

Walther's PPQ pistol

- petite, powerful and quick!

by Jack Crawford



The test group supplied with the PPQ was reproduced in testing the pistol with factory loads and target handloads.

The PPQ has its ambidextrous magazine release integrated into the triggerguard; pushing either lever down will release the magazine.

If James Bond wanted to get a Walther PPK as used in many of his earlier films, he would be out of luck. While Walther still manufactures the PPK in its Classic handgun line in either a blued or stainless option, that famous Bond sidearm is now only chambered in 9x19 (9mm Parabellum).

Had James had a choice today, he may well have opted for Walther's new baby - the PPQ. The Walther P99 was first introduced in 1996 and has been the basis for the P99QA and this again has been a major contributor to many of the design elements in the current PPQ pistols. It has been reported that the PPQ has yet to find acceptance with any law enforcement agencies, although it as good as does this indirectly as the very similar P99QA which is made in Poland under licence for military applications.

The main difference with the PPQ compared to its predecessors is the firing system; the PPQ has what Walther calls a 'Quick Defence' trigger system, which I think is unique to Walther at this stage. The striker on the PPQ is always in the pre-set condition, other than when it has been fired on an empty chamber and is in the fully uncocked mode. At other times, the striker is ready to go, awaiting instructions from the trigger. Unlike the Glock system, the PPQ trigger does not have to completely cycle the striker mechanism and work against the striker spring. The trigger system sounds fairly complex, as when the trigger is pulled, it actuates a disconnector bar that releases the sear and drops the striker. This means that the trigger only has to look after itself, allowing for a relatively short (9mm) and light 25 Nm (about 5½lb) constant release weight. So after initially cycling the slide, the Walther PPQ is constantly in a 'cocked' state. The Walther PPQ specifications state that the trigger is only required to move forward about 2.5mm to reset the striker connection. Once the PPQ has a loaded cartridge in the chamber, the trigger is 9mm away from firing a shot.

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The PPQ is polymer framed with its stress and wear components being steel. The Walther uses a modified Browning-type recoil-operated locking system, where cam surfaces in the frame and under the barrel move the locking lug on the barrel out of engagement with the slide as the slide and barrel recoil.

The slide and other metal parts are listed as being 'Tenifer' coated. This is a proprietary nitriding process that imparts a hard and corrosion-resistant coating to the surface of the steel. The Tenifer coating is reported to have a Rockwell C hardness of 64. This is very hard as the average good quality knife blade has a Rockwell C hardness of around 60.

All the contact surfaces on the frame and grip area are textured and the form of the grip will suit most average hands. If it does not, the PPQ comes with two additional backstraps, which can be fitted through the removal of a cross-pin in the grip. The grip is ambidextrous, in that it fits quite well for either right- or left-handed shooters. The front of the frame also has a Picatinny rail moulded integral with its underside at the front to accommodate aiming devices or lighting equipment.

The PPQ test pistol is an 'Australianised' version organised by the Australian



The disassembly of the PPQ is not quite the same as similar recoil-operated self-loaders, but the end result is the same.

The Australian version of the PPQ is fitted with an extended barrel (120mm) to meet local firearms regulations.



Ben Mauro illustrates the lively recoil of the Walther, shown here at the top of its recoil movement with factory ammunition.

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distributor Frontier Arms and comes with what is listed in Germany as an accessory 'silencer barrel'. The simple reason for this is that this particular barrel option is 120mm long, while the standard barrels are only 102mm and that is not long enough to satisfy the current Australian gun law requirements for minimum barrel length for handguns.

The Walther PPQ has departed from convention with its magazine release arrangement. At first, I thought this system was a bit awkward compared to the traditional push-button release located at the root of the triggerguard. The PPQ has two levers that appear to be part of the lower section of the triggerguard. For a right-handed shooter, the magazine is released by pulling the levers (one or both will do the job) downwards with the thumb and



The striker firing system on the PPQ results in a very clean and simple slide arrangement.

forefinger and this allows the magazine to drop into the palm of the hand. With a conventional set-up, the left hand still has to be used to catch the magazine, but with the Walther, it works to do both jobs. Shooters with long fingers may be able to operate the magazine release levers with their right hand, but my digits were not long enough to do it.

The PPQ is a very compact handgun, but the characteristic that struck me on first lifting the Walther PPQ from its case is its lightness. It tips the scales at only 700g with its magazine in and is the lightest self-loading pistol of its type that has come across my test bench. The pistol has high-visibility fixed sights with a three-dot phosphor arrangement to aid lowlight sighting.

As stated previously, the trigger on the Walther is quite rightly one of its main claims to fame. The gun is striker-fired, but the design shortens this function considerably to 9mm. My RCBS trigger pull gauge verifies the factory specifications by measuring the average trigger release weight at around 2500g.

The real fun came when it was time to shoot the PPQ. The pistol came with a 15m test target with a group about 75mm. For a change, this seemed to be reasonably practical accuracy, as it is sometimes very difficult to emulate the test groups that are supplied with some firearms. The PPQ was tested with some Magtech 125-grain lead bullet ammunition, as well as some Federal Premium 125-grain JHP loads and my 125-grain Top Score handloads. All of the ammo shot consistently around 100mm at 25m, which is almost exactly proportional to the accuracy level achieved on the test target.

The shooting test highlighted the light weight of the PPQ - it is a mighty lively handgun with the full-power factory loads and needs a firm hand to keep the little devil under



The rear of the PPQ shows no hammer or other protrusions. The high-visibility sights are of the luminous three-dot variety.



Two 10-shot magazines and a magazine-loading assistant come with the pistol.



The PPQ comes with three interchangeable backstraps to suit different hand sizes.



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control. The ergonomics of the grip are very good, and there is the added advantage of the grip backstraps being able to be changed to suit individual hand sizes.

Fellow shooter Ben Mauro was recruited to shoot the PPQ so I could get some photos of it in action and catch the recoil performance on film. The challenge when taking such photos is to be quick enough on the shutter button to catch an empty case in the air just near the pistol. It is always relatively easy to get such shots with any 1911-type self-loader, but unfortunately, I had no such luck with the Walther, as it cycled so quickly that the case was long gone before the camera went off.



The PPQ shot well with Magtech lead and Federal jacketed ammunition.



The frame of the PPQ is glass-filled polymer with steel inserts in the wear and load areas.

While the PPQ has no conventional safety, its mechanism is no different in principle to a double-action revolver. The disconnecter on the trigger ensures that the striker cannot fall unless the trigger is pulled to the rear, so dropping a loaded PPQ will not result in an accidental discharge. It does have a loaded chamber indicator in the form of a red section on the extractor that is visible on the right side of the frame if there is a cartridge in the chamber.

The PPQ is not a bullseye target pistol; it is obviously oriented to practical competitive shooting applications, but more so to police and security use, where its light weight, ease of use and safe handling characteristics would enhance its desirability.

Like most self-loaders of its type, the PPQ is easy to strip for cleaning, with the requirement that the protection nut on the front of the barrel be removed to allow the barrel and slide assembly to be removed from the frame, and the barrel removed from the slide. The PPQ is supplied with two 10-shot magazines in a hard carry-case

Specifications

Manufacturer: Walther

Model: PPQ

Action: Recoil-operated self-loading

Calibre: 9x19

Barrel Length: 120mm

Overall Length: 198mm

Overall Height: 135mm

Overall Width: 34mm

Weight: 700g

Trigger: Pre-loaded striker system, 2500g weight of pull

Magazine: 10 round

Magazine Release: Ambidextrous incorporated in the triggerguard

Sights: High-visibility fixed with phosphor three-dot system

RRP: \$1 000, but shop around

and a magazine loading assistant, which clips over the magazine to suppress the follower to facilitate pushing of the stubby 9mm cartridges into the magazine.

For more information about the Walther PPQ pistol, visit www.frontierarms.com.au For specific pricing and availability information, contact your local gunshop. ●