

## Boss Asserts Its Legacy as London's Best Gunmaker With a Stunning New, Ambidextrous Sidelever Over/Under

Written by Irwin Greenstein

Rate this item  (3 votes)

 Share  Tweet



Over our dinner at a private quail plantation in South Georgia, I talked with Arthur S. DeMoulas, the American owner of London best-gun maker Boss & Co., about the company's gorgeous new 12-bore ambidextrous sidelever.

The new 12-bore sidelever over/under, called the "1812 Edition," celebrates the company's founding that year by Thomas Boss. It's also a tip of the hat to Boss's original sidelever side-by-sides popular with the Victorian gentry.

In the annals of Boss, the 1812 Edition is significant as its first new purpose-built action in 111 years since John Robertson, the company's second owner, introduced the groundbreaking over/under ejector in 1909.

"It's quite a milestone in our history," Mr. DeMoulas said of the 1812 Edition.



### Shotgun Life Newsletters

Join an elite group of readers who receive their FREE e-letter every week from Shotgun Life. These readers gain a competitive advantage from the valuable advice delivered directly to their inbox. You'll discover ways to improve your shooting, learn about the best new products and how to easily maintain your shotgun so it's always reliable. If you strive to be a better shooter, then our FREE e-letters are for you.

Name

E-mail

**SUBSCRIBE**

*Shooting Tips, Gear & Shotguns*



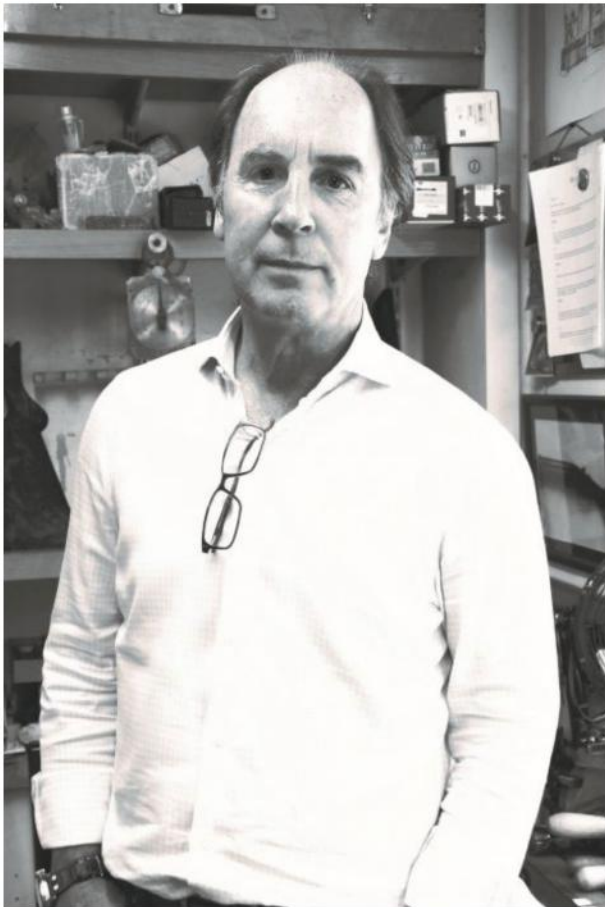
The new Boss 1812 Edition over/under took nearly four years and 2,000 hours of development.

Because it can be fitted for right-handed shooters and left-handed shooters, he ranks the new shotgun's innovation alongside other technical breakthroughs from Boss such as the first British over/under, the reliable single trigger introduced in 1893, the three-pull trigger for the amazing triple-barrel side by side, the gun cocking when the barrels fell open, the ejector mechanism renowned for its simplicity and thrust, and of course the industry's de facto locking mechanism of trunnions and lumps underlying a sleek profile known as the Boss action. And as Mr. DeMoulas will point out, the Boss Hammerless Ejector of 1897, which has been in continuous production, remains virtually unaltered today.

Although he prefers to highlight the company's legacy and craftsmanship over his forward-looking vision as owner, the 1812 Edition represents the significant development made public under Mr. DeMoulas since he bought Boss in 2015. Behind the scenes, he has been investing in capital improvements and an apprentice program that ensures an uninterrupted workforce trained in the art of making shotguns and rifles by hand.

"Apprentices are the lifeblood of this business," he told me.

The apprentices are paired up with veteran craftsmen in a course of training that could take some five years for the apprentice to become proficient at the bench. "We can still do it the old-fashioned way because we're a relatively small group and privately owned since our inception in 1812."



Arthur S. DeMoulas

In effect, he sees himself as a trustee of the Boss legacy to safeguard the company's perpetuity, and the 1812 Edition is a first-rate example.

Mr. DeMoulas emphasized that, as a bespoke gunmaker, "Boss builds best guns only, handmade only. We're doing what we've always done. We're not making

second-grade guns. Every day we come to work with a singular focus of making best guns only. The company's slogan has always been Builders of Best Guns Only."

Through his singular mission, Mr. DeMoulas has served as his own living laboratory when it comes to the evolution of Boss.

The idea for the 1812 Edition began at a driven shoot in England where he used a pair of vintage Boss side-by-side sidelevers.

"They were brilliant" he said. "They were functional, practical, modern and easy to use in the field, and the loader loved loading with the sidelever."

Conveniently, Boss had created a prototype over/under sidelever shotgun some 20 years ago that had been somewhat forgotten. Mr. DeMoulas raised the possibility of making it a great production gun in discussions with one of the company's most experienced gunmakers, John Varney, along with others in the business.

But Mr. Varney passed away shortly after the shotgun's conception following 42 years with Boss. The 1812 Edition is dedicated in his memory as a tribute to his enthusiasm and technical expertise that helped fuel its development. Jason Craddock, who worked on the bench next to Mr. Varney for 20-plus years, stepped in to shepherd the 1812 Edition to market after its nearly four years and 2,000 hours of development.

Both behind the scenes and in the field, the 1812 Edition represents the continuity of ingenuity and craftsmanship that Mr. DeMoulas believes has been the bedrock of the company, which underlies its renown standing among British gunmakers.

"We're different from many other British gunmakers because we focus exclusively on building best guns only," he said.

Noting that Boss has several orders on the books for the 1812 Edition. "When the gun is seen and handled, with the option of the lever on the left or right side, the gun sells itself."

The 1812 Edition mirrors the elegant shape of Boss's iconic over/under top lever, which Mr. DeMoulas says is one of the most copied in the world, and introduces a new purpose-built action that incorporates a side lever rather than a top lever.



Boss owner Arthur S. DeMoulas hails the company's new 1812 Edition sidelever over/under as the world's first ambidextrous

shotgun.

As the world's first ambidextrous shotgun, identical right and left-handed levers are included in the presentation case.

"The lever sits identically on either side in relation to the engraving," explained Mr. DeMoulas. "They are a mirror image of each other."

Delivering the 1812 Edition with both levers eliminates the challenge of, for example, a left-handed shooter inheriting the shotgun from a right-handed relative and having to request a new hand-made, hand-engraved lever. As a family heirloom, having the two levers preserves the shotgun's original integrity if the engraver had subsequently retired or passed on. And if one were to sell the gun in the future, the new owner would have the option of the left-handed and right-handed lever.

"Our sidelever is a true generational gun," noted Mr. DeMoulas, who is left-handed while his children are right-handed.

Because he's a lefty, opening and shooting a shotgun is different for him than most. Top lever shotguns open one way to accommodate right-handed shooters. Likewise, nearly every sidelever shotgun has the lever mounted on the right side. That's why the 1812 Edition's ambidexterity is no mere gimmick.

He'll also tell you that a sidelever presents beautiful aesthetics, and in turn delivers an unblemished shooting experience.

The sidelever's hand-wrought, hand-engraved chequered thumb push was designed for performance and aesthetics. It's angled slightly forwards so when depressed the owner can exert progressively more downward pressure without their thumb slipping off.

"We looked at every sidelever we could find before setting on this shape and design," Mr. DeMoulas said.

The lever curves gracefully around the action so if the gun is held up to the daylight, none is visible between the lever and the action.



Without a top lever the top strap flows from the stock to the barrels without a single flat spot in it – emphasizing the

signature Boss form.

A great deal of thought and design also went into the vacant top strap now devoid of top lever. Not a single part of it is flat, creating a traditional Boss & Co. flowing shape, as it tapers into a hand-engraved beetle-back safety – again a traditional design from London's oldest gunmaker. The top strap, and the entirety of the body, has been engraved by Boss & Co.'s engraver, Christophe, with the firm's celebrated rose-and-scroll pattern.

"Without the top lever we gave the sidelever a sensuous curve," Mr. DeMoulas pointed out. "There's not a flat spot anywhere on the top strap. It flows right into the comb of the stock."

In discussing the 1812 Edition, Mr. DeMoulas quoted Mr. Craddock who had said that "Boss, guided by tradition, not bound by it."



A new classic from Boss & Co.

Continuity is important to Mr. DeMoulas. In 2017, we had also spent time together hunting in South Georgia at a private quail plantation when I [reported in Shotgun Life](#) "Boss has a two-hundred-years-plus history of making best guns only, that allows us to go back in our archives and build any of those guns again," he explained as we continued underway on the wagon. "We have the ability, for example, regarding a side-lever side-by-side that the company made in the late 1800s through 1941, to make them now. We can start with the 12 gauge and scale everything down proportionally to the .410. We are able to build an over/under double rifle that hasn't been built since 1913. It's not as though we're coming out with a new model. Our guns are as beautiful now as they were in the 1800s and early 1900s. If you come to our company and see how our guns are made, you'll think you were back 100 years in time. The customer can specify a long bead, short bead, high bead, single or double bead, round body, and other actions shape they like and all of that bespoke work is done by hand in our shop."

In retrospect, I think Mr. DeMoulas had been alluding to, among other developments at Boss, the 1812 Edition.

*Irwin Greenstein is the publisher of Shotgun Life. You can reach him at [contact@shotgunlife.com](mailto:contact@shotgunlife.com)*

at [contact@shotgunlife.com](mailto:contact@shotgunlife.com).

Useful resources:

[The Boss & Co. web site](#)

1 Comment

Sort by [Top](#) ↕



Add a comment...



**Bill Maher**

Great article and very informative about beauty art and fabulous function. They are the boss!!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · 3w

Facebook Comments plugin

Share

Published in [Shotguns](#)

Tagged under [##bossguns](#) [#bossidelever](#) [#boss shotguns](#) [#boss & company](#) [##englishbestguns](#) [##bossambidextroussideleveroverunder](#)



**Irwin Greenstein**

*Irwin Greenstein is Publisher of Shotgun Life. Please send your comments to [letters@shotgunlife.com](mailto:letters@shotgunlife.com).*

<https://www.shotgunlife.com>

## Latest from Irwin Greenstein

- [EUKANUBA PRO TRAINER AL ARTHUR OF SANDHILL RETRIEVERS WINS THE 80TH U.S. NATIONAL OPEN RETRIEVER CHAMPIONSHIP](#)
- [LONGTHORNE 'BOXLOCK' TRIGGER PLATE RANGE](#)
- [Beretta Holding Acquires Holland & Holland](#)
- [Shotgun Life Surpasses 10 Million Page Views in 2020](#)
- [Mossberg International™ Introduces Reserve Series O/U Shotguns](#)

## Related items

- [The Untold Story Behind the Most Extraordinary Flight of British Best Guns Ever Made](#)
- [Hunting Wild Quail with Arthur S. DeMoulas, the New American Owner of English Best Gun Maker Boss & Co.](#)

More in this category: [« CZ Goes Old School With The 16-Gauge Redhead Premier Over/Under](#) [The History of Shotgun Chokes »](#)

[back to top](#)

*The Best in Wing & Clays Shooting*  
**Shotgun Life Magazine**

### ABOUT SHOTGUN LIFE

Shotgun Life is the first online magazine devoted to the great people who participate in the shotgun sports.

Our goal is to provide you with the best coverage in wing and clays shooting. That includes places to shoot, ways to improve your shooting and the latest new products. Everything you need to know about the shotgun sports is a mouse-click away.

CONNECT WITH US





[About Us](#)  
[Advertise](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)  
[Whitelist us](#)  
[E-letters](#)  
[Contact](#)

Irwin Greenstein  
Publisher  
Shotgun Life

PO Box 6423  
Thomasville, GA 31758  
Phone: 229-236-1632

[igreenstein@shotgunlife.com](mailto:igreenstein@shotgunlife.com)

Powered by ANNATECH