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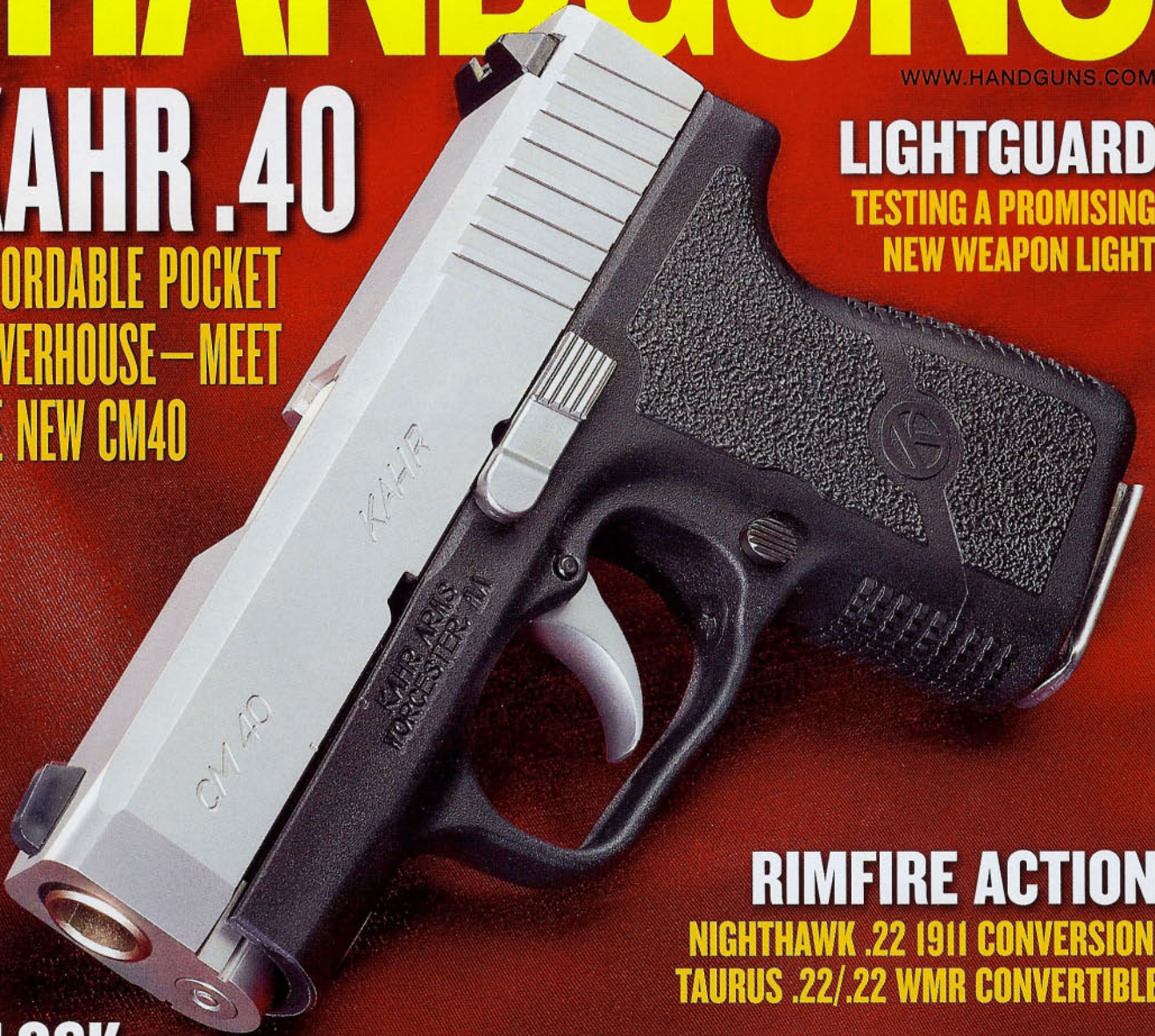
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APRIL/MAY 2012
USA/CANADA \$4.99





PHOTO BY MICHAEL ANSCHUETZ

POCKET THUNDER

BY JAMES TARR

THE AFFORDABLE KAHR CM40 PUTS SERIOUS POWER IN A VERY CONCEALABLE PACKAGE.



The CM series from Kahr is the latest in a long line of improved and evolving designs from this company. The newest member of the clan, the CM40, is at first glance no bigger than the CM9, which made its debut last year. But when compared side by side, the CM40 shows more beef: It is both thicker (.94 inch versus .90 inch) and a hair longer (5.47 inches versus 5.42 inches) than the CM9.

That said, for its .40 S&W chambering it is a tiny gun. It has a three-inch barrel and weighs just 15.8 ounces, not quite two ounces more than the CM9. Those extra two ounces are all in the slide, which is machined out of a solid hunk of 416 stainless steel.

The pistol is just four inches tall, the same height as the CM9. How do you make a .40 S&W the same height as a 9mm? You sacrifice capacity; the CM40 holds only five rounds in the magazine compared to the CM9's six. The top of the slide sits slightly higher off my hand than the CM9 due to the increased bore diameter.

It is a DAO with no double-strike capability. I've found Kahr trigger pulls to be consistently the best in the pocket gun market, and the CM40 didn't disappoint. Trigger pull was a consistent 6.25 lbs and relatively short for a DAO.

The only complaint I had with the trigger was the reset. To fire another shot, the trigger had to be released almost back to the starting point. If you're used to riding the trigger, this might take some getting used to, and lightning-fast double-taps with this kind of trigger (all other factors aside) aren't really possible.

The stainless steel slide has a matte finish and is topped with excellent sights for a pistol this size: a white dot front with a white bar in the rear.

The Kahr's magazines are stainless steel and feature Wolff springs. They are made in the USA, plasma-welded together and have a black polymer follower. The magazine catch in the frame is metal, so it won't get damaged by the metal magazine.

POCKET THUNDER

← Externally, the CM40 is identical to the company's PM40, but it is more than \$200 cheaper with a suggested retail of just \$517, which is even less expensive than the initial price of the CM9 (\$565).

The difference between Kahr's two .40 offerings? The CM line takes the value-priced features from Kahr's CW series and incorporates them into a smaller package. The PM40 has polygonal rifling in the barrel, whereas the CM40 has traditional land-and-groove rifling. The CM's slide has fewer cosmetic machining operations done to it and does not feature rollmarked markings but instead simple engraving on the slide. The CM's slide stop is a metal-injection-molded part as opposed to machined steel and is the only thing that mars the smooth lines of the pistol.

The CM has a polymer front sight and a drift-adjustable steel rear sight, as opposed to the PM's all-steel sights. While most end users will hardly notice the differences between the CM40 and the PM40, I have concerns about the longevity of a polymer front sight installed on a gun designed to live in a pocket or purse, where it will bang against

other items on a regular basis.

The slide, which features functional, flat-bottomed slide serrations, locks back on an empty magazine. The magazine well is slightly beveled to facilitate reloading.

Another way Kahr reduced the cost of the CM series is by shipping the guns with only one magazine (the PMs come with two). And if there was one thing I would change about the CM, it is that: The question isn't if a magazine is going to fail but rather when. I've seen the springs die on new and old magazines alike, and while there is every chance you'll never have a problem, a spare magazine for a semiauto carried for self-defense is a must.

That said, for a gun designed to be carried a lot and shot a little, the other changes made for economy's sake don't affect the performance of the gun at all.

As expected, the CM40 has a very strong recoil spring that fits around a full-length recoil spring guide rod. The Kahr was so tight out of the box that when the slide was locked back and the magazine removed, pulling back on the slide wasn't enough to let the slide stop drop down out of the way. Most Kahrs are this tight when new and just need to be shot a little to loosen up.

I like the feel of Kahrs in my hand—even the short-framed models—a lot more than I do the chunky baby Glocks and a lot of other pocket autos.

▣ The CM40 features a drift-adjustable rear white-bar steel sight, but the front sight is polymer. The slide's grasping grooves are flat-sided and functional.

The first time I ever picked up a CM9 I couldn't wait to shoot it. It fit my hand well, was bank-vault solid, had a smooth trigger pull and had enough weight to it that I wasn't worried it would snap my fingers off when I started shooting.

The CM40, on the other hand, had me wondering. The .40 S&W is a noticeably more powerful cartridge than the 9mm Luger, and putting it in a pistol only 1.8 ounces heavier than the CM9, with a higher bore, promised to be interesting.

The CM40 is designed for self-defense and has only a three-inch barrel, so I tested it for accuracy at 15 yards. This is probably pushing the distance at which it would be used, even though the sights are good enough to shoot it much farther than that.

As usual, I shot it off sandbags as opposed to clamping it in a rest, as a rest tests only the inherent mechanical accuracy of the design. Using sandbags means the sights—and the sight radius—as well as the trigger now become factors.

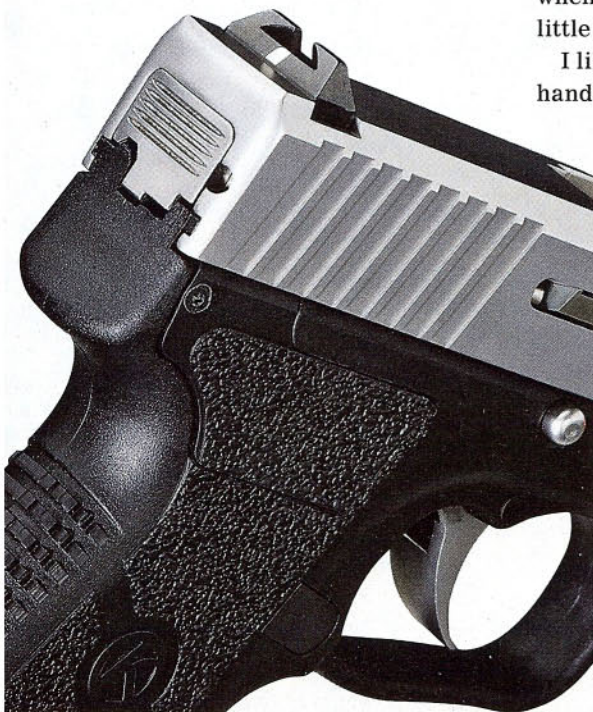
The trigger is wide and smooth, and with a relatively light trigger pull it wasn't hard to shoot up to the little pistol's full potential. Let's be clear, though—this shouldn't be anybody's first gun. A small, light .40 isn't the gun you practice with to get good; this is the gun you carry after you've practiced and learned the basics. A small, light handgun chambered in .40 S&W will save your life and is easier to hit with than a J-frame, but it just isn't much fun to shoot.

If you've never shot off sandbags, pistols tend to show more muzzle

ACCURACY RESULTS | KAHR ARMS CM40

.40 S&W	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
Magtech JHP	130	1,014	18	2.12
CCI Blazer TMJ	165	895	19	1.75
Hornady TAP FPD	155	1,022	14	1.68
Black Hills FMJ	180	859	15	1.93

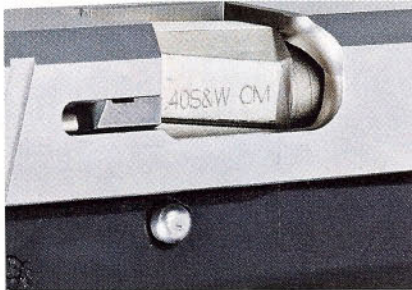
Notes: Accuracy results are the averages of four five-shot groups at 15 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured with a Shooting Chrony F-1 Alpha chronograph 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FMJ, full metal jacket; JHP, jacketed hollowpoint; TMJ, total metal jacket



rise than when shooting offhand. The little Kahr was snappy off the sandbags, and with some ammo I got a nice fireball. Shooting offhand the Kahr barked and shoved at me and hit a little low and left but was completely reliable with every type of ammo I tried. Occasionally the slide wouldn't lock back on an empty magazine, but I think this was because my thumb was hitting the slide stop during recoil.

Even for its size and chambering, I never had any worries the Kahr would fly out of my hand while I was shooting. This is because of the texturing on the front and rear of the polymer frame. It is not checkering, more like horizontal rows of interlocking squares, and even though it doesn't look like much of anything the texturing does a good job of keeping the pistol in place in your hand.

V Because the .40 S&W cartridge is significantly longer than a 9mm, Kahr has relieved the front of the ejection port to facilitate ejection of loaded rounds.



KAHR ARMS CM40

ACTION: polymer-frame DAO semiautomatic

CALIBER: .40 S&W

CAPACITY: 5+1

BARREL: 3 in.

OVERALL LENGTH/HEIGHT/WIDTH:

5.47/4.0/0.94 in.

FRAME: black polymer

SLIDE: matte-finish stainless steel

SIGHTS: white dot plastic front, steel rear with white post

TRIGGER: DAO, 5.5 lb. pull (as tested)

WEIGHT: 15.8 oz

PRICE: \$517

MANUFACTURER: Kahr Arms, KAHR.COM, 508-795-3919

▣ While small enough to fit in a pocket, fully loaded the CM40 tips the scales at more than 20 ounces. The author recommends a pocket holster (and a belt) to keep things from sagging.

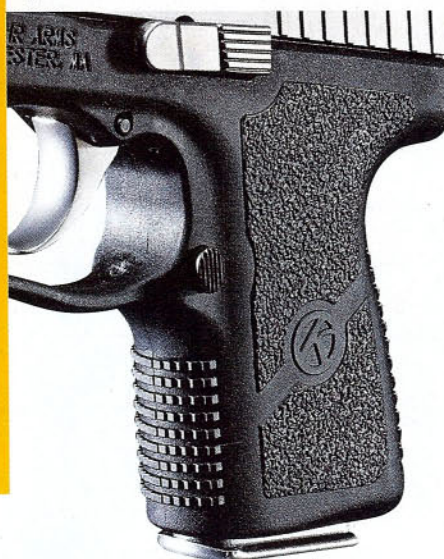


If you do buy a CM40, however, I definitely recommend loading it with .40 S&W ammunition specifically produced for the concealed-carry market, such as the Hornady FPD and Federal Guard Dog. This ammo is not loaded to +P pressures or blistering velocities, and while it won't necessarily meet the FBI penetration standard when shot through auto glass, at conversational distances against two-legged predators it will get the job done.

The projectiles loaded in this type of ammo are not only designed to expand at slower velocities, they have much more rounded profiles, so they feed reliably. Loaded with this type of ammo the CM40 still isn't a pussycat, but it's manageable.

If you'll notice, the velocities I was able to get from the Kahr are noticeably less than advertised by the ammunition manufacturers.

V The texturing on the grip doesn't look like much, but it does a great job of helping to control the pistol. The single magazine comes with flat base plate.



This is not unique to the Kahr. Most advertised velocities are generated with full-length barrels or even test fixtures, and when you start firing those same rounds out of three-inch barrels you're going to see a significant velocity drop, no matter the gun manufacturer. Depending on the ammo, you might get a lot of muzzle flash from the unburned powder as well.

While it is small enough to fit in a pocket, fully loaded the CM40 starts to take on some real weight. At 15.8 ounces for the pistol and 1.9 ounces for the magazine, once you load six rounds of .40 S&W it adds up to something more than 20 ounces. While that wouldn't feel like much of anything in a belt holster or a jacket pocket, that's a lot of weight to stick into a pants pocket. I'd recommend an inside-the-pocket holster if you're going to go that route.

The CM40 is so small that even getting two fingers onto the grip might be difficult for people with meaty paws, but that's the price you pay for a pistol not much bigger than a deck of cards. I wish the magazines didn't have flush floorplates but rather ones with finger extensions. Actually, if I'm going to start a wish list, I'd want two magazines with flush base plates and two spare finger-extension base plates.

All of those extras, cost money, though, and floorplate extensions might make the Kahr too big for most pockets. The charm of the CM40 isn't just that it is a reliable auto chambered in a man-stopping cartridge and small enough to fit in a pocket, it is that it is affordable. **○**