



KAHR

INSURANCE

THE NEW "S" SERIES
HITS THE SWEET SPOT
FOR PERFORMANCE
AND VALUE

BY GARRETT LUCAS



→ The S9 and ST9 feature simple yet attractive laser engraving on their slides as well as three-dot sights, unlike the "C" series' bar-dot sights.



change is a natural part of growth. Sometimes change is revolutionary, but more often, it is evolutionary. This is especially true for the marketplace. We'll often see

examples of new products come from out of the blue and surprise us with their innovation and design. However, nothing is ever perfect, and no market is static, so companies will refine their processes and make improvements to meet changing demands, stay relevant and enjoy further prosperity.

Such is the case for Kahr Arms, its history and its most recent additions to its product line. In the summer of 2017, Kahr introduced two pistols, the S9 and ST9, as part of its new "S" series. This new line is placed just above Kahr's Value Series pistols as a way to offer a few additional features while still being very affordable.



→ "S" series pistols also stand out from other Kahrs with front cocking serrations for those who prefer to press-check their guns to see if they're loaded.



← The S9 is more compact than the ST9 with a 3.6-inch barrel and a seven-round magazine. The author tested the S9 with Galco's Fletch leather belt holster (far left).

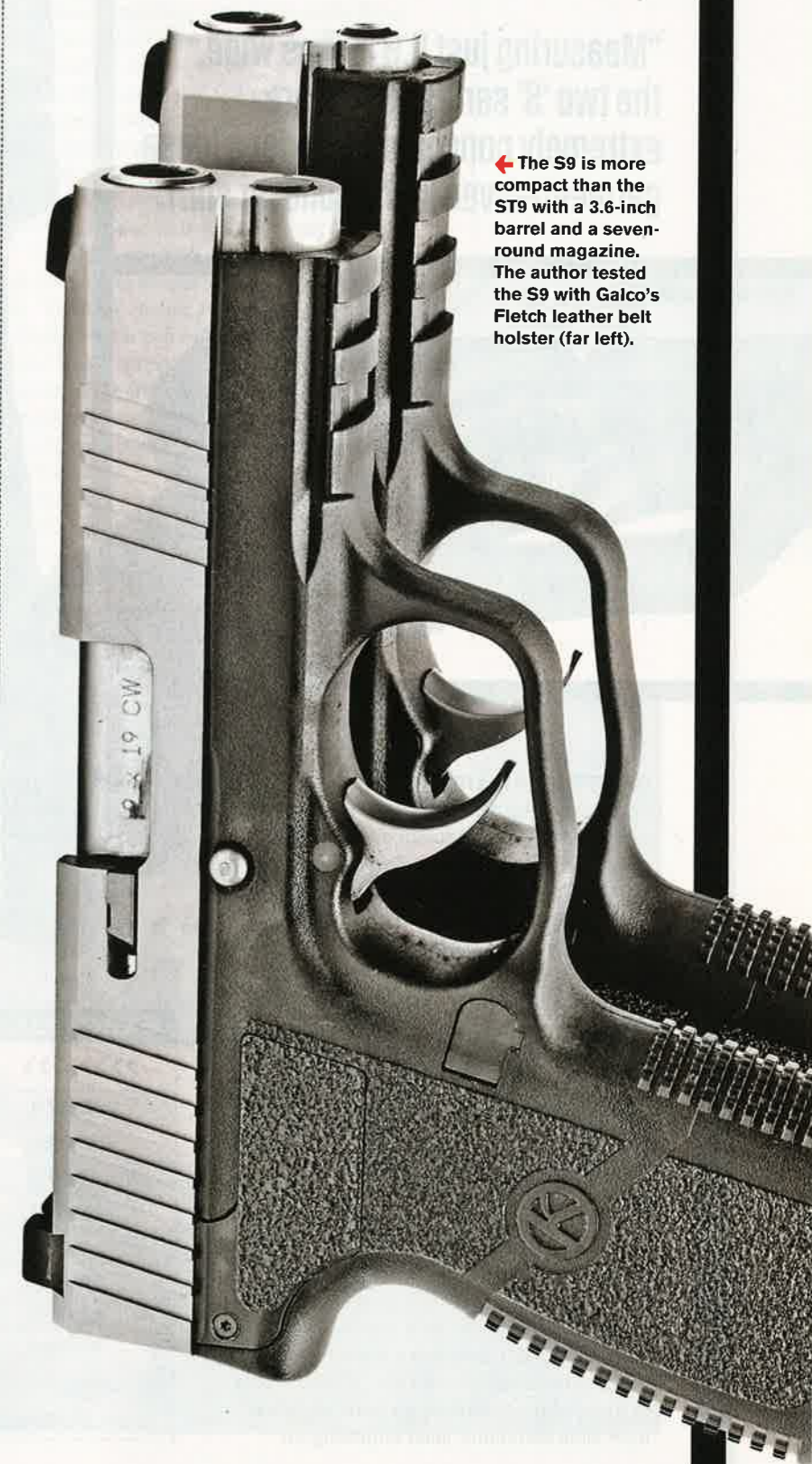
SOME BACKGROUND

Kahr Arms has enjoyed great success in a short amount of time by offering some unique options in the firearms industry. That success is due to Justin Moon, the founder of Kahr Arms.

A gun enthusiast for most of his life, Moon acquired his concealed-carry permit in New York at the age of 18. At the time, however, there weren't as many options as there are today in terms of reliable and compact carry pistols in standard chamberings like the 9mm. So, Moon decided that he would design his own carry pistol to meet his specific needs.

While he was in the design process, Moon felt like there would be a market for the type of compact carry pistols he wanted to produce. Once he finished college, he already had his design in hand and worked with the family business to get a prototype finished. It was in 1995 when the company's first pistol, the K9, was introduced to the market.

Moon's timing was near impeccable, as there was a perfect storm brewing in the background when Kahr Arms stepped into the firearms industry. In September 1994, high-capacity magazines were banned for a 10-year period. This development resulted in a lot of citizens looking toward smaller pistols like those offered by Kahr. Since there was no real point in carrying a larger pistol that was originally designed to carry more than 10 rounds, buyers flocked to the company's products, and there was no looking back after that.



“Measuring just 0.9 inches wide, the two ‘S’ series pistols are extremely concealable under a loose garment—even just a pullover shirt.”



← While the Kahr ST9 is larger than the S9 with a 4-inch barrel and eight-round magazine, it's still relatively easy to conceal because it's only 0.9 inches wide.



← The sides of the polymer grip frames have subtle non-slip texturing while the front- and backstraps are more aggressive for a secure hold.

GETTING AN UPGRADE

Kahr now offers pistols of various sizes, calibers and material composition. Along the way, the company decided to offer “C” series polymer-framed pistols that retain most of the major characteristics of the standard pistols but do away with some of the refinements of the premium models. The purpose behind this move was to offer a quality pistol at a price that would be more affordable than Kahr’s premium pistols. For example, rather than use a dovetail for the front sight, each “C” series pistol uses a pinned-in front sight. Also, conventional rifling is used in the barrel rather than the more expensive polygonal rifling. The “C” models have less machining, the slides are roll-marked rather than engraved, and they are shipped with just one magazine.

The “S” line of pistols is now slotted just above the “C” series regarding price and value, and it ushers in a few additional features not available with the “C” line. Some of these add-ons include an extra magazine, front slide serrations, laser engraving on

SPEC BOX		
KAHR S9	KAHR ST9	
CALIBER:	9mm	9mm
BARREL:	3.6 inches	4 inches
OA LENGTH:	5.9 inches	6.5 inches
WEIGHT:	17.7 ounces (empty)	20.6 ounces (empty)
GRIP:	Polymer	Polymer
SIGHTS:	Three-dot	Three-dot
ACTION:	Striker-fired	Striker-fired
FINISH:	Matte black, stainless	Matte black, stainless
CAPACITY:	7+1	8+1
MSRP:	\$477	\$456

the slide, an accessory rail on the frame and three-white-dot sights rather than the bar-dot configuration on the “C” series.

For comparison’s sake, the S9 is the counterpart to the CW9. The CW9 lists for \$449 while the S9 has an MSRP of \$477. So, for an extra \$28 more, you get a nice set of upgrades for essentially the price of the extra magazine. That’s a great deal.

OVERALL FEEL

Like the S9, the ST9 also has a counterpart in the Value Series. Everything about these two new “S” series pistols is essentially the same except for size. The S9 is more compact, has a 3.6-inch barrel and holds 7+1 rounds, whereas the ST9 is taller, has a 4-inch barrel and holds 8+1 rounds instead. Other than dimensions, the pistols have the same parts and are made to the same specifications.

Both pistols have polymer frames and stainless steel slides with non-reflective matte finishes. The texturing on the grips is just perfect from my perspective. The sides have lighter texturing while the front- and backstraps have

more aggressive checkering, which provides a very secure purchase, especially while firing.

What really makes the S9 and ST9 really stand out as concealed-carry pistols is their slim widths. Measuring just 0.9 inches wide, the two “S” series pistols are extremely concealable under a loose garment—even just a pullover shirt. All of the parts are low profile, and the edges on the slide are beveled for more comfort during carry and to assist with easy reholstering.

Speaking of which, both “S” series pistols will fit holsters made for their counterparts in the “C” Value Series. For this review, I received a Galco Fletch belt holster made for the CW9, and it fit the S9 perfectly. Being a bit of a traditionalist, I like the feel of a nice leather holster hugging the beltline. And, on certain occasions, I like the retention benefits offered by a holster like the Galco Fletch with its steel-reinforced thumb snap. It’s an extra layer of security for the mindful concealed-carry holder.

TRIGGER TIME

Like other models from the Kahr lineup, the S9 and ST9 utilize Kahr’s proprietary trigger-cock-

↓ The 4-inch-barreled ST9 ran flawlessly right out of the box and printed nice groups at 15 yards, thanks in part to its smooth, consistent trigger pull.





ing DAO system. This system both cocks the striker and deactivates the firing pin block through the use of a cocking cam. Because of this design, the trigger pulls on Kahr pistols are consistently very smooth. The trigger on my test S9 averaged 5.68 pounds while the ST9 had an average pull of 5.29 pounds.

Despite the fluid feel of the trigger pull, there is a good amount of travel before the striker is activated and released. Those who are familiar with the longer pulls of revolver triggers won't have any issues, but it may take some users a little time to get used to it. And while not necessarily a negative, the trigger also has a long reset. In fact, the reset does not occur until the trigger is almost completely forward. Some people like shorter resets for faster follow-up shots, but a longer reset can be viewed as a safety feature. How the pistol handles and operates in this regard is subjective and must be decided upon by the end-user.

I ran several different 9mm loads from Federal, Sig Sauer and Speer to gauge the accuracy of the S9 and ST9 from different distances. Both pistols seemed to prefer the Speer 147-grain Gold Dot load, with the S9 averaging 1.19 inches at 7 yards and the ST9 averaging 2.09 inches at 15 yards.

The new Kahr user should be aware that, in the manual, Kahr Arms recommends that

↑ Despite its compact size, the S9 was accurate and controllable. Its single best group at 7 yards, produced with Speer's 147-grain Gold Dot rounds, was 1.13 inches wide.



PERFORMANCE

KAHR S9

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	
		AVERAGE	BEST
Federal 124 HST	1,094	2.00	1.75
Sig Sauer 124 V-Crown JHP	1,135	1.88	1.25
Speer 147 Gold Dot	915	1.19	1.13

KAHR ST9

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	
		AVERAGE	BEST
Federal 147 HST +P	991	2.38	2.18
Sig Sauer 124 V-Crown JHP	1,144	2.44	2.25
Speer 124 Gold Dot +P	1,193	2.31	1.88
Speer 147 Gold Dot	940	2.09	1.88

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for three 5-shot groups at 7 yards.



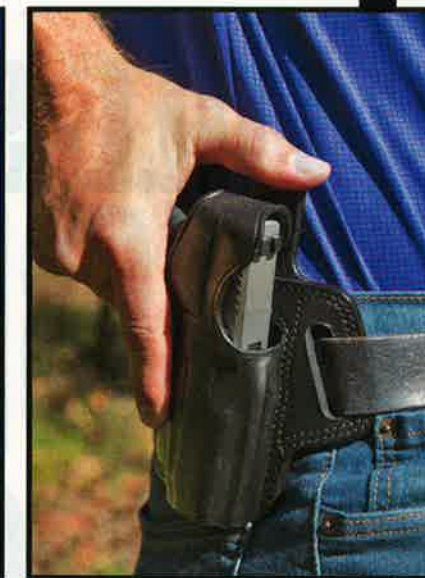
Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for three 5-shot groups at 15 yards.

“My favorite of the two was the S9. It was extremely accurate while being more compact, and I shot it as well off-hand at 15 yards as I did the larger ST9.”

at least 100 rounds of a particular ammunition type should be fired to ensure reliability. It has long been said that a brand-new Kahr pistol should be broken in with at least a few hundred rounds. This was certainly the case with the S9, as there were several failures to go into battery. However, as time went on and more rounds went downrange, the pistol found its footing and the issues disappeared. On the other hand, the ST9 was good to go from the very beginning and didn't experience any problems during multiple range outings.

THE NEW VALUE LINE

Overall, the two “S” series pistols were very competent shooters. My favorite of the two was the S9. It was extremely accurate while being more compact, and I shot it as well off-hand at 15 yards as I did the larger ST9. Even more impressive were the trim dimensions



of the pistols, making them very easy to tuck away for concealed carry.

Until now, Kahr deemed the “C” lineup as its Value Series, but the new “S” series definitely shakes things up quite a bit. For less than the price of an extra magazine, you get some significant add-ons to improve both the aesthetics and performance of the baseline pistol—and still get an extra magazine as well. If you're looking for an accurate and reliable pistol that's purpose-built for concealed carry, Kahr's new “S” line is a true value proposition that's hard to beat. For more information, visit kahr.com.

↑ The Galco Fletch provides an extra layer of security for the S9 with a thumb-break retention strap. This leather rig will also fit the CW9 and other Kahr models.

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PARTS:

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