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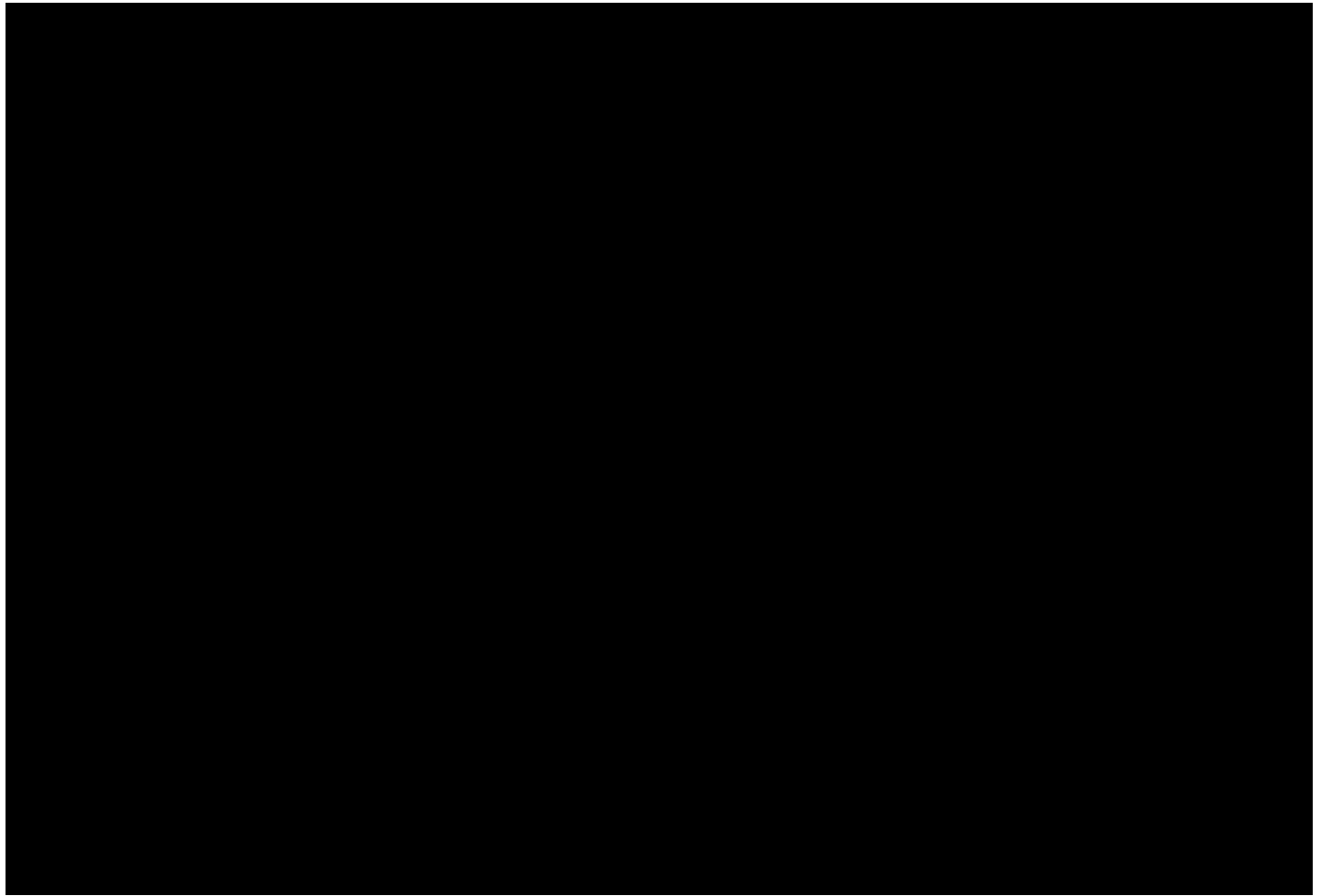
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American Derringer's .45 double-barrel in its velvet lined case

By Jim Dickson | Contributing Editor

When you talk of power in a small pistol package the American Derringer comes to the top of the heap.

This is a small gun only 4.82 inches overall with 3 inch barrels. Its height is 3.35 inches, frame width .9 inches, width at grips 1.2 inches and it only weighs 15 ounces. It can easily be covered by your hand yet it has the power of two .45 Colt cartridges lurking inside.

This is a cartridge that has killed all North American big game. A cartridge designed for the U.S. Cavalry in the early 1870's who required their new round to be able to kill an enemy's horse with one shot at long range. It did that and much more.

When the cavalry was employed in exterminating the buffalo in order to eliminate the Native Americans' food supply, troopers found it great fun to ride alongside the buffalo and kill them with their new .45 Colt M1873 Single Action Army revolvers. Until "magnunitis" swept the country it was the most popular handgun caliber for bear protection and it was not found lacking. Just be sure you have hard bullets as you need penetration not expansion. You already have a big enough hole.

When the new .38 revolvers would not stop the fanatical kris and bolo knife wielding Philippine Moslem Moros on jihad before they got to the American soldier the .45 Colt once again proved a one shot stopper. This is truly a cartridge that has proven over and over that it is one that you can safely stake your life on.

While the full size revolver can be counted on to shoot alongside a M1873 or M1892 Winchester at all ranges if the shooter only does his part, the little Derringer is and always has been a hideout or backup gun with a range that should be limited to about 10 feet. That is not as bad as it sounds since most gunfights occur at 5 to 10 foot ranges. Just remember that Derringers were designed and intended as deep cover guns or a backup to a full size pistol. Don't shoot this at 50 to 300 yards and expect to hit anything. Even 25 yards is quite a stretch for any belly gun like this.

The difficulty of hitting with these little guns has led to some interesting developments.

Ammunition Suggestions

Sabot Designs LLC loads seven flechettes in the 2 ½-inch .410 shell which will also chamber in these guns. At 10 feet they have a spread of 5 ½ inches on the target which can make up somewhat for the difficulty of precision shooting with these guns. These flechettes will penetrate a car door to reach an enemy and they penetrate over 20 inches of ballistic gelatin. Each one has about the same stopping power as a 9MM pistol cartridge based on its energy signature, the total energy deposited by the projectile on impact. The energy of seven 9MM pistol cartridges striking simultaneously is impressive. As the name implies these rounds are inside a plastic sabot that prevents the bore damage that would occur if the steel flechettes were fired against the bare barrel.



A simple but fast and effective holster for the .45 Derringer

There are also Federal buckshot loads for the 2 1/2-inch .410. There are four .36-caliber 000 buckshot stacked end to end. Since they come out in a column they only spread to 4 1/4 inches at 10 feet. The total weight of the buckshot load is 280 grains and the combined frontal area is 1.44 inches of striking surface.

Both the flechette and buckshot loads are popular for defense but for bear I would not consider anything except the full power .45 Colt loads. For defensive use, the "Cowboy Action" loads with their somewhat slower velocities work fine as they penetrate a bit less, which means they are dumping more of their energy into the target instead of over penetrating. Humans are thin targets front to back. That's why the .455 Webley at 700 FPS had such a good reputation as a manstopper. The full power .45 Colt is a cavalry horse and bear stopper. It also works equally well against enemy attackers, just like it's big brother, the 45-70. Its extra power is no disadvantage.

This pistol is highly recommended as a backup gun for bear. It will be most welcome if you get to "rasslin'" range with something with big teeth and claws that may outweigh you by 1,500 pounds. If your rifle and full size pistol get knocked aside, as has happened with bear in the alders, this little gun can literally be a lifesaver.

All Stainless

The American Derringer is all stainless steel except for its springs, which makes it very carry friendly. It is comfortable to fire so long as you keep a tight grip on it thanks to its generous size grips. It can be carried in a pocket or a holster.

For inside the waistband carry nothing beats the holsters from Sticky Holster company because once it is positioned behind the belt inside the waistband it stays at whatever angle you left it at. This makes carrying a lot more comfortable. While the Sticky Holster has the waistband and the belt to keep the gun in its holster, the gun is too grip heavy to stay in a conventional holster without a safety strap to keep it from falling out.

Avoid holsters with a belt clip for this gun. If the gun is in a holster with a belt clip and is positioned in front of your hip bone the holster and gun may pop out and fall to the ground the first time you bend over.



The .45 Derringer in a pancake holster

I have used simple holsters with old fashioned safety straps as well as pancake holsters with this gun and everything seems to work well with it. It can easily be carried in a pocket but a gun carried in a pocket must not have any keys, coins, or whatever else in that pocket and a pocket holster is very desirable to break up the outline of the gun and protect it from the grit and lint that magically seem to appear in pockets. Any pocket holster should have a nub sticking out at the top to catch in the pocket lining so the holster does not come out with the gun when you draw, as in El Paso Saddlery's PocketMax model. I have seen too many pocket holsters that seemed to be inseparable from their pistol in a fast draw from the pocket.

A lot of people will not carry a full size .45 opting for the smallest hideout gun they can find. These miniature guns are equally hard to hit with as their small size makes precision shooting almost impossible. A double Derringer in .45 Colt makes a lot more sense. You can take out one drug crazed oversize attacker with each shot whereas you may not be able to stop even one before he reaches you if you have a smaller caliber.

This is a deep cover carry gun that has a most unique safety. It blocks the hammer so the gun cannot fire if dropped but it automatically comes off when the hammer is cocked. It doesn't get any better than that.

You must pull the hammer back to the safety position when loading because if the hammer is all the way down one of the firing pins will be forced out where it will fire a cartridge when the barrels are swung shut.

Quality Guns

These are top quality handmade pistols built by Elizabeth Saunders and John Price. Elizabeth is a widow carrying on her late husband's dream of making double Derringers. Robert Saunders founded the company in 1980 and began making this pistol. Tragically he died of pancreatic cancer in 1993. Elizabeth took over running the company and eventually went back to school to get a degree in mechanical engineering. There she met John Price in one of her classes. John was a military veteran getting his degree as well. Afterwards he went to work for her.

Quality is the watch word at American Derringer. They even cut out all distributors in 1994 when their demand for low prices conflicted with the quality standards American Derringer was determined to maintain.

They are the only entirely handmade guns that I am aware of that are available in the U.S. outside of some Best Quality guns from the British Isles and Germany. Thankfully their cost is more like a new Colt or S&W than a Purdey or a Holland & Holland. They are the only reasonably priced entirely handmade guns out there. For those of us that appreciate practical art and skilled hand work there is great pride of ownership that comes with a handmade firearm. This is one anyone can afford. It is available from:

American Derringer Corporation

127 North Lacy Drive

Waco, Texas 76705

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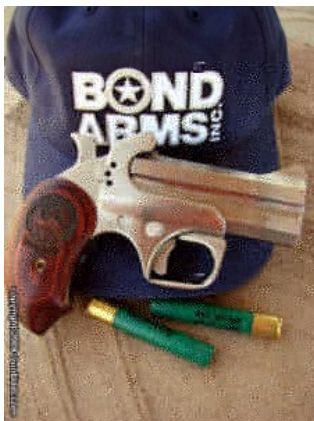
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Bond Arms | Bond Arms .45 Colt



by Jeff Quinn – Gunblast.com

photography by Jeff Quinn & Boge Quinn

April 20th, 2009

If you have never handled a Bond, forget everything that you know about derringers. For over 150 years, the term “derringer” has been used to describe what most think of as a cheap, light, short, two-barreled last ditch backup gun. Manufacturers in the late nineteenth century jumped on the popularity of Henry Deringer’s small pocket guns, and started cranking out pistols of varying quality to satisfy the market. Ever since, derringers have been available that chambered small caliber cartridges into pistols that were cheap to build and sell. For what they are, these derringers serve their purpose, and certainly can put two reasonably quick shots into an opponent at close range, but are sometimes lacking in quality of materials, manufacture, safety, and power. Some of these pistols will slam-fire, and can also fire if dropped on their hammer. Most on the market today are made from zinc alloys, and work pretty well, but lack the quality and size to chamber powerful big bore cartridges.



Enter Bond Arms, Inc. of Granbury, Texas. The Bond Arms derringers exude quality. Some would call them the “Cadillac” of

derringers. I would not. I have owned Cadillacs. Very good automobiles, but they are not up to the quality standards of Bond Arms. The closest that I can relate to the quality of the Bond pistols is the Freedom Arms revolvers. Most revolver shooters are familiar with Freedom Arms. Freedom makes the finest revolvers on the planet, and Bond Arms makes the finest derringers ever built. Ever. Made from machined stainless steel, the Bond is the derringer perfected. The Bond has a rebounding hammer and spring-loaded firing pins, adding greatly to the safety of the design. The hammer is blocked from forward movement unless the trigger is pulled, to prevent the weapon from firing if dropped upon its hammer. In addition, the Bond has a crossbolt safety that effectively blocks the hammer from contact with the firing pins. It is very simple to use, but I prefer to rely upon the rebounding hammer and block, and do not use the crossbolt. To prevent the crossbolt safety from being accidentally pushed into the "on safe" position, a small set screw can be tightened with an Allen wrench, to lock the crossbolt into either the "on safe" or "off safe" positions. To load and fire the Bond, a side lever is pushed downward, releasing the barrels to swing upward for loading. After loading, the barrels are closed, the hammer is manually cocked, and the trigger is pressed backward and slightly downward to fire. The locking block is angled, or cammed, in the design, and self-adjusts to stay tight as the gun wears, much like the lockup on a modern double-barreled shotgun. Come to think of it, the Snake Slayer is a double-barreled shotgun! The trigger pull on the sample gun released cleanly with seven and one-quarter pounds of pressure. This is a good pull on a pistol of this type. It is not too heavy, and not too light. The barrels alternate in firing sequence, without resetting when the action is opened. Most prefer to fire the bottom barrel first, and looking at the block on the hammer that contacts the firing pins, one can determine the sequence of firing. The Snake Slayer has a trigger guard, which is removable if desired, but there are models available without a trigger guard, for those who prefer it that way. I really like the trigger guard. It makes the weapon easier to handle for me, and is not in the way at all. The Bond derringers are available chambered for several different cartridges, and the barrels are interchangeable. The sample pistol wore a set of three and one-half inch .45 Colt/.410 Snake Slayer barrels, but also had spare four and three-sixteenths inch .45 Colt/.410 Snake Slayer IV and .38 Special/.357 Magnum Defender barrels that were shipped to me as well. The chamberings offered by Bond include the following:

.45 Colt/.410 Shot Shell, rifled bore .357 Magnum/.38 Special .357 Maximum .45 ACP .45 Colt .45 GAP .44 Special .44 WCF (.44-40) .40 S&W 10 mm Auto 9 mm Luger .32 H & R Magnum .22 Long Rifle



Changing barrels is the definition of simplicity. Swing open the barrels, and remove the hinge screw with a Allen wrench. Insert the other set of barrels and replace the hinge screw. It takes very little effort and less than a minute to switch barrels. The extractor is built into the barrels, so no change is necessary for that part. The extractor is spring-loaded, and works to extract any of the rimmed cartridges automatically, lifting them slightly as the barrels are swung open. While several cartridge options are available, the bread and butter of the Bond line is their .45 Colt/.410 shotshell versions, such as the Snake Slayer shown here. The versatility of that combination is outstanding, allowing the pistol to chamber a variety of .45 Colt ammunition, and either two and one-half or three inch .410 shotshells, including birdshot, buckshot, and slugs. The three inch buckshot load usually contains five pellets of either 00 or 000 size, and at close range, is devastating on flesh. The pattern spreads pretty quickly, but at typical fighting distances, the buckshot is a very good choice. At contact distances typical in a gunfight, even birdshot is an excellent choice. While called the Snake Slayer, this handgun would be an ideal defense against a carjacker. Carried in the Bond Driving holster, it is quick into action, and a face-full of number six birdshot will repel any attacker, leaving him either dead or worse, blind for the rest of his life. Taurus is selling all of "The Judge" .45/.410 revolvers that they can make, but the Bond double barrel is much more compact than even the lightweight Judge, and fires the full-length three inch shotshell. The lightweight Judge is only offered in the two and one-half inch version. You have to go with the much-heavier steel Judge to get the three inch chamber. It is neither as light nor as compact as the Snake Slayer. While the Judge offers three more shots without reloading, the two in the Snake Slayer are plenty for any snake, and should suffice for close range defense from human predators as well. I like the Judge, but for a packing gun, I greatly prefer the Bond. The three and one-half inch barreled Snake Slayer weighed in at 21.8 ounces on my scale, and has an overall length of only five and one-half inches. It is a true pocket pistol, laying pretty flat, but I prefer to carry in the driving holster.



Shooting the Bond Snake Slayer was a pleasure. Recoil, with even the stoutest .410 shot loads was easy to control, thanks to the excellent design of the grip. Having that extra length to accommodate the little finger makes a world of difference, as does the trigger guard in helping to control the pistol. The recoil of the .45 Colt ammunition varied from mild to heavy, depending of course upon the load chosen. However, while shooting .45 Colt ammo from the Snake Slayer is a good option, I prefer to think of this thing as close range protection from poisonous snakes and two-legged vipers, and in that capacity, the .410 birdshot and buckshot excels. Shot patterns at close range with .410 birdshot were superior to any centerfire handgun shot cartridges that I have ever used. While the bores are rifled on the Snake Slayer, the shot load did not exhibit a donut pattern, and as can be seen in the picture, a snake would have no chance of squirming through that shot pattern, and neither would an attacker in a close range fight.

The Bond Arms Snake Slayer is a very unique weapon, like nothing else on the market. It is a specialized weapon, ideally suited for carry in poisonous snake country, and an excellent choice for a handgun to carry while driving an automobile. It is compact, relatively lightweight for the power that it packs, and built with pride by American craftsmen in the state of Texas. It is a good weapon, and I highly recommend it.

Check out the entire line of Bond Arms firearms and accessories online at www.bondarms.com.

For the location of a Bond Arms dealer near you, [click here](#).