

Kahr's signature S9 is built to perform, not break your budget

FULL THROTTLE

BY MIKE DETTY PHOTOS BY ALEX LANDEEN



"Summers are always slow in this industry," said Frank Harris, the vice president of sales and marketing for Kahr Arms. "But this summer, it's as if all of our distributors have closed their checkbooks. Competition has never been tougher, and as a result, the buyer's dollar is buying more gun than ever before. Walther and S&W have made it tough by offering rebates that amount to almost an almost 20-percent price reduction. Our new S9 pistol and the 'S' Series of guns are designed to offer more value for the money."

BRAND-NEW KAHR

I recently got my hands on the new Kahr S9 pistol for testing. I first saw it at the 2017 NRA Annual Meetings & Exhibits in Atlanta, and the guns started

shipping in mid-July. The S9 is very similar to Kahr's CW9, with a couple of important differences. Most notably, there are forward cocking serrations on the S9's slide, and it is outfitted with three-dot sights, with the rear sight being made of steel. There's also an accessory rail on the dust cover of the frame for a light or laser. The addition of the rail required moving the gun's serial number plate from the bottom of the dust cover to the left-side grip panel. Finally, the bottom of the grip has been re-contoured so as not to leave a gap between it and the magazine basepad.

Introduced in 2005, Kahr's CW line has been very popular. Initially, the line was designed to compete head to head with firearms from Ruger and Taurus. But Kahr's first polymer-framed gun, the P9, was just too expensive to compete with comparable





guns from such competitors. So, Kahr used a conventionally rifled barrel on the CW9 instead of the Lothar Walther polygonal-rifled barrel used on the P9. Less complicated slide contours were also used on the CW9 along with pinned-on polymer sights. Kahr also used a metal-injection-molded (MIM) slide stop on the CW9 rather than the machined stop used on the P9. The CW9 pistols ship with just one magazine compared to the two that come with the P9. With these changes, Kahr was able to offer the CW9 for 20-percent less than the P9, which put a Kahr product within reach of most concealed-carry users.

"But after 12 years, it was time for us to freshen up the line," said Harris.

"We're offering the S9 with a 3.6-inch barrel and the ST9 with a 4-inch barrel. We're starting with the 9mm but hope to add .45 ACP pistols to the lineup soon. Each gun in the 'S' Series will ship with two magazines and have a lifetime warranty."

Of course, Kahr is a company that listens to consumers and strives to give them exactly what they want. "One of the criticisms we used to hear was that our

LEFT: While other affordable Kahr pistols come with white bar-dot sights, the S9's are set up in the more common three-dot configuration.

BELOW: The durable polymer grip frame is textured for a non-slip hold, and Kahr includes two steel, seven-round magazines with each gun.

manual suggested breaking the gun in with at least 200 rounds before you start carrying it for protection," said Harris. This seemingly prudent suggestion scared some potential customers who saw the cost of ammunition as prohibitive. Kahr's solution to this criticism was to build hydraulic fixtures to hold the guns and cycle them hundreds of times, basically mimicking the slide movement of the gun as it is fired. This breaks micro burs loose and polishes the metal-on-metal surface contact points, in effect breaking the gun in.

Additionally, the chamber of the barrel is polished and honed. This means your new Kahr should be ready to go straight from the box. Of course,

SPEC BOX

KAHR S9

CALIBER:	9mm
BARREL:	3.6 inches
OA LENGTH:	5.9 inches
WEIGHT:	17.7 ounces (empty)
GRIP:	Polymer
SIGHTS:	White three-dot
ACTION:	Striker-fired
FINISH:	Stainless, matte black
CAPACITY:	7+1
MSRP:	\$477



any prudent and responsible gun owner will fire the gun with their intended carry ammo to verify the gun's zero and make absolutely certain it feeds without any problems. Ultimately, the end-user is responsible for ensuring the gun works before it is carried.

S9 HIGHLIGHTS

A new feature of the S9 is its magazine release. Southpaws can order a left-hand magazine release from Kahr's website and easily install it. So, that's what's new with the S9 pistol. Fortunately, nothing was changed with Kahr's basic Safe-Cam action, which uses a two-lobed cam for operation. As the trigger is pulled, one cam draws the pre-loaded striker back a short distance while the other lobe depresses

ABOVE RIGHT: Kahr's S9 is similar to the CW9, but it has forward slide serrations as well as a dust-cover Picatinny rail for mounting accessories like lights and lasers.



the mechanical firing pin block. It's an ingenious system that prevents the gun from firing unless the trigger is purposefully pressed.

BELOW RIGHT: The S9's 3.6-inch barrel uses conventional rifling with a 1-in-10-inch twist rate.



Another Kahr innovation is the barrel's offset feed ramp. While most manufacturers simply place their trigger bar below the feed ramp, Kahr's owner and chief engineer Justin Moon offset the feed ramp so the trigger bar could be placed alongside it. Why is that so important? Because it dramatically lowers the bore axis, which helps reduce muzzle flip and provides shooters with faster follow-up shots.

Kahr uses conventionally rifled barrels on both the CW9 and S9. As mentioned, Kahr's first guns used Lothar Walther polygonal-rifled barrels, and the company's premium line of guns continues to use these excellent barrels. It is claimed that polygonal barrels cause less bullet

deformation and are therefore more accurate. Their bores also provide a better gas seal for improved velocity. Over the years, I have done extensive testing with both styles on Kahr guns and found that the polygonal barrels are slightly more accurate and the velocities are slightly—and I mean slightly, on the order

of 1 percent—faster. The advantages of the polygonal barrel over a conventionally rifled barrel are not something I would pay a premium for. It's a non-issue for me.

Kahr actually molds two stainless steel subchassis into its polymer frames. These parts provide the rails for the slide to ride on so there is no metal-to-plastic contact. Rails on the inside of the frame's dust cover engage bilateral recesses at the front of the slide.

One consistent factor that makes every Kahr pistol such a nice shooter is the trigger. Being a striker-fired gun, the term "double action only" is probably not the most accurate way to describe the S9 and other Kahr triggers. The rela-

For a lightweight, subcompact semi-auto, the S9 HANDLES WONDERFULLY."



“The gun’s LOW BORE AXIS made it easy to get the sights BACK ON TARGET quickly.”

tively long trigger pull of the S9 requires approximately 5 pounds of pressure to fire. My test sample’s trigger is about 0.38 inches wide, and has a smooth and polished trigger face. Because the gun has no manual safety, the S9’s long pull is an additional safeguard to prevent an inadvertent discharge.

TEST DRIVE

To measure the S9’s accuracy, I set up targets at 15 yards and fired five-shot groups with five different loads. I used my

ABOVE: The S9 created its best five-shot groups with Black Hills and DoubleTap JHPs.

RIGHT: The slide stop is large and easy to reach, and southpaws can order right-side magazine releases.

BELOW: While the test gun’s trigger pull was long, it was very smooth and required 5 pounds of pressure.



DOA Tactical shooting bench for support and fired from a seated position while using a Millett BenchMaster to steady the S9. As you can see, the long trigger pull did not adversely affect my accuracy.

Black Hills’ 115-grain JHPs and DoubleTap’s 77-grain JHPs tied for accuracy, with both loads producing tight 0.7-inch groups. The pistol’s flat rail



ABOVE: You’ll notice the gun’s serial number is now inset into the left-side grip panel with a unique ID tag.

BELOW: At the range, the S9 was easy to handle, making it a great choice for new CCW permit holders.

made for an extremely stable shooting platform while using the BenchMaster rest. I was able to keep the sights aligned all through the long trigger press.

For field shooting, I set up an MGM BC-C Zone steel target at 15 yards. This target is basically a steel version of a USPSA paper target with the D-zone removed. Using a PACT electronic timer, I recorded just how quickly I could score a pair of hits on the steel target. After firing about 50 rounds, my splits, or time between shots, averaged about 0.3 seconds. Considering the relatively long trigger pull and the gun’s light weight, I thought that was pretty respectable. The gun’s low bore axis made it easy to get the sights back on target quickly. For a lightweight, subcompact semi-auto, the S9 handles wonderfully.

I fired a number of different ammunition types through my S9. They all varied in weight, overall length and bullet-nose profile, yet they all fed, extracted and ejected without issue. In fact, there were no stoppages of any sort during the 300-round evaluation.

Field-stripping the S9 is quick and easy and requires no tools. After dropping the magazine and clearing the chamber, align the witness marks on the left side of the slide and frame and push out the slide stop. With the gun pointing in a safe direction, pull the trigger and ease the slide and barrel off the frame. At this point you can remove the recoil spring and guide and drop the barrel out of the slide. That’s all there is to it, and reassembly is in the reverse order.

I tested the S9 before Kahr made its official introduction, therefore I didn’t have any holsters to work with. But I imagine a Kydex holster carried at the appendix position inside the waistband would be a comfortable and practical way to carry this lightweight compact. Kahr’s new “S” Series of pistols is all about adding value to the company’s economy line of guns, and that makes every consumer a winner. For more information, visit kahr.com.

PERFORMANCE

KAHR S9

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 115 JHP	1,198	0.70
DoubleTap 77 JHP	1,381	0.70
Federal 150 Micro HST	891	1.12
Hornady 135 Critical Duty FlexLock	1,094	0.79
Hornady 147 XTP	954	0.88

BULLET WEIGHT MEASURED IN GRAINS, VELOCITY IN FPS BY CHRONOGRAPH AND ACCURACY IN INCHES FOR BEST FIVE-SHOT GROUPS AT 15 YARDS.

