



A great Dane



Denmark isn't the first country that springs to mind as a producer of great rifles, but Byron Pace is pleased to discover it makes some of the best in the world

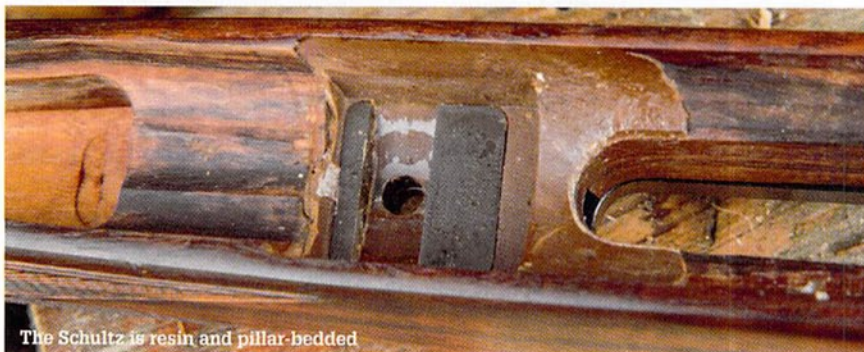
There are only a few rifles that have really captured me to the extent that I cannot live without owning one. I had wanted to get my hands on the new Schultz and Larsen for some time. I knew a little about them, having handled some older Schultz and Larsen rifles, but was yet to lay my eyes on its new models. Despite many attempts to review one, the distributor didn't seem to be able to make the planets align. After several months, I found that the distributor had shifted to someone I knew would deliver. In no time, Alan Rhone had my preferred 6.5x55 on the doorstep, and provided no end of assistance and information throughout my period reviewing the rifle.

This rifle is one of the best I have had the privilege of shooting, and it will be joining the ranks of rifles in my possession. There isn't an individual thing that is outstanding – the whole rifle is well made. It is well constructed, well machined, old-fashioned manufacturing.

I was greeted by a hand-oiled, grade 2 walnut stock cradling a deep blued action and barrel. The setup screamed old school skill. I liked that. There wasn't a bit of plastic in sight: No new-fangled cocking levers, no synthetic bolt knobs, no rubber inlays, just wood and metal, machined with precision. The stock is sealed with hand-applied linseed oil coats, built up over time in the old-fashioned way. Pleasing to the eye, it would be easy to repair minor scratches, and only

requires a light wipe down with linseed oil every so often. CNC inlet, the stock is pillar and resin bedded for consistency in fixing. The only aspect I would have changed was the provision of a slightly more generous channel for the barrel to free-float. It was free, all the way to the receiver, but a few more millimetres would give me some comfort.

Available in one action size, there is a more streamlined version available in its Legacy model, but that is only chambered



The Schultz is resin and pillar-bedded



Review: Schultz and Larsen Victory 6.5x55

in .223, .222, and .300 Blackout. The Victory I tested wasn't hefty, but at 7.9lb, it's not the lightest rifle on the market. Opt for the fluted barrel and this comes down to 7.5lb. The equivalent version in a Sako 85 comes in at 7.7lb, so it's in the ballpark for a nice piece of wood. Balance was exceptional, and countered much of this.

There is a reason S&L only offers one action size, and that comes down to it being a switch-barrel. To achieve a barrel swap, the stock has to be removed in the same way as most rifles, through both action screws, dropping out the action and barrel in one. In fairness, it only requires two bolts to achieve this, but you are not done yet. On an M03, two bolts drop the barrel in your hand. I didn't like that the action can't be serviced, the scope has to be removed first, and the lack of access to the trigger. The S&L offers both and the scope can stay fixed in place. It does, however, require further attention to remove the barrel.

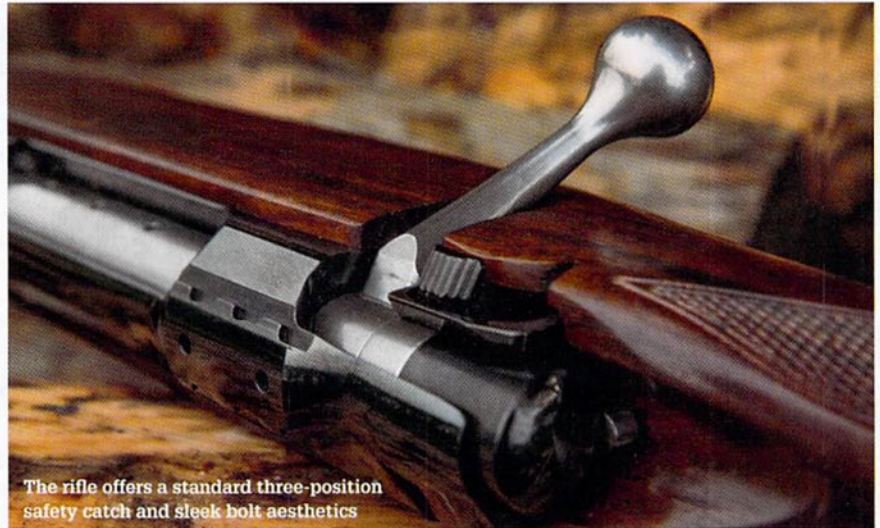
The barrel is held in place via a simple clamping system. Backing the hex-head screws out half a turn allows the barrel to slip from the receiver, assuming the bolt has been dropped back. The bolt locks down into the barrel itself to ensure consistent and repeatable head spacing. Around the shaft of the barrel fitting, locking ridges help to ensure consistent and secure clamping. Maintaining the correct orientation, a small slot and tennon at the chamber end provides positive location.

I was surprised at the side play around the locator, though I could tell this wasn't a mistake. Its function was to ensure the barrel wasn't fitted upside down.

The recommendation is for the clamping screws to be secured to a torque of 71-88 inch pounds. The rear should be secured first, followed by the front bolt. According to the manufacturer, the actual tension shouldn't matter, but it stresses that it mustn't be over-tightened. If doing this without a torque driver, it should be done up snug, then nipped up. I tested the rifle with and without a torque driver and didn't notice a difference.

This may not be the slickest of switch barrels, but how quickly do we really need to switch between one calibre and another? As long as the system works, and is secure and consistent, it doesn't really matter. The ability to hold its point of impact is most

“ It is well constructed, well machined, old-fashioned manufacturing ”



The rifle offers a standard three-position safety catch and sleek bolt aesthetics



A three-lug design allows for shallow bolt lift

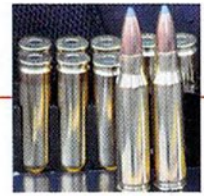
vital. For me, the most convenient part of being able to remove the barrel is to do with transport rather than calibre range. The downside of the S&L is having to replace the entire bolt if switching to a magnum calibre. Many offer a simple and convenient head replacement only. There is a price consequence to this at £380. An M03 bolt head, on the other hand, is £214.

I would suggest a system that only requires a barrel removal should be more likely to maintain zero between switches, even if it's on the margin. That said, if consistently torquing the action screws, there shouldn't be any effect. I would be hard-pushed to split the S&L from any of the other big brand switch-barrels in this department. It simply works.

Schultz and Larsen makes some of the best in the industry. This is how it started life in 1900, producing target barrels before transitioning towards complete target rifles. An interesting part of its history is S&L's production of sniper rifles, under duress, for the Wehrmacht. The legend goes that it made its rifles almost unusable in the field without ever having the faults traced back to its workforce.

It is rare to find an off-the-shelf manufacturer that hand-laps its barrels, but S&L does. Each barrel is cut-rifled, which many people consider to be more accurate than hammer forging. The barrels are crafted from stress-relieved chrome molybdenum and internally polished with a cast tin lap before leaving the factory. Well turned out, they have the same

Review: Schultz and Larsen Victory 6.5x55



The trigger can be tuned at home or before purchase

“ I was surprised at the side play around the locator, though I could tell this wasn't a mistake ”

metal finish as the rest of the rifle, which entails nitride hardening of the metal before polishing in a ceramic stone batch and bluing. The result in a deep, traditional feel.

The only part of the rifle that I wasn't initially fond of was the silver bolt handle. I would have preferred it blued, but over time I seemed to care less about this. Shape and position were good, and it came to the hand well with its swept-back curve. The centre of the bolt knob has been milled out to help with weight. Maybe that's what keeps it under the 8lb-mark. It is not as aesthetically pleasing as the straight drop from a Mauser, but it handles well.

Owing to the three-lug locking design, bolt lift is shallow. Cycling is smooth – not the slickest, but darn good. Like the attention to detail with the hand-lapped barrel, even the raceway of the receiver had been polished. The bolt shaft remains plain and unmolested, giving way to a bolt shroud of the same diameter, neatly capped in black. Below, a plain cocking indicator protrudes as part of the cocking piece. Only a small portion of the shroud extends beyond the receiver, where a smoothly curved dome provides an aesthetic termination. To provide for this, the rear of the receiver is split to allow for the travel of

the bolt. Extraction and ejection follows the usual default choice, with a plunger ejector and short, wide-sprung claw extractor.

The safety is to the right (on the right-handed rifle) of the rear split receiver. I wasn't sure why S&L had backed the safety catch with a grooved plate, but this was down to protecting unintentional operation. Being a simple rocker system, it's one of my favourite designs, and as good as silent in operation. Its three-position system isn't obvious during initial operation, with the middle position not being particularly defined, but it's fine once you know it's there.

The trigger is key on any rifle. The Schultz did not disappoint: it came with the basic direct trigger, adjustable for pull weight and sear engagement. It was set to 2.25lb on arrival, and was so crisp I did nothing with it. The release just tripped off every time, the way a finely tuned trigger should. There is a two-stage option, which I have had a chance to use and is equally excellent. The choice comes down to personal preference.

The bottom metal is as refined as the rest of the rifle: well machined and finished, inlet without flaw. The magazine bottom sits slightly proud of the woodwork, but the chamfered edges provide a smooth transition. The mag is nothing fancy, being a simple straight-stack design, but is finished well and made from quality metal components. This model held three rounds, but a five-shot option is available. Mag release is in front, recessed to prevent it being unintentionally pressed. It lacked the neat, sliding-lock mechanism like we see on the new Sauer 404, but that didn't bother me.

The rifle offers a traditional drilled and tapped receiver top, allowing for a normal bases-and-rings affair, however S&L also has a proprietary "slide and lock" system. This cleverly allows a different mounting position for summer and winter: Cold winters mean more clothes. More clothes mean that there is a greater distance between your shoulder and the scope. With your head resting comfortably, the scope will be too far for the correct relief.

Using Schultz and Larsen's mounts, slackening the single base screw on each ring allows the scope to be slid off, replaced, and repositioned. Its rings are made in unique pairs from the same block of steel, and are good value. The way they lock into



The rifle is inlet to a high standard. The bottom metal houses a simple three-shot mag



Review: Schultz and Larsen Victory 6.5x55

“ I had no trouble grouping the rifle, and it was not fussy in the ammo department ”



The rifle doesn't just offer good looks – it also delivers performance in the field

the receiver is extremely secure, squeezing down over the milled teeth, which form the slide and lock. It's not as snappy as the quick-release mounts of Mauser or Blaser, and it does need a tool, but it works. Over 100 yards, I never found any obvious shift in POI between the two positions. When using a torque driver, the return to zero on the same position was within 0.5in. Shooting groups before and after a scope removal left a group of 0.85in, which by any standards is fine. If you want to make use of the S&L system but don't want its rings, it offers Weaver bases or a Zeiss rail.

Shooting the rifle is as pleasant as it is to look at it. The stock offers good head positioning and comfortable handling. The

6.5x55 is a soft-shooting calibre, and rifle seemed to be quite sympathetic in terms of recoil. I had a chance to use the S&L moderators as well, but I will cover them in another article. I had no trouble grouping the rifle, and it was not fussy in the ammo department. I broke the new barrel in properly, and grouped my first target with intent after about 20 rounds. Shooting Hornady 140-grain SST, the five-shot group came in at 0.79in. It would have been 0.6in, had it not been for a single lower shot. That could very well have been my error. The 140-grain Fusion grouped about the same. I had the chance to try out a .308Win as well, and the first test with 150-grain Federals gave a tidy, perfect triangle of 0.7in. Taking the time to hand load, along

with more breaking in, gave groups sub 0.5in when loaded with 140-grain Bergers.

I have already expressed my pleasure with this rifle, and need say no more than to suggest that everyone has a look at one before they shell out for another rifle. ■

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Victory standard grade: £1,610

Grade 2: additional £165

Left hand: additional £110

Slidelock mounts: additional £89

Spare magazine: three-shot £105, five-shot £150

Magnum bolt: £380

Barrel: £600 (standard), £800 (magnum)

Contact: 01978 660001 ■ alanrhone.com