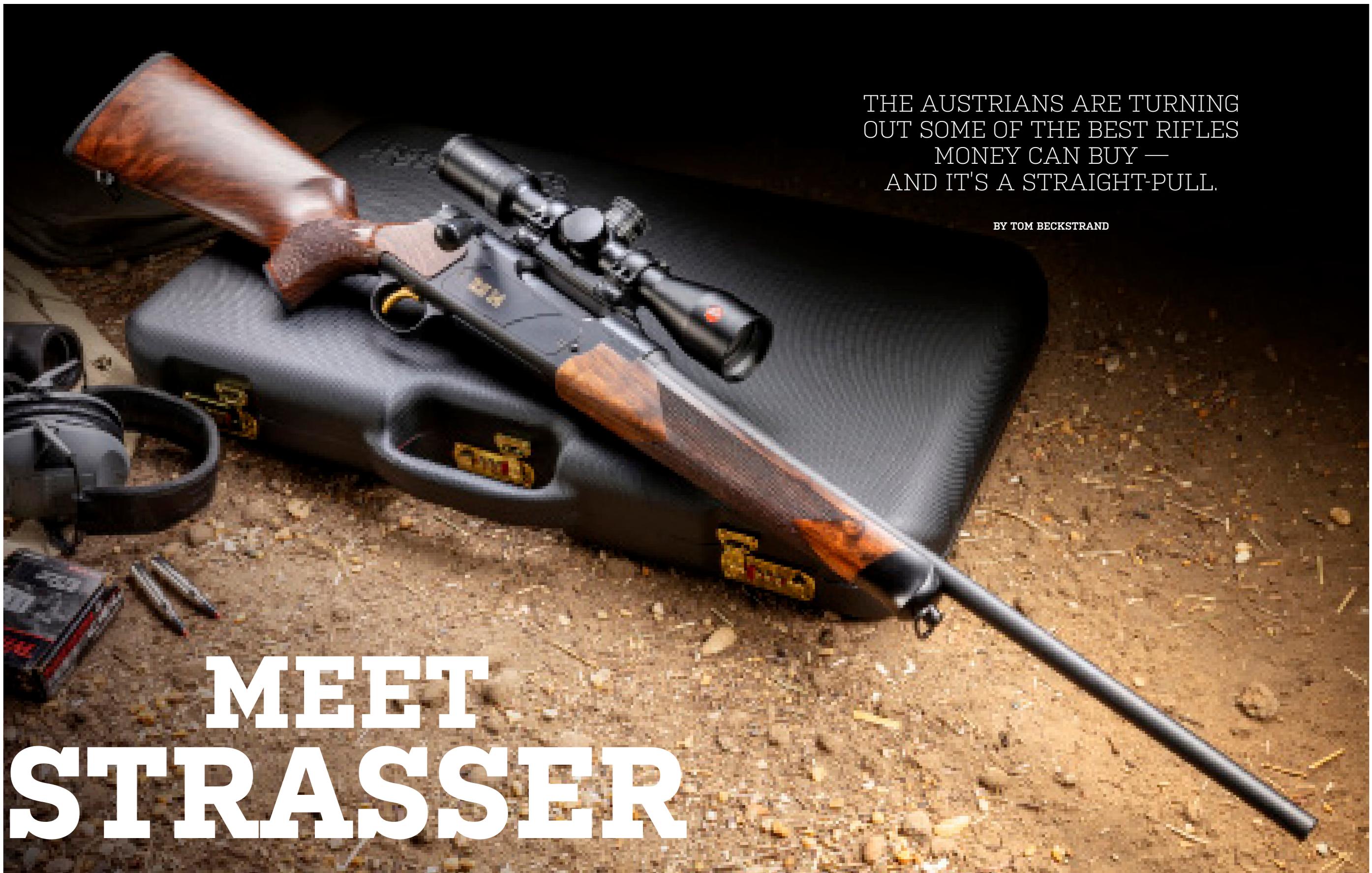


THE AUSTRIANS ARE TURNING  
OUT SOME OF THE BEST RIFLES  
MONEY CAN BUY —  
AND IT'S A STRAIGHT-PULL.

BY TOM BECKSTRAND

# MEET STRASSER





The one of the four radial bolt lugs handle is enough to keep the action safely closed when firing CIP-proof ammunition. The bolt head is complete with a titanium-nitride (TiN) finish.



Any tools that are required for changing the barrel or used during disassembly are stowed in the recesses cut within the rifle's forend.



The detachable box magazine is flush fit when inserted with the receiver. The list of cartridges it can accommodate are laser etched onto the side.

THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS about Europe that don't impress me, but this rifle from Strasser certainly does. This is the nicest straight-pull rifle I've ever touched, and the manufacturing techniques used to make it allow for precision on a level that is difficult to envision. For all of its fine craftsmanship, Strasser rifles were made for the field. They are simple to disassemble for maintenance, and some models allow for quick caliber conversion and disassembly for easy transport. If a fast-cycling, accurate, and fully featured rifle interests you, allow me to introduce Strasser.

STRASSER RS14 EVO BLACK WIDOW	
TYPE	Straight pull, bolt action
CARTRIDGE	.270 Win. (tested); standard and magnum lengths available
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	22 in. (std.), 24 in. (mag.)
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in (std.), 44 in. (mag.)
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 12 oz. to 8 lbs., 4 oz.
STOCK	Grade 6 Italian walnut, ebony
TRIGGER	3 lbs. (tested); adjustable
SIGHTS	None
MSRP	\$7,952 (std.), \$8,336 (mag.)
IMPORTER	Strasser USA, 334-593-3833, strasser-usa.com

**Rockets to Rifles** Strasser is an unknown name in the American lexicon, but the company has a record for premium manufacturing that goes back to 1947. Herbert Strasser founded Strasser Machinery shortly after World War II with a turning lathe in a garage near Salzburg, Austria. He specialized in producing parts for the wood-cutting and ski-lift industries and slowly grew the company while his son, Herbert Mathias Strasser, attended school, graduated, and went to work for Bavarian Motor Works (BMW) as part of the engine development team for BMW's racing division. Not a bad gig for a guy fresh out of school! (For the gear-heads in the audience, The younger Strasser was on the same racing team as Hans-Joachim Stuck.)

Herbert Strasser became ill, so Herbert Mathias returned

to Salzburg in 1975 to run the family business, and this is when things started to happen quickly. At this point Strasser Machinery was making machines for large manufacturers world-wide and, when Herbert Mathias was in the U.S. working for Wrigley Chewing Gum, he saw some high-end Japanese Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) machines. He promptly hopped on a flight to Japan where he ordered these new machines for his own shop. Those new machines allowed him to use about 300 tools

instead of his old machines that only allowed five or 10. He also purchased Europe's first, small, three-dimensional (3D) measuring machine. Between the new CNCs and the 3D measuring machine, Strasser began making more complex and precise parts.

In 1981, Strasser became a prime vendor for the European Space Agency (ESA), and worked extensively on the Ariane 5 rocket. Strasser did a sizeable portion of the engine components used in the rocket and launcher and worked at the ESA for a number of years. Herbert Mathias recalls an early visit from ESA where they assessed his quality control. The representative saw Strasser's new CNC machines, but was immediately drawn to the 3D measuring machine. "This is what I want to see," the representative said. "This is what we need."

The Strasser family continues to work in the industrial



The muzzle is crowned and threaded to accept a suppressor. There are two tapped holes behind the thread protector that allow attachment of aftermarket accessories.

machining and tool-making industry, even today.

The transition from making parts destined for space to sporting rifles began in 1990. Herbert Mathias loved rifles and was friendly with the local butcher, who was also the local gunsmith. Herbert Mathias gave the butcher a tour of his manufacturing facility, just being friendly, and a week later Horst Blaser, founder of Blaser rifles, showed up and asked for help. Strasser Machinery worked with Blaser to build the Sodia Super Light, a light hunting rifle with an aluminum receiver. Strasser became involved in the project because of the precision manufacturing they could offer. Through their cooperation with Blaser, Strasser would get to know Steyr Arms and also Merkel, two well-known European rifle companies that build premium products. Later, Strasser would build parts for Steyr Sport, purveyor of Olympic air rifle and air pistols.

While Herbert Mathias was creating business within the firearms industry, his son, Mathias, attended Europe's only gunsmithing and small-arms design school located in Ferlach, Austria. Once Mathias was out of school, he wanted to begin manufacturing complete rifles of his own design. It was an excellent idea considering Strasser's proven ability in precision manufacturing. In 2005, the Strasser family opened HMS Precision Technical and began designing and manufacturing rifles.

**Rifle Firsts** The firearms design education Mathias, the 3rd-generation Strasser, received in Ferlach bears some examina-



Some Strasser rifles can be purchased with with lined storage cases featuring a compartment to smartly organize each component. The cases are lockable, hardsided and worthy of travel.



Each bolt face has a blade extractor and coil-spring-powered, plunger-style ejector. The opposing position ensures reliable cycling.

#### STRASSER RS14 CONSOL III

TYPE	Straight pull, bolt action
CARTRIDGE	.243 Win. (tested); standard and magnum lengths available
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	22 in. (std.), 24 in. (mag.)
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in (std.), 44 in. (mag.)
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 12 oz. to 8 lbs., 4 oz.
STOCK	Grade 5 Italian walnut
TRIGGER	3 lbs., adjustable
SIGHTS	None
MSRP	\$6,485 (std.) to \$6,807 (mag.)
IMPORTER	Strasser USA, 334-593-3833, strasser-usa.com

tion. Mathias participated in the extended program where he had to make every part, to include every pin, of his rifle to graduate. He had to do everything from the CNC programming to fitting the rifle together. "I learned a lot about how a rifle fits together and how it functions," he said. "I also learned that coatings and finishes are important and that careful consideration is necessary to select what should be done where." The program focused on getting even the smallest details correct.

The first rifle Strasser designed was the RS05, a straight-pull rifle that shares a lot of DNA with the Solo Evo and RS14 rifles seen here. The four models featured in this article are the Solo Evo (which was used for accuracy testing), the RS14 Evo Black Widow, the RS14 Evo Consol III, and the RS14 Evo Tahr. The Solo Evo has a fixed barrel, while the other three rifles have quick-detachable barrels that allow for easy caliber conversion and convenient transport.

The heart of each of these rifles is the straight-pull action. The steel bolt locks into a steel barrel extension protruding rearward from the steel barrel (to keep pressure contained),



### STRASSER RS14 EVO TAHR

TYPE	Straight pull, bolt action
CARTRIDGE	.30-'06 Sprgfd. (tested); standard and magnum lengths available
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	22 in., threaded
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in (std.), 44 in. (mag.)
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 12 oz. to 8 lbs., 4 oz.
STOCK	Laminated wood; adj. comb
TRIGGER	3 lbs., adjustable
SIGHTS	None
MSRP	\$4,273 (std.), \$4,628 (mag.)
IMPORTER	Strasser USA, 334-593-3833, strasser-usa.com

but the receiver is made entirely of aluminum. The aluminum receiver makes these rifles much lighter than they first appear. Grab the bolt handle to cycle the action, give it a tug, and the bolt unlocks and effortlessly slides open. Pushing the bolt forward locks the bolt assembly in place. The bolt has four radial locking lugs that use the motion of the bolt handle to push a four-sided steel piece forward, forcing the lugs outward and locking them in battery. The Strasser bolt head is also removeable, allowing the rifle to transition across a range of cartridges.

Although the receiver is aluminum, all of the pressure is contained in the steel barrel/barrel extension/bolt. Strasser obsesses about safety (and they're built in Europe), so each rifle must pass CIP testing. This is where proof rounds that are 30-percent over pressure are fired for certification. After firing several rounds, the actions and barrel must function

The tools needed to accomplish a barrel change or to adjust the trigger settings are available on-board the rifle. The author added, "Holding and adjusting the trigger was like handling a piece of jewelry."

without issue. Strasser believes so firmly in safety that they designed their rifle to function safely with only one of the four locking lugs installed in the bolt head. Just one bolt lug is strong enough to contain CIP-pressure ammunition, so the rifle will certainly handle a diet of commercial-grade

ammunition. It is a light and robust action.

The barrels Strasser uses on these guns come from Lothar Walther, but they feature Strasser's barrel extension. The fit between the barrel extension and the receiver is unlike any other quick-detach barrel system I've examined. When the extensions slides into the receiver, there is no wiggle. I don't know what the clearances are between the extension and receiver, but when I asked Mathias how he made them he said, "We CNC grind them and hold them to .001mm (.00003-in.) tolerance. Headspace with extension attached is within .01mm (.0003-in.). This is why every barrel we make will safely operate on every receiver we make."

This test was the only time I've seen and felt quick-detach



**PERFORMANCE**

.308 WINCHESTER	VELOCITY (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVERAGE GROUP (IN.)
Federal GMM 168-gr. SMK	2,605	32	13	.68	.8
SIG Sauer Match 168-gr. OTM	2,517	28	12	.77	.93
Winchester Match 168-gr.	2,622	41	19	.83	.91

Notes: Accuracy is the average of five, three-shot groups fired from 100 yards. Velocity is the average of five shots measured by LabRadar placed adjacent to the muzzle.

There is little bolt movement involved to unlock and cycle the straight-pull action. Once the handle moves rearwards about 2 inches, the entire bolt assembly moves with it.

European look about them, but the quality and performance they now offer the American market transcend all boundaries.

These are expensive rifles; there is no arguing that. The least expensive Solo Evo model retails near \$4,000, and the top-end Strasser Black Widow costs \$12,000. That's serious money.

If you've got the coin, handling and shooting a Strasser is an experience unlike any other. I've handled a lot of rifles in my day, but I've never seen or worked with anything as precise or so finely made as this. **GA**

parts that actually fit together and then present zero play between parts.

The other component that I struggled to get my head around was the trigger. Triggers can be temperamental, and the lighter the pull weight the more prone they are to throwing a fit. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the Strasser trigger slides out of the receiver with the press of a button. Once removed, there is a large cut-out in one of the side-plates that allows easy access for maintenance. Another first, the open side-plate makes it possible for tool-less pull weight adjustment. There is a lever in the back of the trigger housing that can be set in one of three positions. The heaviest setting gives the trigger a 4½-pound pull weight and the lightest is 2 pounds. However, this is also a French-set trigger (with a single shoe), so pushing the trigger forward lightens pull weight significantly. The set trigger's pull weight is also adjustable by way of a small screw on the back of the trigger. The set-trigger's pull weight can be adjusted to just 1 ounce. Strasser rifles can be cocked on an empty chamber and have the butt pad smacked on the ground without firing, even when the trigger is set to this light of pull weight.

Strasser rifles have a distinctly

STRASSER RS14 EVO SOLO	
TYPE	Straight pull, bolt action
CARTRIDGE	.308 Win. (tested); standard and magnum lengths available
CAPACITY	3+1 rds.
BARREL	22 in. (std.); 24 in. (mag.)
OVERALL LENGTH	42 in. (std.); 44 in. (mag.)
WEIGHT	7 lbs., 12 oz. to 8 lbs., 4 oz.
STOCK	Walnut, 14.5 in. LOP
TRIGGER	3 lbs., adjustable
SIGHTS	None
MSRP	\$3,451 (std.); \$3,759 (mag.)
IMPORTER	Strasser USA, 334-593-3833, strasser-usa.com



The small lug protruding up from the right-rear side of the receiver is a secondary safety lug to prevent the bolt from moving rearward unintentionally.