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REVIEW

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY'S HELLCAT

THE NEW HOTNESS IN CARRY GUNS

BY ARON BRIGHT, A51967

Springfield Armory is looking to carve out a piece of the subcompact market share; the Hellcat is a striker-fired pistol designed for carry. The Hellcat boasts a thirteen-plus-one capacity, which is a lot of capacity for a subcompact pistol. The Hellcat comes with a thirteen round magazine with an extended base pad, as well as an eleven-round flush-fitting magazine. Both magazines are of the stainless-steel variety that are typical of Springfield polymer pistols. This high capacity for such a small gun is a huge selling point.

The Hellcat can be purchased as either an iron-sighted or an optic-sighted gun. The model we were sent arrived with the optic in place and co-witnessed, so iron sights could also

be used if needed or desired. A small, light, easy-to-conceal pistol with a dot riding on top and easy-to-see iron sights checks a lot of boxes for a good carry gun. The Pro-Glo sights are very visible; the rear sight is square so that one-handed manipulations of the slide can be done if the gun is being used solely with iron sights, and one-handed manipulations with the RMSc dot in place can obviously be accomplished.

This Hellcat came equipped with a Shield Sight's RMSc red dot already installed. Shield Sight's is not a new company; they started in the 1980's in Great Britain, and have specialized in suppressed weapons for Special Forces and stocks for the British Army sniper rifle. They are now one of the leading providers of Mini Red Dots

and have in recent years built them for JP Enterprises and Trijicon, marketed under their own brands. They are now producing several models of reflex sights and mini sight systems.

The Reflex Mini Sight Compact (RMSc) is a parallax-free clear polymer optic that they claim can withstand up to ten times greater shock impact than similar products using glass optics. (We did not test this feature.) The RMS is designed without a red reflective filter on the lens like several competing models. The sight body is made from aerospace grade aluminum and has an anodized matte black finish. The unit has a variable intensity drive circuit that senses target light levels and controls LED output giving optimum visibility of the dot against the target. The RMSc

is small but it is very easy to find the dot on the draw when indexing the target.

There is enough texture to the grip of this pistol to prevent it from slipping around in the hand. The stippling on the grip could not be called aggressive but it will receive a warm welcome for the EDC crowd. Springfield's Adaptive Grip Texture™ is grip pressure activated. When you run your hands over the grip texture it feels smooth; this is a design feature built into this gun to avoid it snagging on your clothes when carrying or hanging up on the draw. When gripped tightly, the design actually locks into your hand so that it won't move when firing. Holding onto the gun during live fire was not an issue.

The slide has cocking serration in front as well as behind the ejection port, making the slide easy to rack with a number of different techniques. There is the typical trigger safety that is common on many polymer pistols,



but there is no grip safety on this pistol. The firearm has a non-proprietary front rail that allows the installation of all common lights and laser if desired. Along with being the highest capacity micro-compact with a three-inch hammer forged barrel, it measures a mere one inch in width and weighs just 18.3 ounces empty. With the flush-

fitting 11-round magazine, the gun is only four inches in height and six inches in length.

This pistol is for EDC and not a range gun or a competition gun. The live fire testing we performed consisted of a few different strata of tests than normal. Groups shot indoors at ranges of five, seven, 10 and 15 yards proved that all





rounds could be kept far smaller than the palm of my hand. A paster could be hit at five yards with some effort on the part of the shooter. Shooting groups at longer distances did not seem to be an important thing for a gun of this type. In the two sessions that I fired the gun there was not a single malfunction and a variety of ammunition was used.

The next test for the Hellcat was to use it as a stage gun in a Carry Gun match that I direct at Parabellum. The Hellcat was staged with one round in the magazine and the chamber empty, hanging from a magnet stashed under a counter. The stage required the shooter to grab the Hellcat, rack it and engage a mini popper at a distance of 12 yards, toss the gun into a box on the counter, and then draw and engage the paper targets with their own gun. If the popper was missed

they could go back and re-engage with their own gun. The competitors were not permitted to touch the stage gun prior to the buzzer going off, so their first shot was cold. There were 25 shooters in the match on this particular Wednesday night; the popper was dropped with the Hellcat six or seven times. There were no malfunctions on the part of the gun. The shooters who forgot to rack the slide were a little slow to get started on the shooting part but that is not a problem with the gun. It is probably not a coincidence that the shooters on the top of the scoresheet were the ones who hit the popper with the Hellcat. The less than subtle point is that the gun is accurate if the shooter is accurate.

Jake Martens shot the Hellcat at another Carry Gun match and finished eighth out of 28 shooters. The folks

above him on the scoresheet all were shooting full-size guns. This match requires a mandatory reload on nearly every stage, and small guns are at a distinct disadvantage for a couple of reasons compared to full-size guns, but the results for the Hellcat in this match are more than respectable. Jake did not have the gun ahead of the match in order to be familiar with it. As a point of full disclosure Jake was not at a disadvantage due to not being familiar with the gun; there was one time he bought a gun the night before a match and placed very high in the match with it. Jake experienced zero malfunctions with the gun in the match and he did not miss.

The gun was drawn from a Clinger Holster that was purchased to use for the review. Jake is familiar with the Clinger holsters, having a few of them for different carry guns. Clinger Holsters is based in Van Buren, Arkansas, where they design and build comfortable adjustable holsters. The hinge inside the waist band model was used during the match. Clinger holsters are not only very concealable and comfortable but they are convertible from IWB to OWB, and additional accessories are available, such as their new Clinger Cushion.

The total round count through the gun was approximately 500 rounds. I personally witnessed every round fired through the gun and there was not a single hiccup. This Hellcat was extremely reliable. The Hellcat runs. The Hellcat is accurate. The sights on this Hellcat are very visible. There is a lot of positive to be said for the Hellcat for a carry gun. The promotional video released for the Hellcat talks about the reliability of the pistol after tens of thousands of rounds. We only fired about 500 rounds through the gun, straight from the box, and experienced zero malfunctions with a variety of ammo. So if you are in the market for a small handgun that was designed to be an "Everyday Carry" firearm that is full of features, big on capacity but small in size, check out the Springfield Armory Hellcat. ■