Lacking the necessary federal credentials, I couldn’t get one for testing. Damn! I did spot their model CZ 97 BD, however. If you like the ergonomics and function of the classic CZ 75, but want something more assertive than 9mm Luger, this is the ticket. Think of it as a CZ 75 in .45 ACP. Best of all possible worlds.

Thompson/Center (www.tcarms.com) introduced a real game-changer in bolt-action rifles with its new Dimension [Photo #7] platform. You choose a right- or left-handed action and then add your choice of interchangeable barrel and bolt combinations in ten calibers from .204 Ruger to .300 Winchester Magnum. It has an adjustable trigger, and the optional bridge scope mount stays with the barrel for a constant zero. The price is surprisingly low.

Compact carry guns are, paradoxically, big. Beretta (www.berettausa.com) was showing their neat little 9mm Nano; SIG (www.sigsauer.com) had their new P224 in 9mm, .357 Sig and .40 S&W; Springfield Armory displayed both an ultracompact .45 ACP 1911 and a micro-compact lightweight 9mm 1911; and STI (www.stguns.com) had an ultra-slim little 9mm LS [Photo #8]. Can we say that 9mm Luger is the new .380?

For a sampling of excellence in really small packages, I checked out the North American Arms (www.northamericanarms.com) booth. Their tiny .22 LR and .22 Mag revolvers were on display in both blue and color casehardened [Photo #9] finishes, in addition to the usual stainless. Very tasty!

Some new names appeared at the Show, with some really intriguing products. Heizer Defense LLC of St. Louis, MO, (www.heizerdefense.com) premiered their new DoubleTap™ Tactical Pocket Pistol [Photo #10], a double-action, two-shot O/U derringer in .45 ACP or 9mm. It is available with ported barrels, in titanium or aluminum, and carries two spare rounds in the grip. It weighs as little as 12 ounces and is only 2/3" in width. Great trigger, by the way.

Another surprise was the Caracal (www.caracal-usa.com) booth. This is a new outfit, based in Abu Dhabi. Their 9mm semiauto pistols, in both 18-round and 15-round compact configuration, will put most of the established polymer competition to shame in terms of appearance, ergonomics and engineering. I checked out several with an innovative Quick Acquisition Sight System [Photo #11] that is actually as described. The pistols come with the best quick loader I’ve ever seen, and the prices are surprisingly competitive.

One name I hadn’t encountered before was Sarsilmaz (www.sarsilmaz.com). This Turkish firm was showing a range of beautifully crafted .357 Magnum revolvers, in various barrel lengths, and a choice of blue, matte stainless and polished chrome finishes. The company has been making handguns for more than 130 years, and their revolvers are new to the U.S. market and still pending ATF approval. Definitely worth a look!

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