

The Kel-Tec PF9 and the Ruger LC9

Pocket Pistol Heaven!

If you're like me, you notice things that don't quite register. Sometimes it takes a good hard kick in the head for things to register, but eventually, I get around to noticing things... One thing I've noticed recently is the great big 9mm pocket rocket push. This comes on the heels of the great big .380 ACP pocket rocket push. I'm sure you all know just what I'm talking about with the .380 rush. The P3AT, Ruger LCP, Diamond Back DB380, etc.



Figure 1 - From MouseGuns.com

So what took time to register for me was the simple fact that while other companies have released pocket .380's, and even some pocket 9mm's, the one company that seems to be out in front in this category (and an American Company) is Kel-Tec. Much like I've written about opinions about Taurus and other companies, Kel-Tec also seems to get some opinionated grief.

Kel-Tec releases the P32, then the P3AT (great play on letters/numbers by the way!), and then the PF9. The first one (P32) was a big hit when it came into the market place – a super light pocket pistol (6.6 ounces unloaded!). The .32 ACP round isn't what some would call a man stopper, though I've read about .25 ACP bullets doing just that – and quite well in some cases...

The P3AT was released, and then we got the Ruger LCP (GREAT gun by-the-way!), and the others .380 pocket rockets followed. Kel-Tec pistols are well designed, simple, light, and inexpensive. There have been production problems from time-to-time, but as a member of one of the Kel-Tec user groups, I know that their customer service is pretty darn good.

Now – don't get me wrong here, Kel-Tec is not the industry visionary with regard to pocket pistols – and there are a great many exceptional manufacturers (and maybe some not so great) who have been down this path (and continue) producing some excellent guns. Want to read more about pocket guns – visit this exceptional website: <http://www.mouseguns.com/index.htm>

Fast forward to the 9mm pocket rocket push. Though there have been others before Kel-Tec to release a pocket 9mm pistol, to me the most recent 9mm pocket rocket push started with the release of the Kel-Tec PF9 (that I've written about before). At the recent SHOT Show there were releases from Kimber, SIG, Ruger, Taurus, and probably a few others. I personally believe that the .380 to 9mm move is a simple follow the leader move much like any other industry.

This leads me to the obvious thought – how does the Ruger LC9 stack up against the Kel-Tec PF9? Here at AGWD we recently picked up a few Ruger LC9's, and since we are long-time carriers of the PF9 (as a primary or a backup gun), I thought it might be a good idea to compare them. I think you might be surprised at what we found.

The Kel-Tec PF9 comes standard with the following:

Calibers: 9mm
 Weight unloaded: 12.7 oz.
 Length: 5.85"
 Height: 4.3"
 Width: 0.88"
 Barrel Length: 3.1"
 Capacity: 7 + 1
 Sights: 3-dot adjustable (rear)



Pretty small package and a picatinny rail come with the PF9. For me the PF9 was a major selling point for ease of carry, price, and the fact that it is chambered in the 9mm round. For many folks, the 9mm round is the absolute minimum self-defense caliber.

The MSRP for the Kel-Tec PF9 is based on the finish:

Blued Finish: \$333.00
 Parkerized Finish: \$377.00
 Hard Chrome Finish: \$ 390.00

The Ruger LCP comes standard with the following:

Calibers: 9mm
 Weight unloaded: 17.10 oz.
 Length: 6.00"
 Height: 4.50"
 Width: 0.90"
 Barrel Length: 3.12"
 Capacity: 7 + 1
 Sights: 3-dot adjustable (rear)



MSRP for the Ruger LC9 is \$443.00

The big question – why is the Ruger LC9 so much more (MSRP)? What are the big differences, and why would I as a consumer want a Ruger LC9? Well, I decided to break both guns down and take a look. I



need to explain that my PF9 does have a Crimson Trace laser attached, so please disregard that add-on!

My first observations were that both guns are extremely alike. Takedown was different – but aside from that, there are some obvious similarities.

I took a look at each major component, and took some pictures so that we could take a keeper investigation. Here are some shots. You should

be able to determine the Ruger from the Kel-Tec based on the finish of each piece. For instance, this is a side shot of the PF9 and the LC9 slide. While they both look similar, the Ruger LC9 has a much better finish. Aside from that, they are actually quite similar in design.



A closer look at the slides from the front shows very similar design, but the Ruger LC9 looks as if it might be a better design for conceal carry.



The slides look quite identical from underneath:



And the frames look alike as well when shown from above without the slides:



These are not radically differing designs. You can see the differences in approach to common design challenges. For instance, the frames to the right, while similar, do show some clear differences. But overall function remains very similar.

The biggest similarity to me was with the barrels and recoil springs. These “almost” appear to be made in the same factory! I’m sure they are not, but the designs are so close that you’d almost think them interchangeable (though I wouldn’t recommend it!).



Even the slides are similar from the side angle. But here again is where you can see the workmanship in the Ruger design. The Kel-Tec seems a little rougher around the edges while the Ruger does seem to have cleaner lines.

So – what does all this mean to me? Well – first off, I’m sure that you can’t go wrong with either pistol as either a primary or a backup carry gun. I know from personal experience that my Kel-Tec PF9 is ROCK SOLID when it comes to function. I also know that the little pistol is capable of much greater accuracy than I can get from it 😊.



I have not had the opportunity to fire an LC9 yet, but all the reviews I’ve read say that it is a great little shooter with some exceptional accuracy.

Which one to buy? Well – the PF9 is basic model, no safety, no chamber loaded indicator, and looks a bit rough. The LC9 has the manual safety (great for a pocket pistol!), a patent pending chamber loaded indicator (see above for the slide view from the top), and a great finish. It’s that same old Chevy vs. Buick question... Same car (same gun) – but what “features” and fit and finish do you want? I’d be happy with either (or both) – but if I were to buy all over again, I might consider the LC9 as my primary purchase due to fit and finish. Does that mean I’m getting rid of my PF9? Heck no!

Somehow I need to convince my wife that I actually need them both! Wish me luck!