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The baby auto mag: Dirty Harry's plinker. *Roger Renner*.

In June of 1984, we featured Dirty Harry's baddest magnum--the .44 Auto Mag--on our cover, and you readers loved it. The response was tremendous and reaffirmed what we thought would interest you.

Well, since then the interest may have waned for some of you, but not for Brian Maynard. He continued to dream about how nice it would be to have an Auto Mag. And, like other logically dreaming gun nuts, he would change a few things to suit himself . . . like for instance the caliber.

Not being a handloader, Brian decided the caliber would have to be something he could buy easily over the counter at a reasonable price. And seeing he didn't have the hands of a basketball star that would easily wrap around the Auto Mag's humungous frame, he would scale his model down just slightly--but it would still have to look and feel like the bigger Auto Mag, mind you.

Ever dream like that? Most of us gun filberts have at one time or another. And because most of us don't have the facilities, skill, knowledge and a lot o' money, we're content as just exercising our imaginations. Well, that's were Brian Maynard isn't like the rest of us. As the tool and die shop foreman at AMT (Arcadia Machine & Tool), he has the "ways and means" at his disposal.

Brian and I talked about his dream gun from time to time, but I didn't realize he was taking all this so seriously. Using AMT's Lightning .22 auto pistol as the basis for his modification, Brian turned out one of the most sensational .22 autos ever--the Baby Auto Mag. We at *Guns & Ammo* liked it so much, we wanted to share it with you. It's a shame that this little beauty isn't a production item, as I'm sure it would be a hot seller. According to Brian, production is pending, as AMT has too many other irons in the fire at the moment.

At first glance, the .22 Lightning looks like it would "convert" easily, as it already has a tubular receiver like the Auto Mag's, right? Wrong. Because of certain operations performed at the outset of receiver fabrication that alter the appearance of the Lightning, Brian had to start from scratch. This means that existing models cannot be converted and achieve the same degree of realism that this "Baby" possesses. As many of the dimensions of the original Auto Mag had to be scaled down proportionately, the gun is virtually handmade.

Well, to make a short story even shorter, he got it all together and asked if I would put it through its paces. Obviously, I agreed. The ranges of the West End Gun Club, located in Meyers Canyon, south of Lytle Creek, California, sprawl for miles through the mountain canyons and make a nice treat for city-weary eyes. Brian and I hit the road very early in the morning to beat the winds that usually follow gun scribes.

Brian said he had used Remington Golden Bullets for the bulk of his development testing and achieved groups of just over an inch from time to time. My testing with the same ammo rendered groups about 25 percent larger than Brian's. For comparison,

I had the Eley Pistol Match and Eley High Velocity on hand. Interestingly, the High Velocity stuff shot the tighter group--turning in at 1-1/4 inches. Don't get me wrong--I'm not complaining! When Brian brings the trigger pull down to a realistic 4 pounds, instead of six, I'm sure that groups will shrink accordingly. I had to rib him a bit about the trigger pull, as it was the only thing I could fault the gun with. He was quick to point out that he never said the gun was finished!

I wasn't really surprised at the accuracy, as I knew Brian took great pains in selecting a barrel and in chambering and crowning the muzzle. Speaking of which, the crown is of the style preferred by the great turn-of-the-century barrelmaker, Harry Pope, and is named for him. However, Brian went a little heavy on the crown in order to achieve a "big bore" muzzle. As you can see in the photos, it sure gets your attention! Functioning was flawless, but again, this is a hand-built gun--so you would expect that.

Like Dirty Harry's pistol, the Baby Auto Mag wears the 8-1/2-inch barrel quite well and retains the balance and pleasing proportions that made Dirty Harry's the best looking of all the Auto Mags. At 44 ounces empty, it's no lightweight, but it isn't unmanageable, either. The taper of the barrel puts the weight right in your hand.

Millett's adjustable rear sight is nestled into the rear of the full-length rib and extends beyond the rear of the receiver, lending maximum sight radius to that Auto Mag look.

Of Lightning lineage, the Baby retains the concealed hammer of the parent gun, but eases cocking with the dramatic cockingpiece of the larger Auto Mag. Take-down is exactly like the Lightning. The magazine, like the rest of the gun, is of stainless steel and holds 10 rounds of .22 Long Rifle ammo.

Brian's choice of Mustang's hand-filling grips superbly completed the cosmetics and made the pistol feel great in the hand (unlike the full-size Auto Mag, which is akin to gripping a pine 2X4).

I should point out an interesting coincidence involving the serial numbers of the Baby and the full-size Auto Mag, which was provided for comparison by collector Ed DeWart. As Brian's project was not a production item, it did not wear a production serial number. And because of an earlier attempt to produce a tamed version of the brawny .44, Brian's little beast wears the number XP02--the first two characters designating the gun as an experimental prototype. Ed's Auto Mag also bears the serial number 2, being the second piece in the scarce "C" series of Auto Mags.

That Baby Auto Mag was able to make friends everywhere we went, and all who saw it instantly loved it. Even people who have little or no interest in Auto Mags think Brian's little pistol is the greatest thing since sliced bread. They all remark, "It's a .22--how neat!"