

ROSSI RIO GRANDE REVIEW

With the Rio Grande, Rossi has tapped into the lever-action's versatility and its lore.

By Richard Mann (RSS)

October 12, 2011

There was a time when the word "rifle" almost exclusively meant a lever-action. The lever-action rifle is an iconic part of America and as much a symbol of the Old West as a worn-out pair of cowboy boots or a set of spurs. Its fame is not just celebrated in the dust of the West, though, as eastern deer hunters have long relied on the lever-action. For the lever-action enthusiast, Rossi offers multiple models, including the unconventional.

Founded in 1889 by Amadeo Rossi, his namesake company is a leading manufacturer of single-shot rifles, muzzleloaders and shotguns; however, Rossi offers a diverse selection of lever-action rifles built around the famed Winchester Model 92 action, too. It has also unveiled a lever-action rifle similar to the Marlin Model 336. Rossi's lever guns are unusual, but one covered here is not a rifle at all. The **Rio Grande** is indeed a lever-action long gun but is chambered to fire .410-bore shells. While specialized in nature, this firearm represents Rossi's commitment to innovation and its dedication to providing shooters with unique and dependable firearms that are fun to shoot.

Rossi Model RG410B

Not only does the Rossi Rio Grande, Model RG410B, reflect the looks of Marlin's Model 336, its investment-cast action features Marlin's customary side-ejection and bolt-banded extractor. But, the RG410B's walnut stained, straight-grained hardwood stock is a bit slimmer in both the butt and the fore-end. There is a barrel band at the front of the fore-end and another one 1/2-inch rearward of the muzzle.

The RG410B has the modern Marlin-style, cross-bolt receiver safety that blocks the hammer when engaged. If the trigger is pulled the hammer will fall; however, its forward travel is stopped just short of the firing pin. Purist may scoff at this arrangement, but it's an inherently safe design.

Each shotgun is shipped with a factory-installed, Weaver-style scope base that matches the mounting holes found on Marlin Model 336s. The shotgun features a semi-buckhorn rear sight that is adjustable for elevation and windage, and the front sight is a thin, yet tall, blade topped with a brass bead measuring 0.090 inches in diameter. The front sling swivel stud is fitted to the rear barrel band, while the other is at the toe of the buttstock. Capping the buttstock is a 1-inch ventilated rubber recoil pad atop a thin white line spacer.

I was initially skeptical of how well a rifle/shotgun like this might function with .410 shotshells. But my worries were quickly dispelled after testing four different .410-bore loads—75 shots in all—without a single failure to function, fire or cycle. It also proved accurate with slugs. Using a **Vortex Strike Fire Red Dot Sight System** affixed atop the Weaver-style rail to aid sighting, Winchester slugs would print five-shot groups between 3 and 5 inches at 50 yards.

The choke on the Rossi RG410B is fixed "modified" but is not denoted on the barrel. Winchester's three-pellet 000 Buck load spread between 10 and 12 inches at 20 yards. Typically one can expect buck shot to spread about 1 inch per yard, so this was fairly tight. Winchester's No. 6 shot Game & Field load patterned within 20 inches at 20 yards, with an average of 12 pellets inside the 6-inch center circle. Pattern density was reasonably consistent.

The Rossi Rio Grande .410 lever gun was a pleasure to shoot. Recoil was mild with all loads tested and functioning was flawless. Even though my 11-year-old son likes ARs and precision bolt-action rifles, he has a passion for lever-actions. He could load and handle the Rossi with ease, and even though it was just a tad heavy for him when shooting off-hand, he managed a string of good hits at 40 yards with slugs.

This would make a great option for a kid that might also hunt with a center-fire, lever-action rifle. Operation is identical. Actually, from a practical standpoint, with deer hunting ranges inside 60 yards, this gun could fill a multitude of tasks from big-game hunting to home defense.

Model: Rio Grande

Action: repeating lever-action shotgun

Caliber: .410 bore

Magazine Capacity: tubular, five

Receiver: investment cast 4140 blued carbon steel; or stainless steel

Stock: oil-finished deluxe hardwood

Barrel: 20"; modified choke

Sights: buckhorn rear; post front

Trigger Pull Weight: 4 lbs., 4 ozs.

Overall Length: 38³/₄"