

# Exercise Your Freedom | Grand Power X-Calibur: Out Of The Box

by Frank Winn, Guns & Gear Editor - Friday, June 24, 2016



Photo credit: Darren Parker

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*This month, we borrow a relatively famous phrase for our title. A single turn-of-the-20th-century puzzle spawned the famous aphorism, but not a wide reputation for its author. We think the X-Calibur pistol might do somewhat better for Slovakian designer Jaroslav Kuracina and Grand Power SRO.*



*Locked for the shot ... and rotating open. It worked like a charm, and we concur: Felt recoil is less. Photo by Darren Parker.*

Multiple interpretations have attached to “out of the box” in the nearly 120 years since it was coined, and whether it’s “as supplied,” “innovative” or something in between, we contend most of them seem to apply to Grand Power’s X-Calibur pistol.

If “as supplied” strikes your fancy, then the X-Calibur shares many features with a successful predecessor, the K100. At first glance, some attributes come over directly—a double/single action, polymer below and steel above 9 mm, complete with ambidextrous controls at mag catch, thumb safety and slide release. A beavertail sits above the grip itself, and can be fitted with any of four

interchangeable backstrap/side panel modules. An accessory rail forward of the squared-off trigger guard and curved trigger round out frame features.

The slide is a somewhat greater departure from the “K” series handguns, and points to the competition-skewed niche Grand Power envisions for the “X.” These start with an extensively machined chrome moly slide that puts nearly seven inches between the Eliason fiber front and adjustable rear sights. The contour transitions from the top down the sides via secant slabs, extensively punctuated by deep cocking serrations. In an interesting twist, those forward of the wide ejection port are vertical and cut through, creating a vented appearance, while the cuts at the rear are angled, but solid-bottomed.

**A patented lock/unlock system begins an immediate clockwise rotation of the barrel as the slide moves to the rear, and extraction, ejection and reloading all proceed without any appreciable movement of the barrel off the axis of the shot.**



*A little “Buck Rogers” it may be, but every machined nuance has a purpose. Photo by Darren Parker.*

Cycling the action of the X-Calibur invokes our title again, and more in the original sense of thinking “out of the box”: There’s no hint of a Browning-style barrel tilt or drop in the X-Calibur. Instead, a patented lock/unlock system begins an immediate clockwise rotation of the barrel as the slide moves to the rear, and extraction, ejection and reloading all proceed without any appreciable movement of the barrel

off the axis of the shot. Unusual at the least, it certainly made us anxious to get the X-Calibur to the range.

Once there, we quickly invoked our own interpretation of out of the box, finding the X-Calibur exceptionally ready to go. Our initial foray was for function testing only, and the X-Calibur marched steadily; a wide range of hollow points (95- to 147-grain) and FMJs (100- to 158-grain) disappeared without incident. It struggled a little with our minor match loads, but a quick swap to the provided “competition” spring set this right in no time. If this is how you think you’ll use an X-Calibur of your own, be alert to the real causes of most malfunctions: It’s far more likely to be grip mechanics issues than anything wrong with the pistol.

This also proved to be our favorite configuration: Although felt recoil is a subjective phenomenon even among firearms or loads that measure the same, the straight-back impulse and soft unlock make the X-Calibur uncommonly flat in recoil. It seems to us a vindication of all that machining up front on the slide and barrel. The dynamics are just too good to be luck, and that good fiber front sight is easy to follow all the way through the recoil cycle.



*Nothing fancy mags and Shell Shock Technologies prototype ammo both ran great. Photo by Darren Parker.*

We rediscovered our weakness with the “double” part of DA/SA in a hurry, but that’s no fault of the Grand Power. After some dry-fire practice, a second foray convinced us that the excellent single action more than compensated for our slightly more deliberate first shots. Accuracy, when we did our part, was uniformly superb. We worked some Shell Shock Technologies prototypes into our test rotations, and they emerged as our

best performers: A one-shot-per-second defensive drill yielded a 10-shot group of .824”.

At the risk of being a trifle self-congratulatory, we get to the end of our look at the X-Calibur satisfied with our “out of the box” metaphor, and it applies to Jaroslav Kuracina’s new Grand Power in earnest. Such thinking certainly resulted in an unconventional design, but perhaps those conventions can afford to go when the result is an innovative, accurate and soft-shooting pistol like the X-Calibur.

### **Nuts And Bolts:**

We think there’s a risk that some American shooters might shy away from the Grand Power X-Calibur for all the wrong reasons. When a pistol and the firm labor in an environment loaded with (excellent) 1911-pattern pistols and feature-laden DAOs (read “Production Division”) pistols from a host of top-flight manufacturers, a slightly quirky departure like the X-Calibur is easy to dismiss. We reiterate: This would be a mistake.



*Big ambi controls—maybe a little too big for some purposes—but modest alternatives ship with the X-Calibur. Photo by Darren Parker.*

If, for instance, you pick up and shoot a standard configuration X-Calibur, you may find the side of the third knuckle of your strong hand “bit” by the base of the large ambi safety lever—we sure did. But unless your dealer or pal takes a little trouble, he or she may not even know that Grand Power anticipates this, and includes a much lower profile pair of levers with each pistol. We’ve confirmed they can be mixed and matched: all large, all small or one of each—

a useful, aggravation-sparing touch.

Another quirk is takedown: Watching someone, especially a fancied “expert,” struggle with this could be off-putting. We channeled our ancient Walther TPH and PPK experience, however, and had this going in a jiffy. Like the Walthers, you have to fully depress the recoil spring to free the slide to the rear and upwards, and this has a feel. Get it once, though, and you’ll be good. Another trick is to carefully watch how the barrel aligns as the slide comes off, and set it up the same way for reassembly. Properly manipulated, an X-Calibur about falls apart for cleaning or maintenance, but typical, it isn’t.

Camouflaged by differences, some out-and-out superiorities might get overlooked. Grip configuration swaps, for instance: X-Calibur wins hands down here. The range of variations are only approached by the H&K VP9 (because it permits asymmetry), and all the others are more irritating or complex to change. The X-Caliber swaps so quickly and easily that you’ll actually remember what the others felt like as you pick your favorite.

**Accuracy, when we did our part, was uniformly superb.**

The magazines were excellent, even if visually unexceptional. Only time will tell of course, but good followers and easy disassembly make us optimistic. We can't help but observe that the 15-round "standard" count gets the X-Calibur into several additional states—well-thought, again.

Perhaps best of all, we thought the out-of-the-box trigger (er, yeah, there we go again) was the best we've seen in the DA/SA arena. Sound skills will let you use a Grand Power X-Calibur for a good long time—and do very well with it—without putting another dime in. If that sounds like code for "more dough for ammo, too," you've got it exactly.

