



BLURRED LINES

KAHR ARMS' NEW "S" SERIES PLAYS THE MIDDLE GROUND IN TERMS OF SIZE AND PRICE.

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THIS NATION'S more than 16 million concealed carry permit holders represent an incredibly diverse group of gun owners. Some are experienced shooters with backgrounds in the military or law enforcement. Others are

beginners who are faced with purchasing a firearm for the first time. They are young and old, male and female, rich and poor, and represent every race and ethnic background. And this group has diverse tastes in firearms, too.



Kahr S9

Action:	Striker fired, recoil operated, semiautomatic
Cartridge:	9mm
Capacity:	7+1 rds.
Barrel:	3.6 in.
Overall Length:	5.9 in.
Weight:	1 lb., 1.7 oz.
Grip:	Polymer, textured
Finish:	Matte (stainless steel)
Trigger:	6 lbs. (tested)
Sights:	White, three-dot; drift adj., U-notch (rear); pinned post (front)
MSRP:	\$477
Manufacturer:	Kahr Arms, 508-795-3919, kahr.com

The current trend in carry guns are toward those in the “middle.” Guns that are not too big or small, with the right amount of features and priced to reflect this configuration, which is the market that Kahr’s new S9 pistol is playing in.

Introduced midyear in 2018, the S-series includes two 9mm pistols: the S9 features a 3.6-inch barrel, an overall length of 5.9 inches and a height of 4½ inches, while the ST9 sports a 4-inch barrel and is 6.5 inches long with a height of 5.08 inches. For that larger size, you get an extra round of capacity. The single-stack ST9 features an eight-round magazine, while the S9 holds seven. Both pistols ship with two magazines.

While the ST9 is larger, it shares many of the same new features that appear on the S9 to include a redesigned magazine base and grip. Therefore, the remainder of this review will focus on the smaller S9.

A challenger is born. The S9 will take on popular 9mm models such as the Glock 43, Kel-Tec PF-9, Ruger LC9s, Smith & Wesson M&P9 Shield, Springfield Armory XD-S 3.3-inch, Taurus G2S and the Walther PPS M2, to name a few. It is also similar to Kahr’s own CW9, but the S9 has the added features of white, 3-dot sights, front slide serrations, an accessory rail under the dustcover and an identification tag on the grip.

When compared to Kahr’s competitors, the S9 has a longer barrel than most, yet the shortest overall length. The Kahr is also one of the narrowest guns on the list at .9 inch. At 17.7 ounces, only the PF-9 and LC9s Pro weigh less than the S9.

The S9 is a striker-fired gun, but its firing mechanism and trigger are unique to Kahr designs. As the trigger is pulled, a trigger bar rotates the cocking cam, which serves two distinct functions. First, it unlocks the passive safety and, secondly, finishes cocking the striker before releasing it to fire. It’s a clever, yet simple design that has proven robust and reliable.

Like the S9’s dimensions, this trigger design appeals to a number of different shooters. It’s long and smooth so those who prefer carrying a double-action (DA) revolver or semiautomatic will appreciate the relatively long but smooth trigger travel. Least likely to approve of the Kahr trigger are those who prefer to carry single actions (SAs), such as the Model 1911.

The S9’s trigger is not as short, light or crisp as a good 1911 trigger. However, the S9’s trigger isn’t all that heavy for a DA. It fires after 6 pounds of pressure, but it’s a long pull with an equally long reset.

Kahr classifies its pistols into two distinct groups. There are the so-called affordable “value” guns and the high-end “premium” models. Most of the upgrades you get with the premium pistols are aesthetic.

For example, premium pieces have more machine cuts and smoother edges on the slide and laser engraving instead of stamping. The value guns come with a pinned front sight instead of the dovetail type that are found on the premium models. And there’s a metal-injection-molded (MIM) slide stop on the value series as opposed to a machined slide stop on the more expensive models.

Further, premium guns come with a polygonal match barrel,



The S9 operates using a John Browning-inspired recoil lug and locked-breech concept.



The 3.6-inch stainless barrel tilts up when unlocked and is tight at the muzzle when the slide is forward.



The rear sight is dovetailed into the slide and features dots and a squared notch for aiming with the white-dot front.



The only lever on the left side is the slide-lock, which is pressed out from the opposite side to remove the slide from the frame.

while value guns do not. Lastly, Kahr's premium line includes three magazines as opposed to the single mag that comes with the less-expensive value guns.

In terms of nomenclature, the C-series are value guns, while the P-series' guns are premium. On average, you can expect to pay a few hundred bucks more for the premium package.

Where does it fit? The S9 that I tested blurs the lines between Kahr's C- and P-series. The S-series has the laser engraving found on the premium guns, as well as the pinned front sight and traditional rifled barrel found on the value models. Additionally, the S-series has front slide serrations, which are good for press checks to verify the status of the chamber, and an accessory rail.

Since it has an accessory rail, the serial number plate location has been moved from the traditional under-barrel position to the side of the grip. The S-series also comes with a new grip design, and the 400-series stainless steel magazines sport updated baseplates.

In terms of price, the S-series guns are closer to the value guns in cost. Retail for the S9 is \$477 while the ST9 can be had for \$456. The S9

costs about \$30 more than the value-model CW9, and the S9 includes a spare magazine to boot.

The S9's rear sight is drift adjustable and features beveled edges. Unlike other Kahr pistols that feature a bar-dot sight layout, the S-series comes with a white, three-dot configuration.

Controls are minimal, but you'll find that there's a slide stop tucked closely against the gun for a snag-free contour that works well for concealed carry. There's also the magazine release button, but that's it.

Disassembly requires dropping the magazine on an unloaded gun and indexing the semicircular cutout in the slide with the corresponding arch on the slide stop. The slide stop can then be removed by applying pressure to the extension on the right side

of the pistol. It's not quite as simple as some other compact single-stack 9mms, but it's certainly not complex or difficult. With a bit of practice, you can have this gun fieldstripped in under a minute.

Kahr's barrel lug is offset, and that allows the barrel to sit beside the trigger mechanism as opposed to resting on top. This results in a lower bore axis. Muzzle flip can be pretty pronounced when firing light 9mm semiauto carry guns, especially with high-power defensive loads. The Kahr's design allows the bore to ride lower in the hand and transfers more recoil



The double-action-only trigger cocks the striker as it is pulled. It can be fired with the magazine removed.

energy in a straight line, which helps reduce muzzle rise and control of the pistol for faster follow-up shots.

The S9's narrow polymer grip has aggressive texturing on the front and backstraps, as well as mild texturing on the flattened side panels. These provide a comfortable and secure hold on the gun.

The narrow dimensions and slab-sided design also help make it easy to conceal, even under light clothing such as a T-shirt. But there's plenty of surface area around the grip for most hands to effectively control the firearm and reduce fatigue during extended shooting. The triggerguard is even spacious enough to accommodate a large trigger finger.



Concealed Carry I carried the Kahr S9 when it was launched last year for quite a while and found that it's an easy gun to conceal. I didn't have an S9-specific holster on-hand, but I found that a Blackhawk inside-the-waist (IWB), leather holster for a Glock 26 worked as a substitute. Today, there are plenty of holster options for the Kahr S9 to include those from Crossbreed (\$50 to \$90), Galco (\$27 to \$84), Sneaky Pete (\$70) and others.

There were no issues drawing the gun from concealment, and it's a comfortable everyday carry pistol that offers an additional round over many of its competitors. With a fully-loaded magazine and a round in the chamber, the Kahr weighs a bit over 22 ounces, which means that I didn't find myself hiking up my pants every so often.

In my opinion, the S9 is really too big for ankle carry. Though I did have to consider the length of the S9's grip when dressing, then find the right holster, and determine the angle and position to help the S9 ride close to my side.

The matte-stainless finish on the slide proved durable and stood up well to rough handling. The polymer is, well, polymer, so this gun is tough enough to withstand the rigors of daily carry.

Range Time On the bench, the S9 performed above what its dimensions and price tag might suggest. For the range portion of the test, I used five loads: Browning's 147-grain BXP X-Point, Hornady's Custom 147-grain XTP, Nosler's 124-grain Match Grade, SIG Sauer's 124-grain V-Crown and Winchester's WinClean 124-grain load. Prior to testing, I fieldstripped the S9, cleaned it thoroughly and lubricated it before firing the first shot. All loads produced great results.



PERFORMANCE

LOAD	VEL. (FPS)	ES	SD	BEST GROUP (IN.)	AVG. GROUP (IN.)
Nosler Match Grade 124-gr. JHP	1,006	29	10	1.31	1.61
Winchester WinClean 124-gr. BEB	1,000	31	9	1.66	1.92
Hornady Custom 147-gr. XTP	920	23	7	1.7	2.06
SIG Sauer V-Crown 124-gr. JHP	1,034	46	14	1.88	2.40
Browning BXP 147-gr. X-Point	884	18	6	2.16	2.54

Notes: Accuracy results are the average of five, five-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures are the average of 10 shots recorded by a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet in front of the muzzle.

Nosler's ammo produced the best single group measuring 1.31 inches from 25 yards, and therefore the best test average of 1.61 inches of all of the loads tested. Additionally, it's worth noting that the S9's sights were properly aligned right out of the box with no need for adjustment. (That rarely happens.)

Helping with the gun's flawless operation is Kahr's utilization of a self-cleaning extractor design that pushes residue and debris away from the extractor to ensure reliable function. Trigger pull seemed extraordinarily long when firing at stationary targets from a fixed position, but there was no stacking.

Once Guns & Ammo's accuracy standard was complete, I ran through a series of drills to simulate defensive-shooting scenarios. My primary takeaway from these exercises was that the S9's high grip and low bore axis really do mitigate recoil and muzzle climb.

In our experience, light single-stack 9mms can produce snappy recoil, but the Kahr sits in the hand as well as any gun in this class. The long trigger pull, which was noticeable while shooting the gun off the bench, was less pronounced during defensive shooting drills and the white-dot front sight was easy to find in most lighting conditions.

Despite its relatively compact size, the Kahr offers plenty of space for a thumbs-forward grip, which makes the S9 an easy gun to manage during fast shooting.

After price, most shooters will rank reliability as a critical factor when deciding to purchase a new carry gun. By the time the entire battery of tests was complete, I had fired a few hundred rounds through the pistol without cleaning and experienced just one incident where I had unintentionally hit the magazine release. The Kahr S9, however, performed without a hitch.

While a few hundred rounds will hardly constitute an endurance test, it does speak to the quality of Kahr's unique design.

The huge and still-growing cadre of concealed carry permit holders have a lot of compact 9mms to choose from, and the S9 deserves your attention. It's a robust, easy-to-carry gun and, at less than \$500, it's a bargain. Is it the right gun for you? That depends on your preferences. After this testfire, I can report that it's a gun I would carry with confidence. 