



Remington's R51 Handguns Are Back—Are They Worth It?

Everyone likes a good underdog story, and that's why we're excited about the prospect of a company trying out something new, facing setbacks, but dealing with them and coming back strong. And that's exactly the story with the newest of Remington's subcompact handguns, the second-generation Remington R51.

The Remington R51 faced many issues in its first release, with defects forcing Remington to recall the much-anticipated gun. But the company's engineers went back to the drawing board, fixed the issues while also improving other features, and have rereleased it in its new and improved form.

Owners of the original R51 already received their replacements several months ago, and now the redesigned model is finally available to rest of the market as well, hitting shelves about a week ago on August 12th.

Some of you may recall the R51's initial fanfare, as well as the subsequent manufacturing issues that forced Remington to recall the product. Others may not have heard of these handguns before. Either way, you're likely wondering if a gun that faced issues and was recalled is worth taking a chance on now that it's been rereleased.

Here's some background to help you decide for yourself.

History and First Release of the Remington R51

Long before the Remington R51, there was the Remington Model 51. These groundbreaking single-stack pocket carry handguns were developed in the late 1910s by John D. Pedersen, whom John Browning once praised as the "greatest gun designer in the world." The handguns racked up over thirty patents (<http://unblinkingeye.com/Guns/Rem51/rem51.html>) over the course of their development and were finally released first in .380 ACP and then in .32 ACP calibers.

The gun received, and continues to receive, a lot of admiration. Extensive and unprecedented research of hand molds yielded a grip the ideal size, shape, and angle for an average hand, making it one of the most natural-feeling handguns out there—so much so that the advertising materials described the Model 51 as "self-aiming." The locking mechanism is a one-of-a-kind design with elements of both gas and recoil operation. This, combined with the low bore axis and lightweight slide, allows for the gun to have very little muzzle flip, and little recoil in general. Experts to this day have called it "the best-balanced, most-instinctive-pointing <American> pistol ever made," and "the best pocket self-loading pistol ever designed."



But Remington, known for their rifles, couldn't compete with the cheaper single-action blowback autoloaders already dominating the civilian market. The possibility for a military contract was cut short as well, as American involvement in WWI lead to the military focusing on the M1911, which had already been in production. As a result, only 65,000 were produced (<http://www.nramuseum.org/guns/the-galleries/modern-firearms-1950-to-present/case-53-arms-of-law-enforcement/remington-model-51-semi-automatic-pistol.aspx>).

The R51 was Remington's attempt to create an updated 9mm version of the Model 51 for the modern era as the company tries to move back into the handgun market after many decades of focusing on rifles. It has similar lines, the same grip angle and low bore axis, and a locking breech block in the slide using the same "hesitation-locked" action that Pedersen developed for the Model 51.

After Remington debuted it at the 2014 SHOT Show (https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=128&v=CMYsuy0ETfg), early reviews of pre-production models built up a lot of hype for the R51, claiming they could be the best handguns in the subcompact class. However, due to what Remington describes as unforeseen problems moving from prototypes to mass production, the R51s in the initial release were wracked with manufacturing defects due to the complex design's sensitivity to machining errors (<http://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2015/01/22/remington-r51-pistol-return-production/>). Users reported (<http://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2014/06/13/personal-remington-r51-woes/>) gritty-feeling slide action, feeding and extraction problems, gas venting out the back, not going fully into battery, firing out of battery, and more.

Redesigned and Reintroduced

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These manufacturing issues lead to Remington recalling the R51 and halting production. Owners returned the handguns and a long waiting process began. Remington, at first open about the changes being made, removed all mention of the R51 (<http://gunssavelives.net/gun-industry/remington-scrubs-almost-all-mention-of-r51-pistol-from-their-website/>) from their website, and omitted it (<http://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2016/01/21/shot-2016-whats-not-remington/>) from their 2016 SHOT Show booth. As time (and release dates) went by, original owners and others interested in the gun began to wonder if it would ever again see the light of day.

Then, in June, Remington out of the blue informed original owners (<http://www.thefirearmblog.com/blog/2016/06/22/breaking-remington-reintroduces-the-r51-pistol/>) that their new replacement R51s were ready to be shipped. The company even offered a free Pelican hard case, two extra magazines, and reimbursement for any FFL transfer fee. Combined with early access to the firearm months before its newly announced August 12th release date, Remington seems to have put some thought into making things right with their customers.

With revamped manufacturing tolerances, production processes, and quality control, the issues from the initial release seem to indeed have been cleared up. In addition to that though, Remington has also reportedly enhanced other features in the 2016 rerelease.

New Features in 2016's R51 Handguns

Remington boasts on their site (<https://www.remington.com/handguns/remington-r51>) about a host of enhancements to the original R51, some clearing up old issues and others improving on various existing features.

The gun now features a precision-engineered extractor that can handle abuse and eliminates the extraction and ejection malfunctions that plagued the original.

The slide internals have been updated. Owners had reported after the initial release that the R51's slide was difficult to operate, and felt like it had sandpaper or something catching inside. This improvement provides smoother slide action, more similar to the old Model 51.

The recoil spring is now force-balanced for better slide feel and positive closure into battery.

The second-generation R51 also comes with a new trigger design. This new trigger offers a very clean, crisp break and increases the gun's comfort and accuracy.

The sights now have a snag-free design for ease of draw, and the barrel now has hard-chromed bushing for improved durability.

All in all, it seems that Remington has adequately addressed the issues from their first attempt at this modern take on the Model 51. We're interested to see how it'll perform in the long run, and how it'll be received. Some may be understandably skeptical considering the initial release, but we like what we've seen and think it's an interesting enough design that it's worth looking into.

If you're still feeling cautious about it though, then by all means, rent before you buy. Second Amendment Sports will be supplying these handguns in McHenry, and has an ever-expanding rental fleet and top-of-the-line indoor shooting range so you can try these handguns out for yourself before you go through with a purchase. We also do FFL transfers and can get practically any product shipped to us if we don't have it in stock at the moment. Simply give us a call at (815) 385-5522 and we can make sure we've got what you need. We're always happy to set up gun owners with firearms they've never tried before.

Mark your calendars and join us for Remington Day on Saturday, September 10 from 11am – 4pm. Come into the store to demo the new R 51 and listen to Remington Rep. Steve Esping discuss the R 51 and answer questions. Remington 380 & 1911 pistols will also be available to demo! Food and refreshments will be served!

Second Amendment Sports

3705 W Elm St
McHenry, IL 60050
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📅 October 20, 2017 💬 0 Comments

My dad has always been a handgun shooter. I went to the gun range with him when I was younger but I never liked it. The smell and noise were always too much for me and I was just never interested. I always knew I wanted to do a sport, though. I had tried a few



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Contact Info

Second Amendment Sports

📍 3705 W Elm St

McHenry, IL 60050

☎ (815) 385-5522

✉ info@secondamendsports.com

Monday-Friday: 10am – 9pm

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