AMT Automag II .22 Mag. Pistol

The AMT Automag II breaks new ground as the first autoloading pistol for the .22 WMRF round. It uses blowback operation.

THE introduction of the .22 Win. Mag. rimfire cartridge in 1959 led to large-scale production of rifles, carbines, revolvers, single-shot pistols and combination guns for it.

Successful .22 WMRF semi-automatic rifles are few and far between, with Heckler & Koch's Model 300 being the latest, but semi-auto pistols have, up until now, been virtually unobtainable.

That is not to say that manufacturers haven't tried to get the .22 WMRF to function reliably in prototype self-loading pistols, only that the process was difficult enough to discourage full-scale production. The .22 WMRF's greater length and power makes it more than a matter of adapting an existing .22 Long Rifle pistol.

Arcadia Machine and Tool (AMT) of Covina, Calif., has set out to change this with an all new single-action pistol made of stainless steel. It bears the name Automag II, but bears only a passing resemblance to that large-caliber center-fire pistol, a gun that has been a delight more for collectors than for its various makers.

The original Automag was recoil-operated, with a rotary bolt. The new pistol, on the other hand, is blowback-operated.

According to AMT's Harry Sanford, the rear portion of the barrel is turned down and a series of 16 small holes are drilled into the chamber area. Then a bushing is passed over the shank and welded to the barrel, with a minute clearance left between the parts.

On firing, gas passes through the forward holes, into the space between barrel shank and bushing, and out the rear holes. There it presses against the cartridge case, equalizing pressure and helping to prevent tearing of the case head.

The designer provided a relatively long 6″ barrel for velocity and accuracy, but in order to get reliable functioning elected to cut away the top of the slide, not only at the ejection port, but for 2⅜″ between the port and the front sight.

AMT AUTOMAG II PISTOL

Manufacturer: Arcadia Machine & Tool, Inc., 536 N. Vincent Ave., Covina, Calif. 91722
Mechanism Type: semi-automatic pistol
Caliber: .22 Win. Mag. Rimfire
Overall Length: 9¾″
Barrel Length: 6″
Weight: 2 lbs.
Height: 5⅛″
Width: 1³⁄₁₆″
Magazine Capacity: 10
Trigger: single-stage, 9 lbs. pull
Sights: white outline adjustable rear, blade front with red insert
Price: $295

The Automag II slide is equipped with a very tight-fitting 1911-type barrel bushing, an adjustable white-outline rear sight and a front blade with red T-shaped aiming post.

The barrel is located in the frame by the slide stop lever shaft, which passes through a square-profiled block at the bottom rear of the barrel.

The thumb safety is located on the left rear of the slide and is easily operated by the thumb of the shooting hand without shifting the grip. When in up position, the thumb safety exposes a red indicator dot; when down (white dot exposed) it locks the firing pin and prevents the hammer from contacting that part.

It should be noted that the safety can be applied only when the hammer is cocked or slightly retracted from its fully-down position.

There is no grip or magazine safety to complicate matters. The factory instruction manual warns against carrying the pistol with the chamber loaded, an advisory that has become standard procedure for most factories when writing their manuals today. The pistol is, however, equipped with a fully rebounding inertia firing pin so that, even with the hammer at rest, the firing pin does not protrude through the breech opening.

Field stripping should be easy for anyone who has disassembled a .45 auto. Using the catch at the rear of the butt, the 10-shot magazine is withdrawn. Retracting the slide allows the slide stop to be pushed out. This will require a tool of some kind, since the shaft is flush with the pistol frame.

Then, ensuring that the safety catch is in the fire position, the slide is pushed forward and off the frame. Slide disassembly is like the 1911; the recoil rod bushing is depressed, the barrel bushing

Using a non-marring tool like a bullet point, press out the slide stop to release the barrel from the Automag II's frame.

rotated counterclockwise and withdrawn forward, keeping control of the recoil rod bushing and spring.

The spring and recoil rod then may be withdrawn forward through the front of the slide, and the barrel can be removed to the rear and downward. Further disassembly is not recommended by the manufacturer, and reassembly is in reverse order. Care must be taken not to lose the ejector, which rests in a slot in front of the hammer. Should that part fall out, it can only be replaced properly, thanks to a tapered slot in the frame.

Next, slide the frame, along with the barrel, the recoil spring, the recoil spring guide and barrel bushing forward off the frame.

AMT's instruction manual concerns itself at length with standard safety practices, following current industry trends, but adds a couple of unusual warnings. We are told that cartridges must be fed only from the magazine—never loaded directly into the chamber.

The second instruction has to do with ammunition choice. AMT says its pistols are test-fired with Winchester brand ammunition, and suggests that rounds loaded with ball powder are more likely to give satisfactory results than flake-powder ammunition like older lots of CCI. Automag II purchasers who have stocks of old CCI ammunition are invited to contact CCI for replacement ammunition loaded with ball powder.

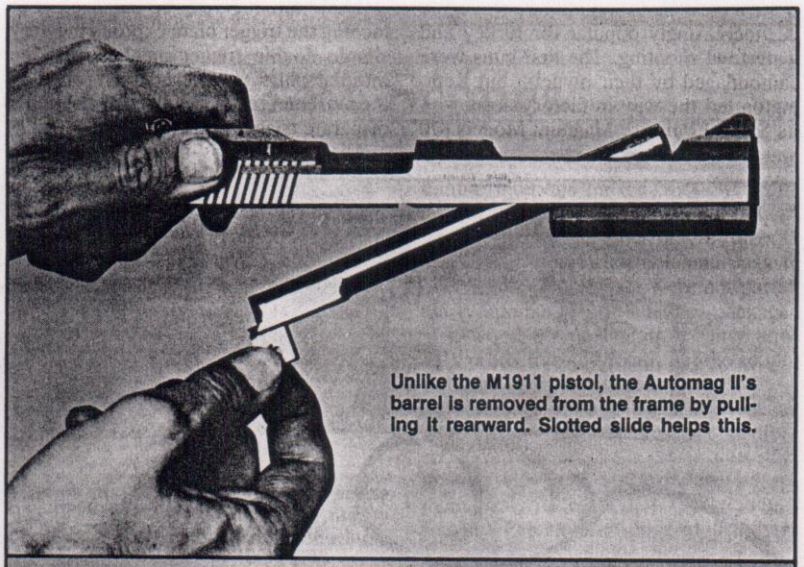
The Automag II was fired for accuracy, with results shown in the accompanying table, and function-fired with RWS and Winchester (both ball powder) and with flake-powder CCI ammunition. The latter worked without problem in a brief 50-round test, and AMT's Sanford stated that the older CCI ammunition will function in well broken-in pistols, but has reliability problems in stiff new guns.

The Automag II proved a reliable and accurate gun, but one with a distinct "personality" and a few quirks that require familiarization. Loading the 10-round magazine requires strong fingers and a bit of experimentation to find the proper technique. If five rounds are loaded at a time, there is little difficulty, but getting the last few of 10 cartridges in the magazine takes some effort.

Reliable function requires that the cartridges be fully rearward inside the magazine. A tap of the magazine on the shooting bench to move the rounds rearward usually sufficed.

The Automag II must be held in a very firm grip for proper functioning of the slide stop. With a sloppy grip, the slide will often override the stop and slam home after the last round of a magazine.

While on the subject of grip, it should be noted that fleshy-handed users should keep the grip low to prevent hammer "bite" on the web between thumb and trigger finger. Sanford stated that future Automag IIs will have a more rounded hammer spur to alleviate the problem.



Unlike the M1911 pistol, the Automag II's barrel is removed from the frame by pulling it rearward. Slotted slide helps this.

ACCURACY RESULTS
Five Consecutive 5-Shot Groups At 25 Yds.
Fired From Sandbags

.22 WMRF Cartridge	Vel. @ 15' (f.p.s.)	Smallest (ins.)	Largest (ins.)	Average (ins.)	25 Shot Composite (ins.)
Federal 40-gr. FMJ	1415 Avg. 32 Sd	3.60	4.66	3.92	4.79
RWS 40-gr. SP	1428 Avg. 47 Sd	2.68	5.87	4.42	5.87
Winchester 40-gr. FMJ	1334 Avg. 22 Sd	2.00	4.12	2.96	4.37
Sd (standard deviation)		Average Extreme Spread		3.77	

The Automag II's trim lines make it a pleasure to handle in today's world of large-capacity pistols. The trigger and safety are in easy reach even for small-fisted shooters.

While recoil is mild, the .22 WMRF produces a surprisingly large muzzle flash and a nasty report in this pistol. We expected something along the lines of, say, the .32 S&W Long, but flash and blast are more like the .30 Mauser.

The Automag II, then, is a trim and appealing pistol that offers the unique combination of self-loading operation and the .22 WMRF cartridge.