

SHOOT LIKE A BOSS

Donald Dallas handles the world's first ambidextrous shotgun



The world-famous London gunmaker Boss & Co, established in 1812, has just announced, for the first time in 111 years, an all-new gun with an all-new innovation, based on their world-renowned over and under shotgun, first seen in 1909. This gun will astonish the gun world as not only is it the first purpose-built action side lever over and under brought out by Boss, but each gun is supplied with two side levers, interchangeable for left and right-handed shooters. Boss & Co has produced the world's first ambidextrous shotgun.

Named the '1812 Edition', the year when founder Thomas Boss completed his apprenticeship with the great Joseph Manton, this gun is a celebration of everything Boss is famed for, style, beauty, craftsmanship and innovation.

The '1812 Edition' over and under is a side lever gun, very easy to use, but what makes the gun so revolutionary is that it is a gun for both right and left-handed sportsmen and women. Contained within each gun case is an extra side lever, allowing the gun to be converted for either the right or the left-handed. Especially important is that it can be passed down through the generations no matter which hand they use, or if it is sold later on, the market will be completely open to all shooters. Since both side levers are included from new, there is no need for the gun to be converted later and for a new side lever to be created and engraved at a time when the original engraver may have since moved on.

A look back into Boss & Co's history, and indeed, gunmaking in general reveals that traditionally, for the last 100-plus years guns have only been built with a top lever that opens to the right making it difficult for left-handed shooters. All previous side levers always had the lever fitted to the right-hand side of the gun, with a very rare exception, which has meant that for well over a century there has never been a gun that is available to both right and left-handed sportsmen and women.

Boss had traditionally built side levers in the 19th century and also some in the early 20th century, but in the past 100-plus years has produced top-lever guns. However, for several seasons, Boss & Co owner Arthur Demoulas was shooting with a pair of vintage Boss side levers and was impressed not just with their ease of handling in the field, but also for their slender shape and aesthetic beauty. And so it was Arthur's vision to finally create a modern side lever Boss & Co gun. He drove the conception of the new side lever with energy and passion; he lives and breathes Boss, and is determined that it will continue to remain in the highest echelon of gunmakers in the world.

As a lefty himself, he was inspired to create a gun that could have interchangeable side levers fitted on either side of the action. Arthur began conversations with his gunmakers, kick-starting the evolution of this gun from idea to reality. Each member of the team, from barrel-maker to engraver needed to work collaboratively with Arthur and the Boss factory manager to build a type of gun that had never been seen before, all while remaining as elegant and rakish as a Boss should be. The fit of a Boss gun must be perfect, requiring millimetre precision and meticulous communications between the gunmakers, Arthur and the factory manager.

The team took, as their starting point, a Boss & Co prototype side lever gun made 20 years ago. John Varney, an actioner with Boss for 42 years, built this side lever O/U for a customer. It was a top lever O/U that he had modified to a side lever, and the Boss & Co gunmakers, in collaboration with Arthur and the factory manager took this initial idea and – inspired by the Boss shapes and innovations of the past – made it perfect over four years of development. Each and every part of the gun had to be subtly adapted to fit around the all-new action and maintain the world-renowned Boss shape; it was a completely collaborative process.

Following the untimely death of John Varney four years ago, Arthur and the Boss & Co team made the decision to dedicate this gun to his memory, delivering a gun that he would have been immensely proud of. Jason Craddock, an actioner that worked next to John for 20 years became an integral part of the project.

With Arthur's drive and vision for the new gun, the purpose-built actions were meticulously conceived, developed and crafted over years into their final form. After nearly 2,000 man hours of building per gun, side lever O/U's nos. 11,001 and 11,002 were launched in late 2020. The guns have the wow factor - there is no other alternative description. They are so stylish, so elegant and so Boss. Jason, the Boss actioner, summed up the new development "Boss, guided by tradition, not bound by it". Here is a Boss gun that is unmistakably Boss, yet is an exciting step forward that will keep Boss well in the forefront in the 21st century. ➡

Image shows the same gun, first with the lever on the left of the action and then on the right of the action





Years of thought and design went into creating the side lever. Arthur studied many Boss side levers and spent many hours in getting the design proportions and shapes just right. The side lever is very much part of the Boss tradition and the idea was to continue that tradition while also ensuring it could work in a way that no side lever gun has ever worked before, to create a truly ambidextrous best gun.

The new side lever is a thing of beauty. The hand chequered thumb push at the top is angled slightly forwards so that when depressed it is parallel with the action to stop the thumb slipping off. The lever curves gracefully around the action and such is the standard of Boss craftsmanship, if the gun is held up to the daylight, no light is visible between the lever and the action. The gun itself is completely bespoke to a customer's wishes, available in the many combinations of Boss' world-renowned shapes and styles, including beading around the lockplate.

A great deal of care and attention is also paid to the vacant top strap now devoid of the top lever. The top strap is wide at the head of the action then is gently reduced in size to where it meets the safety. Not a single part of the top strap is flat, it is all gently curved and held from any angle, the vision of this top strap sans lever is a delight to behold. A traditional beetle-back safety is fitted and this perfectly complements the sweep of the top strap with its rounded chequered beetle back design. This beetle-back safety is again very traditional to Boss.

The new gun is engraved in the world-renowned Boss style of rose and scroll engraving as developed by the Sumner family in the late 19th century. The Sumners engraved all the Boss guns until 1939 with rose and scroll engraving in small bouquets over the gun. This engraving is instantly recognisable as "Boss" and the Boss in-house engraver, Christophe, has engraved the new gun in this same style. In many respects the new gun is so traditionally Boss, the side lever, the Sumner engraving and the O/U action, but such a combination of all features had never been done before and as for the interchangeable side lever.

The gun is a beautiful, slim and rakish gun with an extremely handsome, gently curving and engraved top strap, graceful side lever and traditional rose and scroll engraving. It is so Boss, yet so functional and easy to use and very modern.

Arthur Demoulas said, the "1812 Edition" is inspired by the past, very practical, easy to use in the field and available to all shooters – regardless of which side they shoot on – in a way that no gun has ever been before. Another Boss gun, marked out by its elegant shape and timeless design and built by hand to the very highest standards by some of the most gifted craftsmen in the world".

Arthur's enormously proud of his entire team at Boss & Co, and of his ownership of Boss & Co, and in this new gun the company has perfectly captured the spirit of Thomas Boss and his innovative successors like John Robertson. They would have been proud of this new gun; proud to see that more than 200 years after it was founded, Boss & Co is still leading the way.

In another first for British gunmaking, Boss & Co's innovative new '1812 Edition' will be delivered in a modern carbon fibre presentation case. Clothed within

a subtle fabric outer layer finished with a hand-stitched leather border, the carbon fibre case is both lightweight and extremely strong.

Just as with the gun that it holds, the case is beautiful in both form and function. The carbon fibre weave – traditionally found in top-end performance applications – is perfect in its symmetry and its design. Upon opening the case, owners are presented with a beautiful wooden oak border and traditional Boss & Co Baze Red interior, fitted with traditional tools and accessories.

The new case follows the overarching premise at the heart of the '1812 Edition'; that it is guided by tradition, not bound by it. It has all the inherent beauty and craftsmanship of one of the intricate wooden cases designed and built by Boss & Co's casemakers since 1812, but making use of the very latest materials and techniques. *FSJ*

