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GUNS & AMMO

AMT'S LATEST THE .22 BACK UP

MARCH 1982



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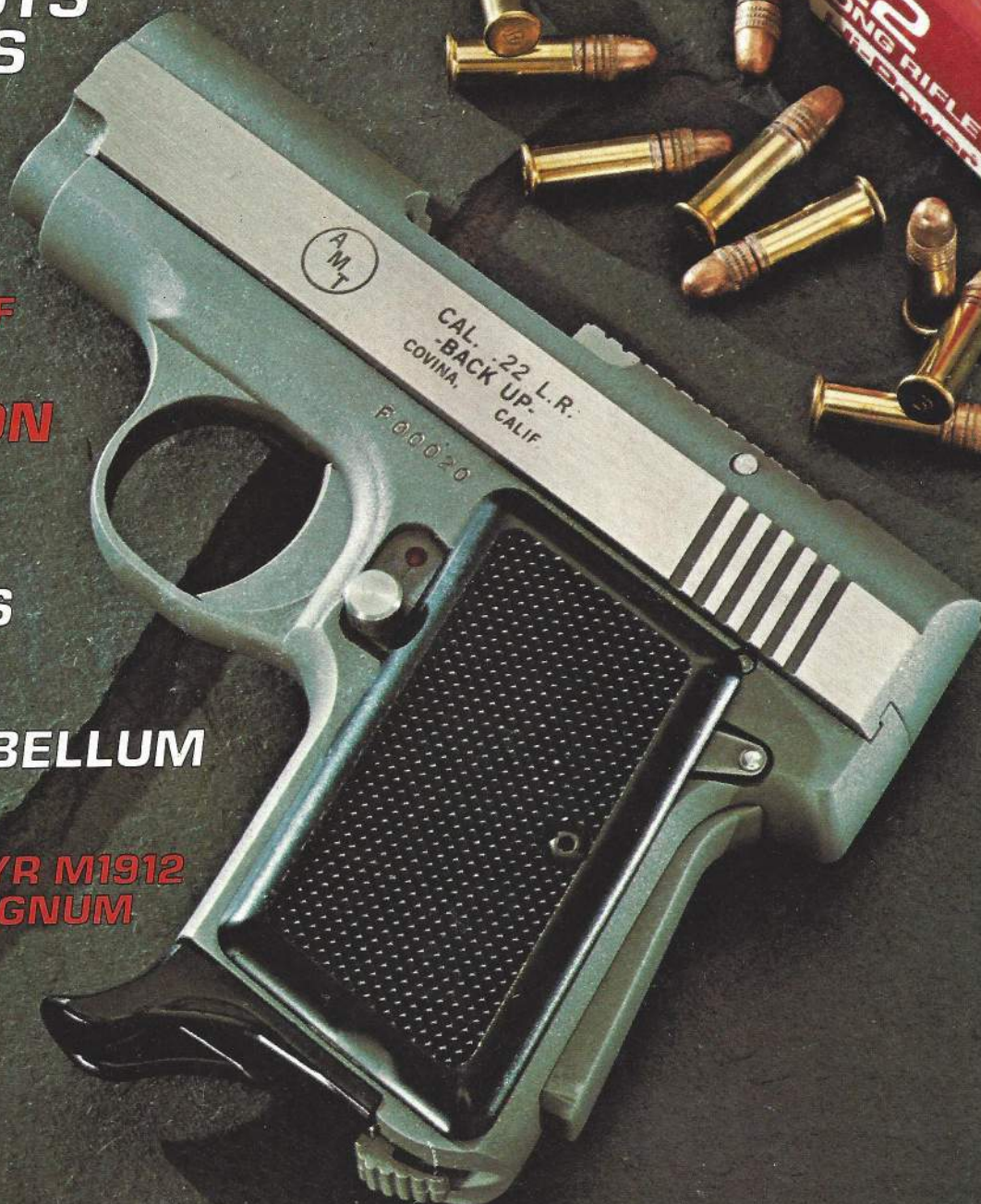
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■ One of the most compact .380 auto pistols on the market today is the AMT Back Up. As its name suggests, this little power package, which is small enough to fit into the palm of a hand, is designed as a second gun for police officers. Thanks to its ease of concealment and stainless-steel con-

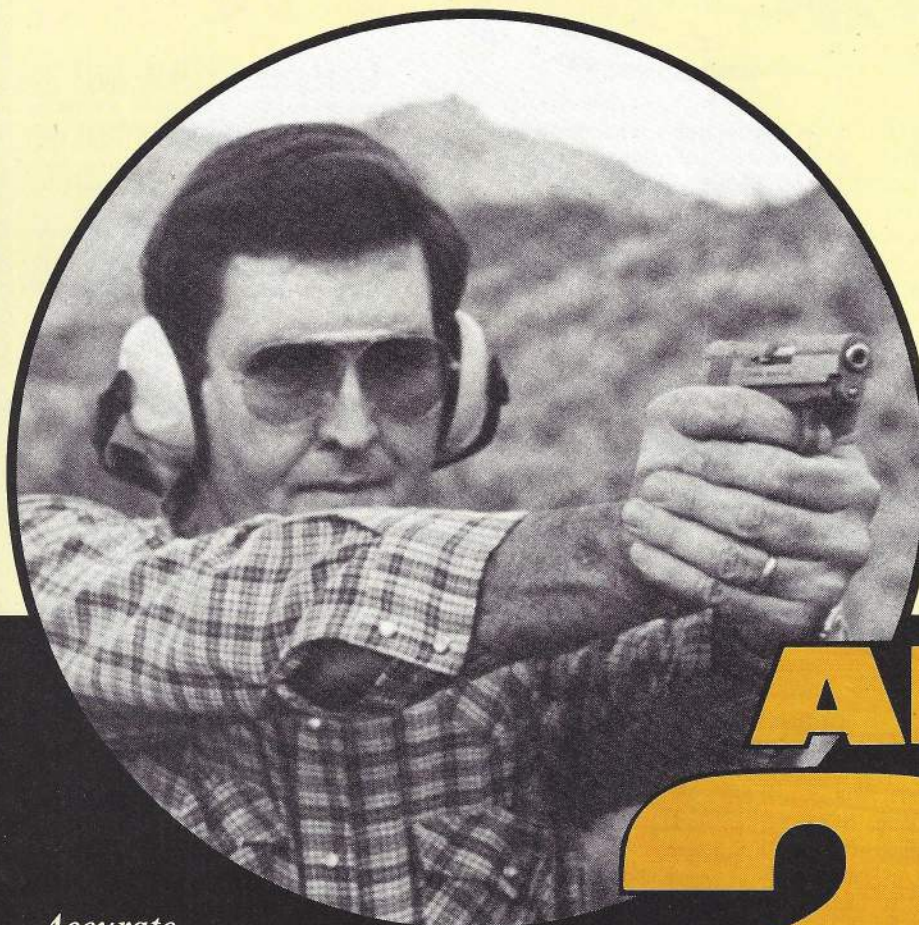
struction, the Back Up has enjoyed good sales which is, no doubt, one of the reasons why it is now being offered in .22 LR.

The new pistol is exactly the same size as the .380 Back Up and identical to it in many respects. The .22 Back Up is an eight-shot, blowback-operated, single-ac-

tion semi-automatic pistol which is constructed almost entirely from stainless steel. Its most significant feature is its compactness; its overall length is only 4¾ inches while its height and width are just under 3½ and one inch respectively. The length of its barrel and chamber is 2½ in.

Placed side by side the .380 and .22 Back Ups appear to be exactly the same. Apart from caliber, both the frame and slide of each gun look identical at first glance as do the other components. However, on closer examination it can be seen that there are quite a number of differences, although the basic concept of the pistols is the same.

All of the changes have been made to accommodate the .22. Unlike other pistols of the same type which house their firing pins and extractors in the slide, the Back Ups have theirs in a removable bolt which is located in the slide just behind the ejection port. In the .22 version the extractor is on the right side and not on the top as is the case with the .380. The .380 also has a stronger recoil spring to handle the more powerful round. Each pistol has a different type of ejector and this, together with the bolt, have required alterations to the slides with the overall result that they are not interchangeable.



Accurate and reliable, this new rimfire version of the Back Up offers much to police officers and plinkers alike.

By Dave Arnold

AMT'S .22 BACK UP



Disassembly of the Back Up starts by releasing the magazine, removing it and then cycling the slide to verify that the handgun is empty.



In order to remove the Back Up's bolt, it's necessary to use a drift to drive out the hardened pin that retains the bolt's position in the slide.



When the pin is driven from its location, the slide must be moved to the rear so that the bolt can be lifted away from slide/receiver assembly.

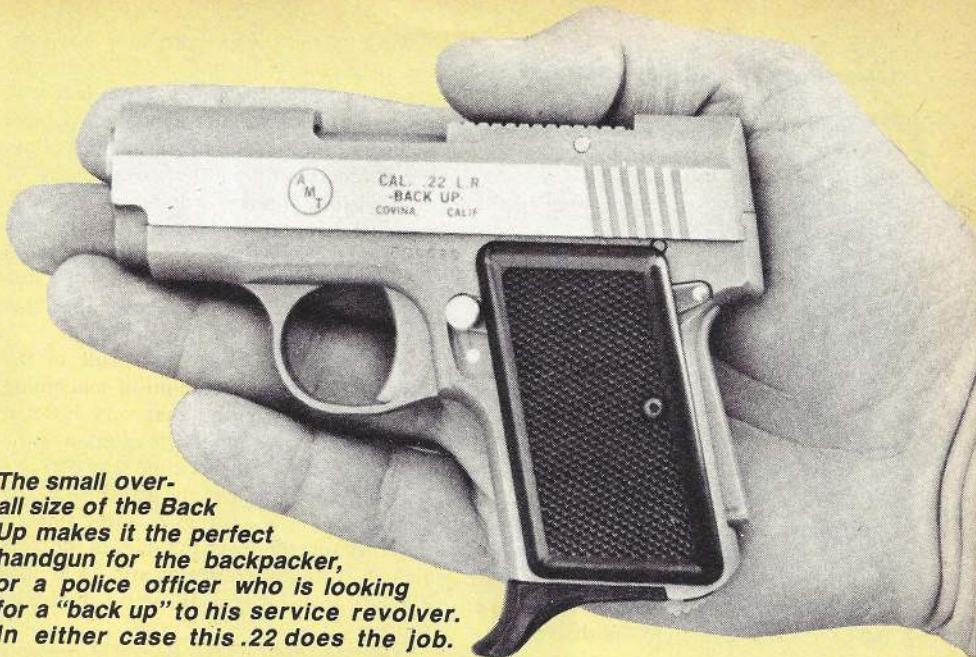
The pistols have identical safeties. The manual safety catch is located on the left side, just behind the trigger which, for a right-handed person, places it in an ideal position for operation by the thumb. The safety is applied by pushing it up and released by pushing it down. Red and white dots help remind one of the position of the safety catch.

The Back Up also has a grip safety. This is of the usual design and is located in the rear of the grip. It prevents the gun from firing unless it is held properly in the hand. The grip safety also doubles as a cocking indicator as it only protrudes if the hammer is back. The manual safety will also signal the condition of the pistol for it cannot be applied unless the hammer is cocked.

The magazine release catch is located at the bottom rear of the grip. Unlike most pistols of this type, the catch is easy to operate in that it's fairly large and serrated. Likewise, the slide is very easy to operate, having deep parallel grooves on its sides that enable the thumb and fingers to get a good grip. This is in contrast to most other small autos which usually have slides that are very stiff and difficult to operate.

The front of the magazine floor plate has

The small over-all size of the Back Up makes it the perfect handgun for the backpacker, or a police officer who is looking for a "back up" to his service revolver. In either case this .22 does the job.



Upon reassembly of the Back Up, care must be exercised in replacing the bolt so that when it is in the proper location it will line up with the retaining pin holes in the slide.



Other than the drift needed for the pin holding the bolt in place, the Back Up can be totally field stripped without the use of any tools. When stripped the care AMT puts into the manufacture of the pistol can be observed; it's a quality-made handgun.

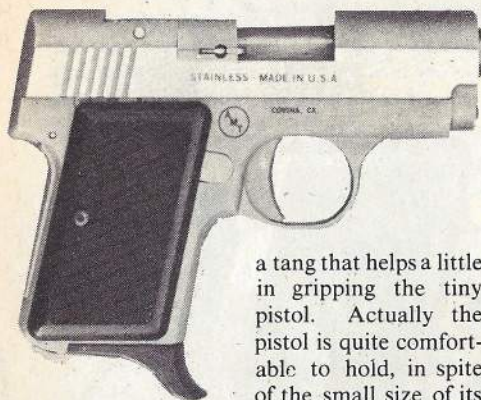


Once the bolt is removed the slide (under pressure from the recoil spring, so care must be taken to avoid injury) can be slid forward and removed from the stainless-steel receiver.



With the slide removed from the receiver, the recoil spring and recoil spring guide can be slipped from their location under the fixed barrel. This is as far as the pistol needs to be stripped for normal cleaning and maintenance after a day's shooting.

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a tang that helps a little in gripping the tiny pistol. Actually the pistol is quite comfortable to hold, in spite of the small size of its grip. Sights are of the fixed type and, typical of this style of handgun, consist of a small front blade in a groove on the slide.

The way the pistol has been constructed deserves some comment. With the exception of the magazine floor plate and the grips, which are of a tough black plastic material, the entire pistol has been made of stainless steel. This is in keeping with all handguns made by AMT, which has specialized in the use of stainless steel in their manufacturing from the beginning.

Most of the components have been investment cast. While this is quite a normal practice in pistol production, the fact that stainless steel is used is significant. I have had some exposure to the difficulties of using stainless steel in the manufacture of auto pistols. Unlike ordinary steels, this material is tough to machine so it makes sense to use castings. However, casting stainless steel is also difficult and the fine quality of the Back Up shows that this company knows what it is doing.

Very clever use has been made of the castings so that a minimum of machining is required. It appears that very little, if any, finishing is given to the exterior of the slide and frame, yet this in no way detracts from the appearance of the little pistol. The surface of these castings is satin smooth and this, together with the sides of the slide (which is the only exterior area to be machined), gives a very attractive dual-tone finish.

The operation of the Back Up presents no surprises. The magazine, which holds eight rounds of either .22 Long Rifle or some of the more potent brands like C.C.I.'s Stinger, is loaded in the normal manner. At first it seemed as though the little pistol's magazine held ten rounds for

it was marked accordingly on its one side. However, try as I might, I could only get eight in the magazine—nine if I loaded the chamber as well. Once the magazine has been loaded and inserted into the bottom of the grip, the slide must be cycled to load the chamber and cock the hammer, which is concealed inside the slide. After the last shot has been fired the slide will return forward instead of being locked open.

I had some difficulty in figuring out how to field strip the Back Up for cleaning because the pistol we received for testing had no instructions. I understand that production guns will be sold with a set of instructions, so shooters won't encounter the same problems as I did. Actually, field stripping the Back Up is quite simple.

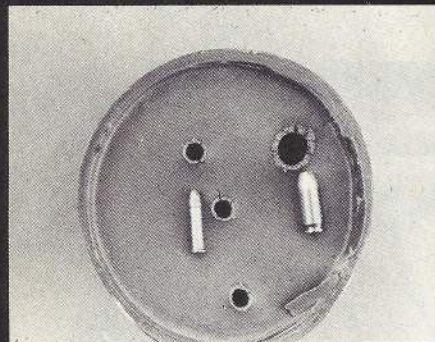
First remove the magazine and make sure the pistol is safe by pulling back the

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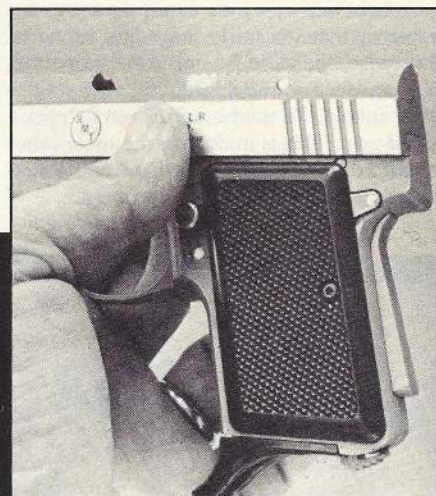


The safety location, just in front of the left grip panel, is perfectly located for fast operation by a right-handed shooter. The grip safety is an aid to make sure the gun won't fire unless the shooter has the proper control.

Other than the extractor location, the overall view of the .22 (front) is exactly the same as the .380 Back Up, the first small-framed gun made by AMT.



(Above) The difference between a .22 and a .380 entrance hole in the oil-based clay blocks can be seen here. (Right) The inherent accuracy of the test .22 Back Up was apparent with groups like these being the norm.



AMT's pleasant dilemma: the .380 with its 5-round magazine, or the new .22 Back Up with its 8 rounder.

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slide to check the chamber. Next pull the trigger to drop the hammer. Then, using a punch, drive out the pin that holds the bolt in place in the slide. Once this has been removed, pull back the slide partially which will enable the bolt to be removed.

Once the bolt has been removed, push the slide forward to release it from the frame. This will enable it to be removed forward off the barrel and frame. The recoil spring and guide can now be removed and the pistol is ready for cleaning. No further disassembly is recommended. The pistol is reassembled in reverse order and the only tricky part of this operation is putting the bolt back in the slide. I found the easiest method was to marry the slide to the frame and then place the bolt in position and press it into position by applying pressure with the thumb. Once in place it simply requires the pin to be replaced and the operation is complete.

One of the reasons for producing the Back Up in .22 is to provide a small compact trail gun. Most of the handguns used for this purpose are chambered for this popular cartridge and the Back Up has the added advantage of being small enough to slip into one's trouser pocket. If it is loaded with some of the new hyper-velocity ammunition like Yellow Jackets or Stingers it still is a viable choice as a second gun for law enforcement use.

The question that was foremost in my mind was whether the little Back Up would be accurate enough to fill the bill as a trail gun. Most comparable pistols of this size are difficult to shoot accurately beyond ten yards. Greater accuracy than this is needed out in the field, be it for shooting small game or just casual plinking.

With this in mind, I put up a silhouette target at 20 yards and, after warming up with a few rounds, fired a five-shot group from a rest position. The ammunition used for this part of the test was CCI Stinger. While I found the pistol quite comfortable to hold, I had to really concentrate on the sights, which are tiny compared to the larger pistols. The trigger pressure was also a little on the heavy side but, in spite of this, I was surprised with the result.

The result was a 2¼-inch group, low and slightly to the left of the center scoring ring of the B 27A target. This is pretty good for a pistol of this size so I tried another five shots, this time using Remington .22 Target ammunition. Once again, the results were surprisingly good. The group was three inches, although four shots were clustered together within a 1½-inch radius that was a little high on the target.

Impressed with the accuracy of the Back Up I got ambitious and tried my hand at some large metal targets 50 yards away, and satisfying sounds of metal impacting metal told me I was on target. Quite honestly, I was staggered with the accuracy of this little pistol. While I'm not claiming

that the Back Up will set any records on the target range, its accuracy is far better than I expected. The tiny sights and heavy trigger mean you really have to concentrate on what you are doing, but, provided you do everything right, you will hit what you're aiming at.

At closer ranges I was able to speed up my shooting with a little practice. The pistol handled well, both with Remington standard velocity target .22 and the hot Stingers. The pistol handled the latter comfortably and the difference in recoil was barely discernable. I fired a .380 Back Up by way of comparison and the recoil with Winchester Silvertips, while controllable, was much more noticeable.

At close range I tried out the Back Up with some instinctive shooting. At this distance sights are rarely used and, in any event, those of the Back Up are so small that too much time would be wasted trying to use them. On combat figure targets the pistol performed quite well. This is not the kind of pistol one would choose to try shooting aspirins with, but I had little difficulty in keeping all my shots on the larger targets at ranges up to seven yards.

When using hyper-velocity hollowpoint ammunition like Yellow Jackets and Stinger, bullet expansion is most important. Here, velocity is critical and I kept wondering if the 2½-inch barrel of the Back Up would be able to give the bullet the speed needed to mushroom in soft material. For this test I prepared some oil-based clay blocks. As a control, I used the .380 Back Up loaded with Winchester Silvertips.

I first shot the .380 Silvertip into the clay and found that the bullet had mushroomed to about .60 caliber. I followed this up by shooting three .22 Stingers into the clay and found that they had penetrated to about the same depth as the .380 Silvertip and that all of them had expanded to about .40 caliber. There is no doubt that the .380 was the more effective bullet but I, for one, am not going to volunteer to stand in front of a Back Up loaded with Stingers or any other .22 round.

COMING NEXT MONTH:
THE .223
AND
6 mm/223
AS HANDGUN CARTRIDGES

Throughout the test the pistol functioned flawlessly. I even tried a few .22 Shorts and found that the Back Up was able to feed them every time but that they did not have enough velocity to drive the slide back far enough to eject them. When standard velocity or Stingers were fired ejection was positive.

Pistols as small as the Back Up are not practical holster guns, being intended to be carried in a coat or trouser pocket. I found that I could carry the pistol quite comfortably in the pocket of my jeans, although it was difficult to get it into action quickly. The main reason for this is because one cannot really get a decent grip on the butt while it is in the pocket. A better way to carry the Back Up would be in a large coat pocket.

Although the manual safety of the Back Up is not likely to disengage itself, I would not carry this little pistol cocked and locked in my pocket. There is too much of a risk of accidentally disengaging the safety as you fumble for the pistol. The safe way is to keep the chamber empty and jack in



The small plastic magazine extension aids the shooter in getting a good purchase on the diminutive Back Up.

a round once the pistol is properly gripped in the hand and clear of the clothing.

I did some shooting using this method and found that I could get a round chambered very quickly once the pistol was out of the pocket. The operation also puts the supporting hand in the right position to assume a two-handed hold. I found that using a two-handed hold quickly when the pistol was already cocked could be hazardous because, being so small, it is possible to get the supporting hand in front of the muzzle. This does not occur after jacking a round in the chamber as the supporting hand is behind the muzzle once the operation has been completed.

I must confess that, up until now, I have never been a fan of tiny pocket pistols. Such guns are difficult to handle and shoot accurately and are invariably of a caliber that is pretty ineffective. In the case of the Back Up, I was surprised by its accuracy and impressed with its performance. Unlike many of the other tiny autos, which have stiff magazine catches and slides that are difficult to pull back, the Back Up was very easy to load and unload. As a trail gun, it is accurate enough to have a lot of fun shooting at casual targets. When loaded with hyper-velocity hollowpoint ammunition, it offers a greater measure of protection than many of the other pistols of the same size. For those looking for a small compact pistol for use in the field, AMT's .22 Back Up is worth considering.