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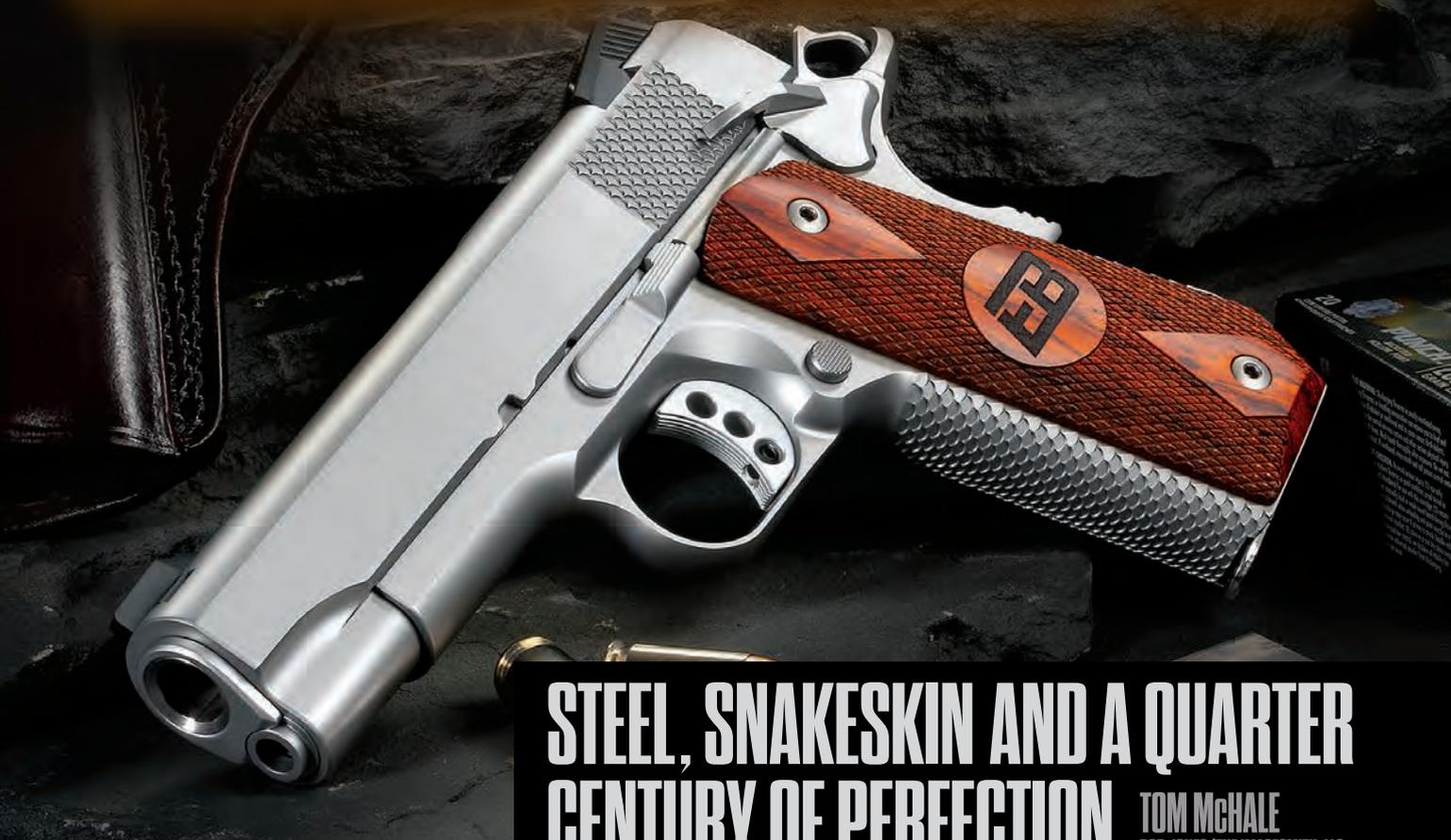
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KOBRA TURNS 25



STEEL, SNAKESKIN AND A QUARTER CENTURY OF PERFECTION

TOM McHALE
ROB JONES/THE IMAGESMITH, LLC

We tend to think of gun companies as impersonal entities, while forgetting that every successful company began with a passionate and relentless person. You know, the classic American entrepreneur who had a dream and pursued it until it became reality.

Such is the case with Ed Brown Products. Ed Brown (the man) was a tool and die maker, CAD/CAM programmer, and CNC machinist for his day job. But back in 1968, he acquired an FFL and opened up a part-time business as a gunsmith. We're talking nights and weekends, and he did this for 20 years, moonlighting in the firearms business while honing his gunsmithing skills. It was the classic American dream in action. Burn the midnight oil, tirelessly, for years, and one day you just might end up with a successful or even thriving company.



Then he got the shooting competition bug in 1980 and quickly rose up the ranks in competitions like IPSC and Bianchi Cup until he became ranked in the top 16 of competitive combat shooters. That's a fine skill to match with gunsmithing expertise, as one implicitly understands the customer requirements for top-notch guns and gear.

Fast forward to 1992, and Ed Brown Products (the company we know today) was formed. The mission of this new corporate entity was to manufacture 1911 pistols. That quickly put a stop to the custom gunsmithing business, and the company moved forward producing its own frames, slides and parts.

Sadly, Ed Brown passed away from an aggressive illness in September 2024,



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25TH ANNIVERSARY ED BROWN KOBRA





and the shooting industry suffered yet another tragic loss of a true icon. But thanks to integrating his sons, Travis and Wade, into the company back in 1998, the business continues as strong as ever.

Birth Of The Kobra Carry

Ed Brown Products released the first Kobra Carry way back in the year 2000, so as I write this, the beautiful 1911 is celebrating its 25th Anniversary, making it the longest continuous production of a custom 1911.

With its distinctive bobtail grip and unique snakeskin texturing on the slide and grip, the Kobra Carry's name and purpose live in perfect harmony. No wonder its distinctive features have been copied relentlessly by 1911 makers and custom gunsmiths.

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Ed Brown's best-selling pistol ever, the company is offering three variants of the Kobra Carry for one year only. That means you've got to get your order in before December 31, 2025, or you might be waiting for another 25 years for the next special anniversary edition. The Kobra Carry 25th Anniversary pistol is available in either all stainless or the black Gen4 thermoset polymer finish. Those

are the first two choices. If you want to go all out, then door three leads to your huckleberry. That's the meticulously hand-crafted Kobra Carry Signature Edition.

25th Anniversary Pistol

Where do I start? When you pick up this pistol, it is clear that it is as high-grade as high-grade gets. Nothing moves, and I mean nothing. One might mistake it for a prop gun machined from a solid hunk of metal. Until you start to operate the controls and slide as intended. Then you appreciate the differences between custom fit and production models made by assembling parts bins of thousands of "pretty close" tolerance components. In the production world, you have to allow a bit of play between pieces to make sure everything functions. Not in this case.

The Kobra Carry, Ed Brown's best-seller every year for 25 years running, sports a 4.25" Commander-sized slide and frame and a Commander frame. For those, like me, who don't commit the Officer, Commander and Government 1911 dimensions to memory, that sizes the Kobra Carry at 5½" tall and 7½" long overall. Being constructed from stainless steel, you'll appreciate

the heft of the 35-oz. unloaded overall weight. The dimensions and distinctive bobtail grip define the "Carry" part.

The "Kobra" origin stems from the delightfully aggressive snakeskin texture strategically placed where fingers would normally tend to slip. You'll find the overlapping snake scales on the rear of the slide, the backstrap just below the grip safety (the memory bump has a nifty set of three horizontal grooves to help prevent slip) and covering the front strap. The "delightfully aggressive" description simply implies an effective and visually appealing non-slip texture that won't make you bleed.

The grip panels are Cocobolo with the large smooth diamonds covering each mounting point, and a small diamond checkering pattern everywhere else. You'll see a large Ed Brown logo in a smooth circular area in the center of each grip. Cocobolo derives from the tropical *Dalbergia retusa* tree and is dense, loaded with oils, and beautiful, making it a wonderful choice for handgun grips. I held them to my ear to listen for the sound of piña colodas, but no luck.

The sights feature a Trijicon HD XR front with a bright orange ring surrounding a Tritium lamp. The rear sight is an all-black ramped model with rounded corners for snag-free draw and holster movement. The notch is rebated to reduce glare. The result of the combination is a highly visible setup, even for my aging eyes.

On the hardware side, the Kobra Carry has a traditional single left side safety, a recessed slide lock (nice touch!), skeletonized hammer and glorious trigger — with the proverbial crisp glass rod break.

Included in the 25th Anniversary kit are two seven-round magazines with tall and short bump pads, a bushing wrench and a canvas carry bag. You

ED BROWN KOBRA

likely won't need that bushing wrench as this model uses the traditional guide rod setup with a flat coil mainspring. I was able to field strip it easily with my bare hands, although I did use the guide rod plug to depress that recessed slide lock, as my fat finger couldn't reach it enough to release.

You'll see a couple of 25th Anniversary touches, including an engraved "Custom by Ed Brown" signature line and a "25th Anniversary" mark on the frame's right side.

The 25th Anniversary model lists for \$3,295.

Signature Edition

Go big or go home, right? If you want the true 25th Anniversary experience, check out the Signature Edition model. This one is by special order only — you'll have to plunk down a \$500 non-refundable deposit and wait for yours to be built — and engraved. That's right, this one features high-polish stainless construction and a beautiful engraved treatment from master engraver James White.

The pistol is literally covered in elegant traditional engraving. The slide, excepting the top (for a "no distractions" sight picture), is covered on both sides but where the Kobra texturing lives. The sides of the frame, trigger guard, bobtail section, slide stop, grip safety, bushing face and even the grip screws are decorated. The overall result is stunning, especially when paired with the smooth cocobolo grips. Oh, did I mention one of the included magazines is engraved around the base?

The rear sight is the same as the 25th Anniversary model, with the exception of side serrations, but the front sight features a bright gold bead. Classy!

This meticulously handcrafted version lists for \$8,295. If you want one, don't dawdle.

Range Performance

Before getting into the accuracy science, I wanted to get a feel for this pistol by shooting as many rounds as possible freehand. I brought along five different types of premium ammo and ran them all over a Garmin Doppler Radar chronograph: Nosler 185-grain JHP (951.7 fps), Black Hills 185-grain JHP (941.8 fps), Black Hills 230-grain JHP (812.5 fps), Federal HST 230-grain (856.4 fps) and Black Hills 200-grain Semi-wad-cutter (892.5 fps).

While waiting for a target change on the line, I occupied myself by warming up with the Kobra Carry by shooting dirt clods on the berm, about 30 yards out. This is where the



sights really grew on me. I've gradually migrated to more optics-equipped pistols over the past few years, as my eyes are slower than they used to be, so I find the red dot approach faster and more precise. But I had no trouble whatsoever hitting small clods and rocks with regularity at 30 yards with this pistol and its excellent iron sights. A .45 is a .45, and an all-steel model like this one features modest recoil. I didn't find that the bobtail changed anything about the feel through the recoil cycle. It was easy and pleasant to shoot in volume.

After a hundred or so rounds freehand, I decided to see what the Kobra Carry would really do.

A Ransom Call

The 25th anniversary Kobra Carry is a pistol that will outshoot my eyes, so I figured if you wanted to know what it's really capable of, I'd need to break out the Ransom Master Series rest setup.

For those not familiar already, the Ransom Rest is a brilliantly designed and engineered system to test the mechanical precision of a handgun by removing all the more subjective variables from the test — like shooter vision, hold stability, and imperfect trigger press. In pistols of this caliber (sorry, couldn't resist the pun), it takes very little to artificially ruin a group via imperfect shooter technique.

The Ransom literally clamps the pistol to the shooting bench, using a recoil system to handle that without shaking the gun to bits. The result is a perfect shot followed up by a precise return to the previous aiming point. The company offers many dozens of custom pistol inserts to safely hold hundreds of different guns. In this case, the standard Commander inserts worked perfectly with no adjustment required. I didn't even have to remove the grip panels.

Shooting multiple groups on a single target was a breeze. After each group, I just adjusted the various locking knobs for windage and elevation to move the point of aim as desired.

Accuracy Results

Setting up targets at 25 yards, I got the Ransom mounted to the bench and dialed in by shooting enough through it to settle the gun in the inserts, then proceeded to fire groups of all five ammo types. One of the neat things about the Ransom design is that you can change magazines easily without touching your setup.

Shooting five-shot groups, I measured the following. The Nosler 185s averaged 1.48" for five shots while the Black Hills 185-grain JHPs measured a stunning 1.09" for five shots. In the 230-grain heavy category, the Black Hills JHPs printed 1.71" while the Federal HSTs averaged 1.55". Last, but not least, the Black Hills 200-grain SWCs made nice, easy-to-measure non-jagged holes in a 1.57" pattern.

In summary, I had my testing results spreadsheet average all five-shot, 25-yard groups I fired that day. The overall result? Just 1.44" That's impressive by any measure.

The Net-Net

A top-notch 1911 won't be inexpensive, but like everything else (cars, tools, machinery, airplanes and steaks), you generally get what you pay for. Can you buy a pistol that will shoot forward reliably for less money? Absolutely. And that's not a bad thing. In fact, I tend to think we live in the golden age of handguns, where one can get a great firearm for a modest sum.

But if you're one to appreciate that "click" of a closing door on a fine automobile, perhaps consider paying extra for a similar "click" experience on a top-tier firearm. As someone once told me, maybe consider buying nicer guns instead of more guns. This one  certainly fits that description.