



BABY BOOMER

BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

THE MAGNUM RESEARCH BABY EAGLE III IS A STURDY ALL-STEEL GUN THAT'S ONE OF THE SMOOTHEST SHOOTING 9MMS AVAILABLE TODAY.

Magnum Research fans get to welcome a new member to the family with the arrival of the Baby Eagle III semiauto pistol. The new Baby Eagle III is available with either a steel or a polymer frame in various configurations and calibers, all of which are manufactured by Israel Weapons Industries (IWI).

The Baby Eagle III will appeal to fans of single-action/double-action semiautos because it offers a robust design and excellent build quality, but it's worth noting that the Baby Eagle shares little more than a name and passing resemblance with the larger Desert Eagle guns in its family.

In fact, the Baby Eagle III's design is closer to the CZ 75 than the larger semiautos from Magnum Research. Like the CZ 75, the Baby Eagle III has a slide that rides inside the frame rail instead of outside the frame like a Colt 1911. Firearms with slides that ride inside the frame rails have a reputation for accuracy, and the design allows the slide to be slightly thinner than the more familiar outside-the-frame design.

Magnum Research offers its steel-frame Baby Eagle III pistols in both Full Size and Semi-Compact versions. The Full Size steel-frame pistol is available in 9mm, .40 S&W and .45 ACP and comes with a 4.43-inch barrel. The Semi-Compact is available in all three calibers and comes with a 3.85-inch barrel. Magnum Research is also importing a polymer-frame Baby Eagle III that's available in both barrel lengths in either 9mm or .40 S&W.

The pistol I tested was the Full Size steel-frame 9mm, which comes with double-stack metal magazines that hold either 10 or 15 rounds. The magazines feature bright red followers and fit easily into the Baby Eagle III's large mag well.

The grip itself is rather austere with vertical serrations on the frontstrap. A polymer grip cover offers texturing on the backstrap but nothing on the sides except a Magnum Research logo and a subtle thumb rest. The new, thinner Bay Eagle grip measures 1.2 inches wide on the sides and 1.3 inches across the thumb rests, which is on par with other double-stack 9mm pistols.

The Baby Eagle III offers a straight, elongated beaver-tail and a large, teardrop-shaped ambidextrous decocking lever. The slide itself is beveled to reduce weight and improve concealability (and, very likely, to mimic the larger Desert Eagle guns), and the carbon-steel frame and slide come with a matte black oxide finish that reduces glare and stands up well to abuse.

These guns also feature a large externally mounted extractor, reversible magazine release button and a four-slot accessory rail under the barrel. The trigger guard is enlarged to give better access to the trigger when wearing gloves.

The Baby Eagle III's 4.43-inch stainless steel match barrel fits precisely in the frame without a visible gap between the slide and barrel. The tight slide/barrel fit is one of the factors that makes these guns so accurate. The three-white-dot combat sights are dovetailed into the slide. The angled design of the rear sight helps control glare, and the rear sight can be adjusted for windage.

When pressed downward, the Baby Eagle III's decocker safely releases the hammer and deactivates the trigger. When it is pressed forward and up, the pistol is ready to fire. It's quite different from the control layout most American shooters are familiar with, but with a bit of practice the design becomes natural—just ask any longtime Beretta 92 shooter.

The ambidextrous decocker and reversible maga- →

BABY BOOMER

← zine release mean the Baby Eagle III works well for left-handed shooters. The large slide stop is easy to reach and easy to manipulate, and I'm glad Magnum Research hasn't shrunk the stop to vestigial proportions like some other gun companies have. The slide-lock lever is easy to access and doesn't require Herculean force to depress. The mag release button is well positioned, easy to access when you need it and tucked out of the way when you don't.

Like other DA/SA guns, the Baby Eagle III offers a heavy double-action trigger pull just under 12 pounds followed by a lighter 4.9-pound single-action trigger pull, as measured on an RCBS gauge. For a DA/

SA pistol the Baby Eagle III has a clean, smooth trigger that is predictable and manageable. The metal trigger itself has a wide, comfortable face that makes it easy to manage when firing in DA mode.

The exposed hammer has both half- and full-cock positions, and by pulling the trigger back partially, the hammer can be placed in the half-cock position without touching it. The decocker drops the hammer from either the half- or full-cock positions when engaged.

In a market overflowing with polymer-frame, striker-fired guns, the sturdy Baby Eagle III is something of an anomaly. The steel frame adds weight to the gun, which tips

the scales at 38 ounces—or roughly the equivalent of a Government-size 1911. Similarly, the extra barrel length gives the pistol an overall length of eight inches. Height is 5.4 inches. That makes the Baby Desert Eagle III as tall and nearly as long as a full-size 1911. Slide width is 1.3 inches, also similar to a 1911

The Baby Eagle III is anything but pint-size, which may seem odd in a world where smaller, lighter 9mms grab headlines. The Baby Eagle is bigger than most competitors, but as a result it's also more comfortable to shoot—especially if you have big hands.

Disassembling the Baby Eagle III is fast and straightforward. Simply remove the magazine of an unloaded gun and cock the hammer. From there, retract the slide slightly until the two round index markers on the left side of the frame and slide align. It doesn't take much—the slide only has to be pulled back about a quarter-inch—and when the dots align you simply push the slide stop pin out of the gun from the right side, removing the slide stop and allowing the slide to move forward.

From there the barrel and spring assembly can be removed for maintenance or cleaning. It's a fast and easy takedown design that even a novice shooter can master in short →



▲ The Baby Eagle III's control layout is quite simple. There's a large slide-lock lever, a decocker and a reversible magazine release button.



▲ The Baby Eagle III doesn't come with a lot of fancy grip texturing. Instead, the side of the polymer grips features an eagle logo and a small thumb rest.

MAGNUM RESEARCH BABY EAGLE III

TYPE: DA/SA semiauto
CALIBER: 9mm (tested), .40 S&W, .45 ACP
CAPACITY: 10-, 15-round magazines supplied
BARREL: 4.43 in.
OAL/HEIGHT/WIDTH: 8.0/5.4/1.3 in.
WEIGHT: 38 oz.
CONSTRUCTION: matte black oxide slide and frame (as tested)
GRIPS: polymer
TRIGGER: 4.9 lb. single-action pull; 11.9 lb. double-action pull (measured)
SIGHTS: three white-dot; drift adjustable rear
PRICE: \$691
MANUFACTURER: Magnum Research, Inc., MAGNUMRESEARCH.COM

BABY BOOMER

← order. Reassembly is straightforward and uncomplicated.

Unpretentious and unadorned, the Baby Eagle III is a robust workhorse of a pistol. Thanks to its slide cuts and geometry, it bears a passing resemblance to its larger Desert Eagle kinfolk, but the Baby Eagle stands on the merits of its own design without the need to impress by impersonating its outsized relatives.

The suggested retail price is \$691 for either the Full Size or Semi-Compact Baby Desert Eagle, which is \$9 less than the similar CZ 75 SP-01. Magnum Research has a long list of accessories available for the Baby Eagle III, including spare magazines, holsters and a wraparound grip that offers more texturing than the standard grip design. The company even offers inside-the-waistband holsters, so if you don't mind the Baby Eagle's size and weight, you can employ it as your everyday carry pistol.

Speaking of which, most 9mm pistols I test are compact, striker-fired, polymer-frame pistols designed

for concealed carry. The Magnum Research was a departure from that familiar design, and the first thing I noticed when shooting the Baby Eagle III is just how manageable this gun is. The hefty steel frame and slide do a great job mitigating recoil, and it's very easy to deliver fast and accurate shots with this gun.

Some shooters think DA/SA pistols aren't a good option for new shooters because they are more complicated than striker-fired guns, but I disagree. The Baby Eagle III offers a long sight radius, mild recoil, and a light, crisp single-action trigger. What's more, when the shooter engages the decocker and the trigger disconnects, the gun won't fire unless the trigger is pulled in double action.

Spending so much range time behind striker-fired guns required me to refresh myself on the DA/SA design. I suffered from poor accuracy on my second shot when firing offhand because my mind wasn't prepared to transition from double-action to single-action firing.



▲ The Baby Eagle III's two-dot rear combat sight is concave to help reduce glare. The hammer has a half-cock position in addition to full cock.

ACCURACY RESULTS | MAGNUM RESEARCH BABY EAGLE III

9mm Luger	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Std. Dev. (fps)	Avg. Group (in.)
SIG Sauer FMJ	115	1,265	14	2.49
Remington Golden Saber BJHP	124	1,210	14	2.22
Hornady Critical Duty FlexLock	135	1,043	9	1.96
Winchester Defender	147	988	15	1.81
Federal Syntech Training Match	147	1,036	8	2.42

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot-shot groups at 25 yards from a fixed rest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots recorded on a LabRadar doppler radar placed at the muzzle. Abbreviations: BJHP, bonded jacketed hollow-point; FMJ, full metal jacket

But once you're in the DA/SA groove, everything comes together, and this gun shines. The initial trigger pull is smooth but manageable, and you can half-cock the gun and rest if you find the long, heavy, double-action trigger pull a burden. Subsequent shots will be fast and accurate.

I appreciated the trigger's wide face, which is very controllable, and there's none of that mushiness you sometimes encounter with triggers on striker guns. My only complaint is I wish the trigger guard offered a more pronounced undercut where it meets the frame.

The Baby Eagle III managed excellent 25-yard groups that averaged between 1.80 and 2.50 inches for five shots from a fixed rest. The sights are relatively coarse—they're designed for combat and not bullseye shooting—but they work just fine. The rear sight is concave to prevent glare washing out the sight on sunny days, and the design is effective. With an unloaded gun I did the 360-degree turn under a full sun and never lost track of the sight.

Reliability was excellent, and the Baby Eagle III fed, fired, extracted and ejected every cartridge without hesitation.

This gun is much more fun to shoot offhand than really small, really light 9mm pistols. Unlike smaller guns that leave you searching for the sights, the steady Baby Eagle III keeps urging the shooter to step on the gas. If you want to shoot accurately and quickly—and who doesn't?—this gun is a great option.

Whether or not you elect to carry this gun and whether you choose an outside-the-waistband or inside-the-waistband holster is largely a matter of taste. The good news is that the Baby Eagle III is very close in size and weight to a full-size 1911. How you feel about carrying the 1911 is probably how you'll feel about the Baby Eagle III.

I made a few notes regarding specific features of the gun. First, the po-

sitioning of the decocker and the lack of front slide serrations makes racking the slide different than other guns. There isn't a lot of real estate on the rear portion of the slide that isn't taken up by the decocking lever. It's not a problem per se, but you will have to readjust how you operate the slide—like learning to step around the hitch on your pickup truck or a piece of furniture in your home.

Second, I recommend paying close attention to the relative position of the decocking lever and your fingers. When the lever is pressed down to the decock position, it rides along the side of the frame and can, if you aren't paying attention, capture a chunk of flesh as it moves. Trust me, that's not an experience you'll like—and you will remember it.

Overall, I was greatly impressed with Magnum Research's new 9mm and happy to see the Baby Eagle name continue forward. There's nothing fancy about this gun, and it's not the lightest or the newest design



Shooters will find the Baby Eagle III way more manageable to shoot than most of today's 9mms. You can deliver its rounds on target in a hurry.

to hit the marketplace. However, the Magnum Research Baby Desert Eagle III is a pistol that's ready to be worked hard, a gun forged in battle and built for the long haul.

It may never challenge the Glock 17 or SIG P320 in overall sales,

but fans of the Baby Desert Eagle know that doesn't matter. They like this gun's all-steel construction, they like the simplicity of the DA/SA design, and they like the Baby Eagle's workmanlike attitude. Odds are you will, too. 