

the

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Right
for
YOU?**

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ECONOMY KAHR: Kahr CW380

Reviewed by Peter Caroline

I was very impressed with the first Kahr pistol I ever saw. In 1995, I was in a gun shop in Tucson, and spotted this new pistol, the Kahr K9, the first compact 9mm I'd ever laid eyes on. I had owned a number of 9mms previously...a Glock, several Lugers, Walther P38s, Browning P35s, a Radom and even a Mauser broomhandle. The Kahr was small and sleek, and the bore axis was lower than any other 9mm pistol I'd ever handled. Very impressive, indeed. Unfortunately, I was in the process of having a new house built, and the money was tight, so I had to pass.

Years later, at the 2009 SHOT Show, I stopped by the Kahr booth and saw an even more compact Kahr, their new P380 pocket pistol. Unlike the original Kahr K9, it had a polymer frame, but otherwise, the technology and the craftsmanship was the same. I requested a sample for review. The gun was a pleasure to shoot, even with Corbon +P loads, with a very manageable double-action trigger and excellent sights. What was most surprising was the accuracy, far superior to any other .380 pistol. I decided this one was a keeper, and I sent a check off to Kahr.

At the 2013 SHOT Show, I saw that Kahr was offering a new .380 ACP pocket pistol, the CW380. At first glance, it looked identical to my P380. There are some differences. The slide stop lever is Metal Injection Molded, not machined. The barrel has conventional rifling, not the polygonal rifling of the P380. Lettering is engraved, not rolled on, and the front sight is pinned in, not dovetailed. And, it comes with just one magazine, not two. As a result, the MSRP is \$419, which is \$230 less than the P380. Naturally, I was curious to find out if the performance was that much different from the P380, so I requested a CW380 to test.

Kahr makes a point, in its owner's manual, of informing you that the gun should have at least 200 rounds fired through it before it is can be considered to be properly broken in. With my P380, that was initially a problem. There was a big rush on .380s back in 2009, and ammo was scarce. Since then, I have acquired a fairly large stash of .380 ACP ammo, both FMJ and specialized defense loads. This is a good thing, because right now we're going through another ammo shortage, this time not limited to .380. Anyway, I was able to

test-fire the new CW380 with a decent selection of ammo, and I'm happy to report that this new pocket Kahr is not a fussy eater. There was however, one cartridge that the CW380 I was testing did not like. I loaded a magazine-full of CCI Blazer alloy-case 95-grain TMs. The CW380 would fire one round, and the slide would stay back. Consistently, every time. I fired Federal Personal Defense Hydra-Shok 90-grain JHPs, Corbon +P 90-grain JHPs, Remington 88-grain JHPs, Winchester 95-grain FMJs, American Eagle 95-grain FMJs and Independence 90-grain FMJs, and all functioned without a hiccup, and the slide locked back only after the last round was fired, as it should. Then I went back to the CCI Blazers. Once again, the slide would stay open after each shot. So, I concluded that this particular CW380 has an allergy to CCI Blazers.

Just out of curiosity, I fired both the new CW380 and my 2009 P380 from a sandbag rest at 10 yards. The results were identical, predictable 2" to 2-1/2" groups. Probably not what

you'd expect from your bullseye gun, but these guns are, after all, primarily intended for use at conversational distances.

You might expect a .380 that weighs just a hair over 10 ounces to be a bit challenging to shoot. I have several that weigh more, and they're no real fun. The Kahr, however, is a surprisingly comfortable gun to shoot. The polymer frame, lower bore axis and perhaps the fact that this is a locking breech and not a blowback pistol, all contribute to a very pleasant shooting experience.

The CW380 comes in a black plastic hard-case, with a neat little trigger lock and accompanying padlock, and a detailed, well-illustrated operating manual.

I think Kahr has got a winner with the CW380. The performance is right up there with its higher-priced pistols, and the price is very compet-

itive. As a backup pistol for law enforcement, or a primary pocket gun for anyone, it's a smart choice.

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a .380 that weighs just
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