



4 NEW  
**DEFENSIVE  
PISTOLS**  
FOR 2011

BY MASSAD AYOOB

BEN BATTLES PHOTO

# KAHR CM9

THE SWEET,  
LIGHTWEIGHT PM9  
RENDERED IN A MORE  
AFFORDABLE VERSION

## KAHR PISTOLS HAVE BECOME

hugely popular for concealed carry. Thin amidships and small in every dimension, they come with a light, smooth double-action-only pull that imparts good “shootability” and peace of mind alike. Recoil is surprisingly light for a pistol that only weighs about a pound. That’s Airweight snub-nose revolver country for heft, but in a flatter package that holds two more rounds, and is chambered for full-power 9mm. Many find the Kahr more shootable than a double-action revolver of equivalent size.

The biggest beef you hear about Kahr pistols is that they’re not cheap. Well, duh . . . what do folks expect with high-quality pistols? Obvious answer: at least some of the market expects cost-cutting. As of the 2011 model year, Kahr decided to oblige that segment of their (potential) customer base.

The CM9, introduced at this year’s SHOT Show, is essentially the PM9 with production shortcuts. Those shortcuts



include less “sculpting” of the slide, resulting in fewer machining operations and making it less expensive to produce. A front sight pinned in place and secured there with heated Loc-Tite replaces the laboriously dovetailed front sight found in the PM9 and other more upscale guns. A few parts, notably the slide stop lever, are MIM (metal injection molded) instead of machined. To keep the price down to bare bones, only one 6-round magazine comes with the new CM9. The barrel features conventional cut rifling instead of polygonal rifling. Different lettering on the slide is also cheaper (and looks it, but what the hell, it’s meant to be carried *concealed*).

The result is a price chop of \$221. Manufacturer’s suggested retail on this new CM9 is \$565. By contrast, the lowest MSRP in the PM9 series from which it is cloned is found on the PM9093 model: \$786.

From the moment we cleared the CM9 out of the box, we spotted what may be another cost cutting measure: less polish on the underside of the slide. Most Kahr slides work very smoothly. This one definitely grated along its track, making it a bit more difficult to run to the rear. Maybe not the best place to economize.

One area of the pistol that the bean-counters and cost-cutters apparently left alone was the trigger mechanism. The trigger pull was very consistent. As a rule, the famously smooth Kahr double-action-only trigger stroke runs around six and a half pounds. On this one, the average was spot on: 6 lbs. 9 oz. according to our Lyman digital trigger-pull gauge. It was every bit as easy and silky to run as the higher-priced Kahrs. Virtually everyone on the test team who handled this gun was of the impression that the trigger mechanism comprised the exact same internals as the flagship Kahr pistols, with the same degree of fit and polish on the bearing surfaces.

Kahr spokesman, Frank Harris, told me the CM9 uses the exact same polymer frame as the PM9. As near as I can see, that’s true, and moreover, the newer and cheaper version seems to have an identical trigger assembly as well. Given that the more expensive Kahr is justly famous for the sweetness of its trigger pull compared to other double-action-only guns, that is definitely A Good Thing.

## ON THE FIRING LINE

POINT OF IMPACT was very close to point of aim, and for me it hit just a whisker left at 25 yards, but not really enough to matter as the photos will show. The sight picture was easy to pick up and keep.

*The CM9 ships with one flush-fit 6-round magazine (right,) but a 7-round extended magazine (inserted) is also available.*



*For a pistol of this size, accuracy was exceptional with Black Hills’ 124-grain JHP. Other ammunition did nearly as well.*





*Mas found the CM9 very controllable firing one-handed. Here, the camera has caught the muzzle flash and “ghost image” of the pistol at the height of recoil.*

Accuracy testing began with the 124-grain Black Hills jacketed hollow-point standard pressure, a load so accurate I’ve seen military teams use it in the national bulls-eye pistol championships at Camp Perry. From the CM9, it delivered a 5-shot group off the Matrix rest that measured 1.85” center to center, with the best three hits in 1.40”. Low-priced Mag-Tech 115-grain full metal jacket practice ammo went exactly an inch larger for the 5-shot group, 2.85”, but it made up for it with an outstanding best-three group of 0.65”. When a gun this small puts three shots into two-thirds of an inch at 25 yards, I’m impressed.

We passed it around for live fire to young and old, guys and gals, healthy and arthritic. Everyone found it very pleasant to shoot. As with its machined brothers found on the bigger Kahrs, the slide stop has a bit of an edge to it at the lower rear. However, if the shooter could manage a grasp in which no thumb was touching it, this caused no problem. In fact, some of our shooters fired with the popular straight thumbs grasp and noticed no metal-to-flesh irritation.

Kahr was the first company to come out of the closet and say in print in its owners’ manuals something that’s true of almost every auto pistol out there: it generally takes a couple of hundred rounds fired—at least—to seat the parts and ensure reliability. Sort of like those few hundred easy miles you’re supposed to carefully put on your new car. The new Kahr, like the new car, will

thank you for it, and it will be in your own best interests.

I’ve actually run across Kahr pistols that *did* choke a few times during those initial coupla hundred shots, but sailed smoothly and reliably on thereafter. In this case, it proved to be unnecessary. From when the test CM9 first saw the light of day in its spanking new box, to when we had fired the last of several boxes of ammo, the pistol never malfunctioned in any way, shape, or form.

Despite the subtly different cuts on the slide, Frank Harris assures me that the CW9 should fit every holster on the market already made for the PM9. The PM9 has long since proven itself deliciously comfortable and concealable to carry: holstered on the belt or inside it, in a pocket holster or an ankle rig. I see no reason why the same should not be true of its more cost-effective little brother.

The PM9 is currently Kahr’s best seller. The CM9 functionally duplicates it for some \$220 less. The accuracy indicates that there has been no sacrifice in going to the cut rifling. The shooting we did indicates a pistol that promises to be extremely reliable. All that savings on what is essentially the manufacturer’s most popular pistol? It strikes this writer as one helluva buy, and the CM9 strikes me as one of the coolest of the new crop of concealed carry 9mm defensive pistols. See it at your firearms retailer, or for more information contact **KAHR ARMS**, Dept. OT; Tel.: (508) 795-3919; Web: [www.kahr.com](http://www.kahr.com)



*The CM9 uses the same polymer-frame as the PM9. Also consistent is what has become known as one of the best double-action triggers in the business.*

*A comparison of the CM9 (right) and PM9 shows the differences in front-sight mounting, as well as the more labor intensive, rounded-profile on the edges of the PM9’s slide.*

