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## High Standard Brings Back the AMT Automag II .22 Magnum Pistol

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photography by Jeff Quinn & Boge Quinn

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*Click for video!*

After being out of production for several years, **High Standard Manufacturing** is now producing the **Automag II** pistol that was previously produced by **AMT** in Irwindale, California and **Galena Industries** in Sturgis, South Dakota. For a bit of history on the gun, I refer you to [Paco Kelly's article on the Automag II](#). Today's article deals with the reintroduction of that fine pistol design.

*Click pictures for a larger version.*

Like most good things, they are never fully appreciated until they are gone. So it was with the original Automag II. Manufactured from 1987 until 2001, quality varied greatly, but basically, they were pretty good pistols. The Automag II has achieved somewhat of a cult following, and are seldom seen on the used market. I picked up a six-inch model back in October at the huge Tulsa gun show, and it is a real tack driver with its preferred ammo.



*The new AMT Automag II .22 Magnum pistol from High Standard.*

High Standard has made a couple of improvements to the original manufacturing process, but stayed true to the Automag II design. The barrel is now threaded into the chamber block, instead of brazed as in the originals, and they are heat treating parts that were prone to being too soft in the originals. High Standard also eliminated the tiny chamber holes that were used to delay blowback operation on the originals. First offered in the six-inch barreled version, with shorter barrels to be offered later.



I recently received one of the new AMT Automag II pistols in for review, and have been shooting it quite a bit since it arrived. The Automag II is a very good-looking pistol, slim and trim with contrasting matte and polished stainless areas on the slide, and an all-matte finished frame. The gun wears **Pachmayr** Signature synthetic rubber grips, with a thin layer of rubber also connecting the two panels and covering the front strap of the frame, providing a very secure hold. The fully adjustable sights are the high profile **Millett** style with a white outline rear and a white line up the center of the front ramped post. The front of the trigger guard is squared off, for those who like to shoot with a finger supporting the hold in this position. The pistol has a full-length stainless recoil spring guide rod, and a removable barrel bushing. The magazine is of stainless construction, with a plastic follower, and it holds nine rounds of .22 Magnum ammo, for a total loaded capacity of ten rounds. There is a hammer-block thumb safety on the left rear of the slide, which is easily reached by the strong-hand thumb of a right-handed shooter. The Automag II has a slide release in the familiar



*The Automag II is equipped with fully-adjustable, high-visibility Millett style sights.*

position to most shooters on the left side, and the slide locks open after the last shot is fired. The magazine is held by a heel-type catch, and is released by pressing rearward on the catch. I prefer this type of magazine release on a field gun to the more popular thumb button release. There is little chance of the release on the Automag II being accidentally pressed, and losing the magazine. It is a good design, and adds also to the trim lines of the pistol. The Automag II is a single action design, requiring that the hammer be cocked prior to firing the first shot, either manually, or by retracting the slide to chamber the first round from atop the magazine. Subsequent shots re-cock the hammer as the slide cycles, ejecting a spent cartridge case and chambering a fresh cartridge.

This is as good a time as any to address the .22 Magnum cartridge. Some regard the .22 Mag as a weak little cartridge, suitable only for ground squirrels and the like. That is a mistake. I have a very high regard for the little magnum. It offers very good penetration on flesh, and hits as hard as many larger calibers that are regarded as good choices to solve distasteful social encounters. I often recommend the .22 Magnum for a concealed carry or home protection gun for those who, for whatever reason, cannot handle the recoil of more powerful handguns. With very little recoil and muzzle rise, a good .22 Magnum can easily be used by most anyone to accurately place several shots rather quickly on target. Looking at the video demonstration by clicking the top picture to the right, the light recoil and easy controllability is readily apparent. In a fixed breach pistol such as the Automag II, the .22 Magnum really shines, giving higher velocities, and therefore more power, than revolvers of like size; this is attributable to the Automag's lack of the barrel/cylinder gap of the revolver design.

To illustrate this, I compared the velocities of the Automag II with those of two of my favorite .22 magnum revolvers; a **Ruger Single Six Hunter** with a seven and one-half inch barrel, and a **Taurus Model 941** with a five inch barrel, using a few different .22 Magnum cartridges. The results are shown in the chart below. Velocities are listed in feet-per-second (fps). Bullet weights



*Hammer-block safety is simple and effective.*

are listed in grains. The chronograph testing took place using a **PACT** chronograph, with an air temperature of 53 degrees Fahrenheit.

<i>Ammunition</i>	<i>Bullet Weight</i>	<i>Ruger 7-1/2 inch</i>	<i>Taurus 5 inch</i>	<i>AutoMag 6 inch</i>
Winchester Supreme JHP	34	1506	1563	1650
CCI Maxi-Mag TNT	30	1519	1542	1671
CCI Maxi-Mag +V	30	1516	1596	1680
Winchester Dynapoint	45	1105	1204	1256
PMC Predator JHP	40	1215	1280	1412
Federal Game-Shok JHP	50	1035	1085	1235

As can be seen in the chart, the Automag II clearly displayed higher velocities than did the two revolvers, sometimes as much as a 200 fps advantage, with most loads giving about a 150 fps edge to the AMT over the long-barreled Ruger. The most impressive gains were shown with the heavier bullets. The chart shows higher velocities for the five inch Taurus than it does for the longer-barreled Ruger. This is no misprint, but is a clear indication of the relation between a good, tight barrel/cylinder gap and high velocity. Of course, the AMT with no barrel/cylinder gap outperformed both.

I like the high velocities posted by the two **CCI** loads, but they occasionally failed to fully cycle the slide, sometimes leaving an empty cartridge in the chamber or hung up in the ejection port. Likewise the same problems occurred with the **Winchester** Supreme 34 grain loads. This AMT prefers bullets of a full 40 grains and with high velocity. The 45 grain **Dynapoint** ammo, with its low velocity, sometimes also failed to fully cycle the slide on this AMT. The best performer, in



*The magazine catch is on the heel, which is a good design for a trail gun.*

both accuracy and reliability, was the **PMC Predator** ammunition. It is also one of my favorite .22 Magnum loads for several of my revolvers and rifles that are so chambered.

Accuracy testing included each of the types of ammunition listed above. The trigger pull measured five and one-quarter pounds, and released crisply after a slight amount of take-up. All loads were fired on paper at a range of twenty-five yards, with a gentle breeze and an air temperature of sixty-seven degrees Fahrenheit, from a bench-rested two hand hold position. Every load tested grouped into less than three inches, with most doing better. The Winchester Supreme grouped into just over two inches, with the PMC Predator going under two inches for five shots, consistently, when I did my part.

I really like the AMT Automag II, and am glad that it is back in production. Weighing in at 34.2 ounces with an empty magazine, it is relatively light, and very slim, making for easy all-day carry in a good holster, such as the one pictured here from **Simply Rugged Holsters**. This pancake design carries the Automag II either on the strong side or as a cross draw, and offers good protection and secure retention of the weapon, while allowing quick access when needed. It is an excellent holster to wear strong side for concealed carry, or as a cross draw when wearing a backpack or riding an ATV, tractor, horse, or in a vehicle. **Rob Leahy** hand crafts each holster one at a time in his shop in Alaska, and has a quick delivery time and very fair prices. He makes holsters to fit just about any handgun ever made, using quality materials, practical designs, and expert craftsmanship.

The Automag II is a very versatile little handgun, good for hunting, plinking, or self-protection with the ammunition chosen for the situation at hand. It carries well, is accurate, and reliable with the ammo that it prefers. It is a highly versatile piece, and a lot of fun to shoot. Dealers can order the Automag II directly from High Standard manufacturing.

Check them out online at:



*The Automag II (center) offers a performance edge over a couple of Jeff's favorite .22 Magnum revolvers, the Ruger Single Six Hunter (top) and Taurus Model 941 (bottom).*

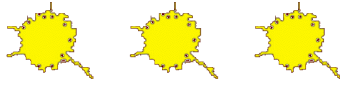


[www.highstandard.com](http://www.highstandard.com).

For a look at Rob Leahy's Simply Rugged and Grizzly Tuff holsters, go to:

[www.simplyrugged.com](http://www.simplyrugged.com).

Jeff Quinn



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*The Automag II proved to be both reliable and accurate with proper ammunition. Shown are some of the loads Jeff used in testing.*



*Some shooters look upon the .22 Magnum with disdain, but it is among Jeff's favorite small-bore calibers.*



*A good field gun needs a good field holster, and it is hard to beat the utility, craftsmanship and affordability of this versatile pancake design from Simply Rugged.*



*The Automag II has always been a fine design, and it is good to see it getting a new lease on life from the folks at High Standard.*



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