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Reviewed by Peter Caroline

In the beginning, polycarbonate (plastic) framed guns were, to put it kindly, not the prettiest pups in the litter. First there was the Heckler & Koch VP 70Z, followed by the Glock 17. The H&K was ugly enough to make strong men weep, and had a long, hard double-action trigger pull that defeated any attempts at effective aimed fire. The Glock was somewhat better looking, monotonously reliable and surprisingly accurate.

The current crop of plastic WonderNines are considerably more appealing. And the best of the lot, in my opinion, is Ruger's new SR9. I say "new" because Ruger has upgraded and refitted the triggers on this model, along with several other internal parts. Not that there was anything terribly wrong with the original trigger. Reportedly, some early SR9s could fire if they were dropped with the safety in "Fire" position. It's probably not a good idea to drop a loaded and cocked pistol

anyway, but in these litigious times, a manufacturer has to go to great lengths to accommodate its more challenged customers.

According to Ruger, the new trigger has less over-travel and a shorter length of pull than its predecessor. In any case, if you have an SR9 with a serial number

prefix of 330, and it has a trigger that *doesn't* look like a Glock trigger, call Ruger and they'll send you a shipping box so you can have your pistol completely upgraded for free.

A while ago, Ruger sent me an SR9 to test... actually, two of them, one with a brushed stainless slide and black frame, the other with a blackened stainless slide and OD Green frame. The SR9 is a handsome gun, and it fits the hand well. To make it fit even better, Ruger built in an easily reversible rubber backstrap that can be removed and rotated for a choice of a flat or arched configuration. Both the safety and the magazine release are ambidextrous. The 3-dot sights are eminently visible, and the rear sight is adjustable for both elevation and windage. The loaded chamber indicator is reminiscent of the classic Luger P08. When a cartridge is in the chamber, a little bar pops up with a red cartridge icon on both sides. I appreciated that the top of the grip is slightly recessed on both sides, similar to their neat little LCP .380. It feels just right.

The SR9 comes with two 17-round magazines and a very simple and effective steel magazine

loading tool. There are seven witness holes on each side of the magazine. One side has holes marked with odd numbers, the other with even, so if you have four or more cartridges in the magazine, you can immediately see exactly how many you have left. It's a nice touch, and more testimony to Ruger's meticulous attention to detail.

The venerable 9mm Parabellum has always been a comfortable round to shoot, and the SR9's polycarbonate frame and well-thought-out ergonomics make it even more so. The trigger pull was about six pounds on both of the guns I was sent, though the angle of the trigger and the position of the trigger safety make an accurate measurement problematic.

At the range, both SR9s turned in some very decent groups with plain old Winchester white-box 115-grain FMJ ammo. Just out of curiosity, I tried the backstrap in both positions on both pistols. Either setup, flat or arched, seemed quite

comfortable, with no difference in performance. For whatever reason, the black-framed gun consistently cranked out slightly smaller groups than the OD. Go figure. From the bench, 15-yard groups varied from 1" to 1-3/4". I'd bet, if the trigger pull were reduced a pound or two,

the groups would be smaller. I would imagine that there will soon be aftermarket trigger kits available for the SR9 as more of these pistols find their way into circulation.

After shooting, takedown and cleanup of the SR9 couldn't be easier. It's your basic "remove magazine, clear chamber and lock slide back" drill, with one interesting difference. Before you push out the takedown pin, you have to insert your finger or a pencil or dowel down through the ejection port and push the ejector downward. This allows the slide to be moved off the front of the frame. The instruction manual is first rate: clearly illustrated and easy to follow. An insert is provided to cover the recent upgrades.

Ruger semiauto pistols have always had a reputation for rock-solid reliability and excellent performance. The SR9 follows in that tradition, and ups the ante with a good-looking gun that feels just right in your hand. At \$525 MSRP (and I've seen it retailing at \$100 less), it's a terrific bargain.

S&W **Sturm, Ruger & Co., Inc. • 200 Ruger Road • Prescott, AZ 86301 • 623-865-2213 •**

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