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NOVEMBER 2007

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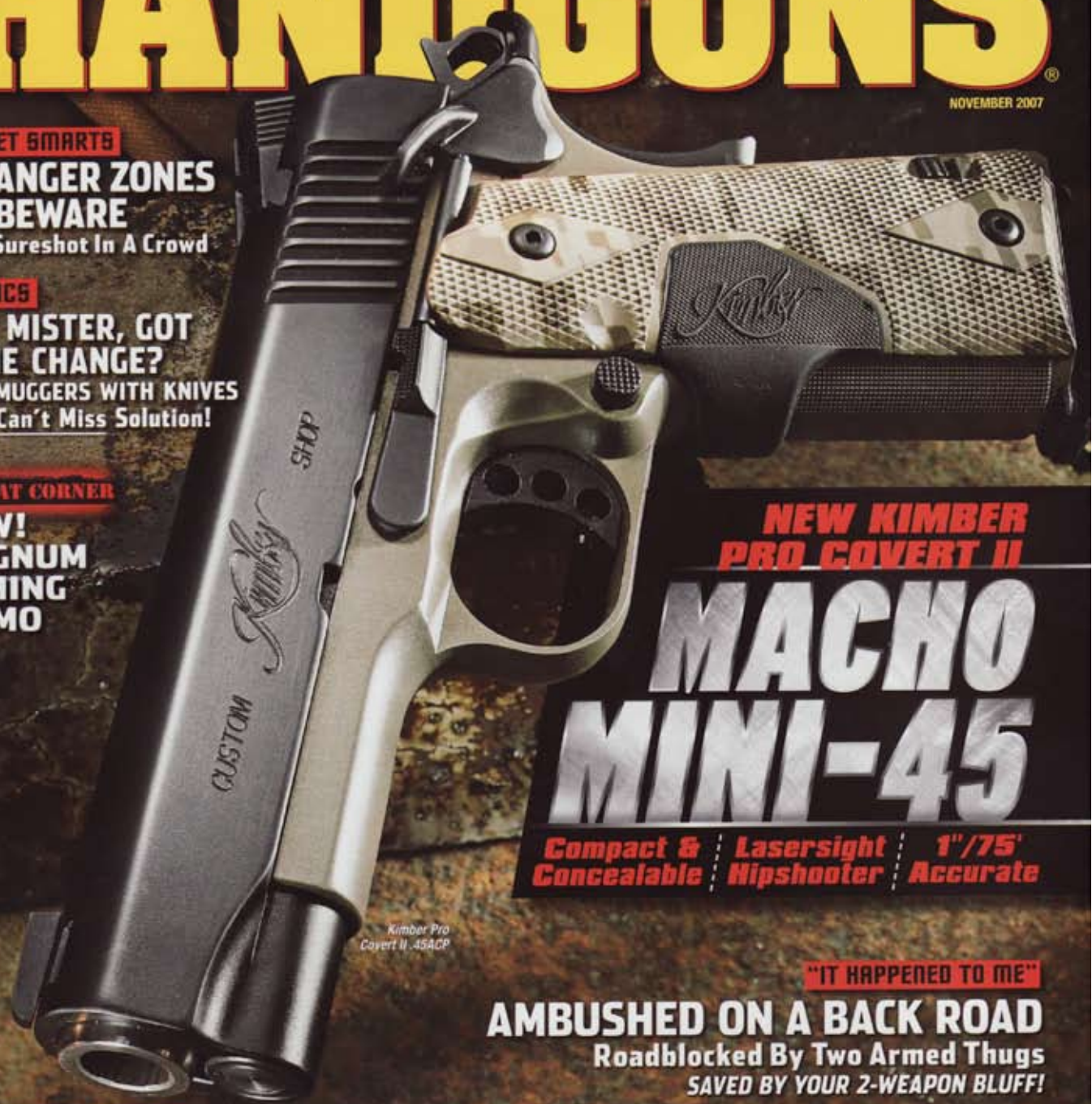
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SPHINX 3000 TACTICAL 9mm

High-End custom quality CZ 75 clone—breed for competition circuits!

By Denis Prisbrey

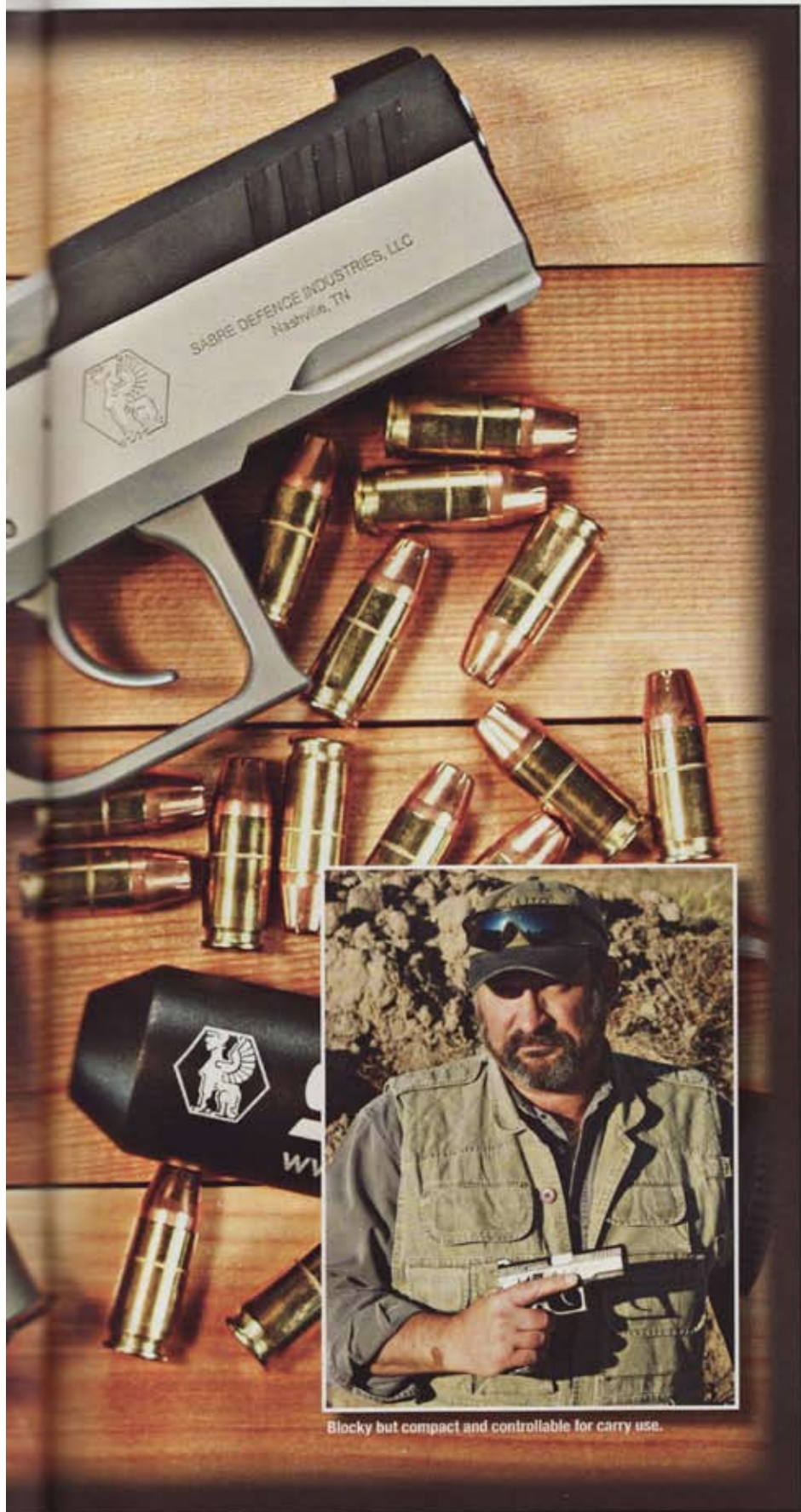
The classic CZ 75 pistol has established an enviable track record as one of the best double-action 9mm autopistols in worldwide service with police, military, and civilian shooters. It features excellent ergonomics and reliability in an all-steel pistol, a lower level of recoil, and acceptable accuracy for the service pistol role it was created to fill. Originally built in Czechoslovakia and mostly unavailable in the US until the collapse of the Iron Curtain, it's also been copied by other non-Soviet-aligned companies in the past in various configurations for import and sale here. The CZ 75 is currently offered in 12 versions by CZ USA that are selling in numbers, and ArmaLite's brand new AR-24 is a Turkish-built CZ 75-based design. It's a popular platform, and that's because it works so well.

While regular run-of-the-mill production CZ 75s are built to a perfectly functional level, leave it to the Swiss to grab the design and run it up the Matterhorn in quality and construction. Made in Switzerland, the Sphinx pistol series is the best-built iteration of the Czech pistol that I've seen, and at a retail price of over \$2000 with tax and shipping, it better be.

While the bulk of the Sphinx lineup is intended for and sold to the European market, Sabre Defence Industries imports pistols in both 9mm and .45ACP for US sales. The .45ACP version hasn't hit our shores in volume yet, but the 9mm Sphinx pistols are available, albeit in limited



Showing typical Swiss quality, this high-dollar 16-round 9mm CZ 75-based Sphinx is in a class of its own for competition or carry.



SABRE DEFENCE INDUSTRIES, LLC
Nashville, TN



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SPHINX 3000 TACTICAL 9mm

numbers at around 1000 guns imported annually. My initial intent was to try for a .45 to review, but with only three in the country and none available when this article was set up, I ended up with a 9mm, specifically the Model 3000 Tactical Titanium De-Cocker version for testing.

Gun Details

The Sphinx comes in a very nice black, padded, compartmented nylon case with a shoulder strap that carries the pistol, one spare magazine, pocket cleaning kit, instruction manual, test target, and a lock. The pistol that comes with it all is a blocky, three-toned, heavy double-action auto with black polymer grips.

Starting at the top, the TTD model uses a black oxide-treated stainless steel slide with an universal accessory rail, and fore and aft cocking serrations over a two-piece receiver. Steel sights are fixed with a vertical two-dot alignment, controls are ambidextrous, triggerguard is oversized and squared, the trigger itself is smooth-faced, the recoil spring guide rod is steel, the magazine release button is also oversized and reversible as well, and the blued double-stack magazine holds 15 rounds. There you have the overview, but don't switch channels yet.

In profile, the pistol looks very angular, as mentioned. A Sabre Defence rep says the overall external contours were developed for European shooters who have a different concept of pistol design than we do, and in fact this one is not necessarily directed at the "Carry" or "Tactical" market, despite its designation as a Tactical Model. Frankly, at this pricing level, it's well out of reach for most looking for a concealed carry gun, and few tactical squads will have either the money or the interest in spending it on a 9mm pistol if they do. (Although, the same package in .45ACP may have more applicability, and \$2990 is not too far out of line with a quality SWAT .45.) What Sabre Defence sees as the primary market for this pistol, in its different model variations, is the competition circuit where participants in IPSC and so on, who like the basic platform, will frequently send a new CZ 75 out for expensive custom work for "run and gun" matches. The company says if you like the CZ 75, but don't like shipping it off and waiting for several months to see it again, here's your "custom CZ 75" already dressed up and ready to go out of the box, and at roughly comparable prices.

So, with that in mind, let's take a closer look.



Main controls are ambidextrous, front lever is slide release, rear is decocker.



Note an universal accessory rail for lights, lasers.



Pocket cleaning kit is included.



Smooth-faced trigger works well in DA mode, mag button is extended for a positive mag dump.



Author feels forward cocking serrations are too short and close to muzzle.

The slide is hefty and angled along both sides at the top, from front to rear. The front serrations are usable, but too short and close to the muzzle for me, and I found the rear serrations much easier to use in cycling. I do prefer all-steel sights, and these are pretty durable. The front's removable from its milled longitudinal cut in the slide by backing out a hex-head screw; the rear is adjustable for windage only by loosening another hex-head screw and tapping left or right in its dovetail. The Sphinx's external extractor's hook is

nearly twice as wide where it engages a cartridge rim as many other 9mm pistols, and the DA/SA 3000 9mm variants all feature an internal passive firing pin block that doesn't release without a full trigger pull. (SA models do not.)

The black hammer uses an abbreviated spur with three horizontal serrations that are small enough to avoid snagging on clothes (for those who choose to carry one), but still long enough for non-slip SA thumb cocking if needed. It's aggressively machined (sharp corners), so there shouldn't be a problem if you do need to manually cock the pistol. There are three hammer positions: fully