have retired years ago. The Grease Gun is certainly not one of these "generic" submachine guns of the silver screen.

While operating a retail gun shop in years past, it was always obvious when someone who spent time in the armed services from the latter years of World War II to the early years of Vietnam would stop by the store. They would always gravitate to either a BAR or a Grease Gun, smile, and tell anyone within ear shot that they used to carry one of those. They would always ask what the price was, and more often than not, after explaining the process of legally obtaining a machine gun, most

Just like the very unique look of the Thompson, or the distinctive style of the M16, the M3 "Grease Gun" has a few immediately recognizable features not easily forgotten by those who once carried it in a theatre of operation. The pullout wire stock, combined with its tubular receiver, immediately gives it away even to those only remotely familiar with it.



Lead photo: The Valkyrie Arms M3A1 Semi-Automatic Carbine with the short display barrel.

Right: Detail of the latest grip design.

Valkyrie Arms

Valerie Johnson founded Valkyrie Arms in 1993. The company concept began with an idea that formed out of the frustration of living in Washington, a state that banned fully automatic firearms. Valkyrie Arms has since evolved into a business that designs ATF approved, semiautomatic-only versions of classic military automatic arms. Some classic military firearms that Valkyrie Arms has designed in their new semiautomatic-only mode include the .50 BMG M2HB, M60, Browning 1919, Browning 1917, 1918 BAR and several others. They are also currently manufacturing and offering their own version of the very rare, suppressed, DeLisle Carbine. Valerie Johnson is a licensed pilot residing in Washington with a passion for firearms and is very active in the preservation of the Second Amendment.

would leave with only the memories they arrived with. If the prices would not have been driven so far out of sight by the 1986-manufacturing ban, or if the registration requirements were not so costly and intimidating, many of these fellow brothers-in-arms would have purchased one for their collection.

Enter the Valkyrie Arms M3A1 Semiautomatic Carbine. After years of development Valerie Johnson has begun manufacturing her semiautomatic-only version of the famous Grease Gun. Just like its namesake, it is chambered for the .45ACP cartridge and utilizes a standard, unmodified 30-round M3 magazine. While there are several changes in the firing mechanism and the overall design, few are apparent by just looking at the firearm.

Several criteria had to be met in order to allow the carbine to remain a Title I firearm and therefore not be subject to the National Firearms Act. The most obvious is the mandatory 16-inch barrel. While looking somewhat awkward it is necessary to keep the barrel length at or above 16 inches so it is not considered a "short-barreled rifle." Secondly, in order to comply with the "Assault Weapons Ban" of 1994 (*The ban that this writer hopes will be allowed to sunset in 2004 like originally intended*), the wire stock is permanently fixed in the extended position so it does not collapse like the original. In my conversations with Valerie, she has indicated that in the future she will make original length barrel assemblies available to anyone who may wish to register their carbine as a "short-barreled rifle" to keep the aesthetics a little closer to the SMG. For an additional \$25.00 Valkyrie will be shortening, crowning and refinishing the



Above: Charging the Carbine is accomplished similar to the original M3A1 Grease Gun. A finger must be inserted into a slot in the bolt, and the bolt pulled rearward. Unlike the original SMG, this new semiautomatic version fires from a closed both.



The Valkyrie Arms M3A1 Semi-Automatic Carbine with the display barrel, the full-length functional barrel and a 30-round magazine.

originally supplied barrel if the customer desires. They may also manufacture a suppressed barrel assembly at some point depending upon the sunset of the current "1994 Assault Weapons Ban". For the time being, a short, non-functional display barrel is currently available with no additional registration requirements for the additional price of \$60.00. A dummy OSS look-alike suppressor is also available for an additional \$65.00. In the near future Valkyrie Arms will be offering an 8-inch, blank firing barrel as well.

While the overall look and feel are very similar, the vast majority of the parts used in manufacturing the Valkyrie carbine are proprietary and will not interchange with original M3 or M3A1 parts.

At a hefty unloaded weight of 8 pounds, the feel of the carbine is extremely close to the original submachine gun. (The unloaded weight of the M3 was 8.15 pounds while that of the M3A1 was reduced to 7.95 pounds.) This heavy carbine is relatively unaffected by the recoil of the .45ACP. Muzzle rise is minimal and multiple, rapid-fire rounds can be easily placed on target at 50 yards.

Fit and finish on the particular carbine we tested for this article were absolutely immaculate. The finish is a dark gray Parkerizing and is uniform from the muzzle to the stock. The dust cover is lined with felt on the inside so it does not wear the finish of the receiver while closed. The dust cover hinge is tight, as is every moving part on our test example and nothing rattles during normal or even heavy handling. The bolt is cocked with the forefinger via a slot in the bolt under the dust cover similar to the original M3A1. The design is of a closed-bolt style and the recoil spring is extremely heavy

Range time with the Valkyrie M3A1 Carbine was always enjoyable. The gun is extremely controllable and pleasant to shoot. The function with a standard 30-round magazine was flawless, regardless of ammunition type, and we never experienced any malfunctions at all. In an effort to distinguish any particular type of "favorite" ammunition, we loaded and fired several magazines with ball, hollow point and even semi-wadcutter match rounds with no failures to feed or fire. The trigger is very smooth. Trig-



The barrel can be removed for cleaning or replacement by simply loosening this allen screw and turning the knurled barrel nut counter clockwise.

ger travel is over 1/2 inch but the break is quick and other than a steady spring tension there is no feeling of resistance at all. The magazine release is located on the left side of the magazine well and depressing the release will allow an unloaded magazine to drop free without having to pull it out.

All in all, I would highly recommend this carbine as a unique addition to any

firearms collection. While this is a great alternative to an original grease gun for people who live in non-class III states, it is also an attractive and extremely functional piece sure to add to any collection. I live in one of the great free states where machine guns are no problem and found this gun fit to add to my own collection anyway.



Technical Specifications **Valkyrie Arms M3A1 Semiautomatic Carbine**

<u>Caliber:</u>	.45ACP
<u>Operation:</u>	Semiautomatic-only, closed-bolt, blowback
<u>Weight empty:</u>	8 pounds (3.62kg)
<u>Length overall:</u>	37.5 inches (952.50mm)
<u>Barrel:</u>	12 grooves, right-hand twist of one turn in 16 inches
<u>Barrel length:</u>	16.25 inches (412.75mm)
<u>Magazine:</u>	30-round, staggered-column, single-position-feed, detachable box-type
<u>Sights:</u>	Fixed, front and rear
<u>Sight Radius:</u>	10.375 inches (305.71mm)
<u>Stock:</u>	Fixed, wire
<u>Finish:</u>	Phosphate finish, dark gray
<u>Manufacturer:</u>	Valkyrie Arms, Dept. SAR, 120 State Ave. N.E. No. 381, Olympia WA 98501; phone: (360) 482-4036; website: www.valkyriearms.com
<u>Price:</u>	\$750.00 Retail (Supplied with one 30-round magazine or 10-round magazine if required by state law)
<u>T&E Summary:</u>	A very functional and affordable addition to any military-style firearms collection.