

By Gary Girvan

CAESAR GUERINI ELLIPSE EVO OVER- AND-UNDER SHOTGUN

A STUNNING NEW ROUND ACTION FROM GUERINI



In this issue, we review a shotgun that has recently achieved high popularity, critical acclaim and awards overseas, particularly in the USA and the UK: Caesar Guerini's new round action over-and-under, the Ellipse EVO.

Many connoisseurs of fine quality double-barrel shotguns, over-and-under and side-by-side, hold round-action shotguns in high regard, especially when their actions are enhanced with finely executed engraving. For most of us though, the price of such choice examples as, say, a John Dickson, a David McKay Brown, or even an AyA No. 1 or 2 round action puts them in the 'When I win Lotto' category. And this explains why the Ellipse EVO has been received so enthusiastically. High-tech manufacturing techniques combined with Italian flair for design have made it possible to offer this high-quality round action over-and-under with stunning engraving at a moderate price. It's a winning combination.

In previous issues, we have reviewed the Guerini Magnus in 12 gauge and the Maxum in 20. This new model shares most of the time-proven features common to all Guerinis. It differs mainly in the new style of receiver and its decoration, features that will be the main focus of this review. For any readers unfamiliar with our previous reviews, the most significant technical details of Guerini shotguns are summarized in a sidebar.

New-style Receiver and Engraving

You can't convert a conventional square-bottomed receiver into a round-bottomed one simply by rounding off its bottom edges. Parts of the mechanism get in the way. The ejector activating rods, for example, are located inside the lower walls of the action right about where the rounding-off would occur. The cocking rod runs along the floor of the action. Guerini have overcome this by creating a new receiver with a profile of constant width front to back and this allows for the rounding of the bottom of the action bar without compromising the operating of the mechanism. It also creates a generous surface for engravers to show their art.

Contemporary Italian gun engravers are arguably the finest in the world today and the Giovanelli studio is one of the largest of the Italian engraving houses. Bottega Incisioni C. Giovanelli offers hand-engraving of the most exquisite quality (and expense), but it has also developed highly sophisticated mechanized processes in which most of the work is done by machine and then finished by hand. These enable the studio to produce engraving of a quality that would previously have been unimaginable on a gun in the price range of the Ellipse. When shooters first see this shotgun, the stunning engraving is usually the feature they comment on first.



From the Giovanelli studio – a stunning combination of fine scroll and deep relief engraving.



Well-timed and powerful ejectors.

The pattern combines two elements: a profusion of tight scroll engraving on most of the surface of the receiver and a more dramatic, deeply-carved and shadowed floral pattern, which curves around the bottom of the rounded action. The fore-end iron and the action fences both feature deeply-engraved floral patterns.

The rear end of the receiver also contributes to the gun's distinctive styling. It is shaped as a large ellipse, the top end of which curves gracefully into the top tang, which is decorated with tight scroll engraving. It's all very Italian and very elegant.

Game Gun Styling

Typical of the attention to detail that gives this Italian manufacturer a competitive edge, Guerini over-and-unders are offered in two distinct styles: as game guns or in target format. Their target guns have full pistol grips, ventilated top and side ribs, soft recoil pads, and stock dimensions suited to the particular clay target sport. By contrast, the game guns such as this testfire Ellipse have a much more open-radius, semi-pistol grip finished with a stylish round knob. Guerini's version of the traditional Prince of Wales grip is well suited to game shooting, combining fast handling with a sure grip.

There is no recoil pad. Instead, the butt stock is finished with a chequered walnut butt plate. With this model, Guerini have opted for a straight fore-end with a rounded rather than a Schnabel tip, and this works well with the Anson-style push-rod fore-end release.

Our testfire gun was stocked with a superior grade of walnut. Its attractive figuring was enhanced by fine cut chequering, 26 lines to the inch, and by a durable oil finish.

Appropriately for a game gun, the ribs, top and side, are solid rather than ventilated. Under field conditions, ventilated top ribs are vulnerable to denting, while ventilated side ribs are prone to accumulating moisture and debris, which is difficult to remove and can lead to corrosion if left unattended. The top rib is stylishly tapered from 8mm at the breech end to 6mm at the muzzle and has a single brass sighting bead.



Fine engraving on the top tang, safety catch and top lever.



High-quality walnut on the distinctively shaped butt stock with its Prince of Wales-style grip and walnut butt plate.



The robust and reliable action is powered by pin-guided coil springs



The jeweled monobloc showing its bottom locking lugs and the bite for the locking bolt. See also the disc retainer for the ejector

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Most of Guerini's over/under shotguns share these same design features, which have proved to be robust and reliable:

- Their barrels are monobloc and have chromed bores. They hinge on trunnions set into the action walls. These trunnions are replaceable if necessary.
- Lock-up is achieved by a wide Browning-style locking bolt that engages a bite beneath the bottom barrel. As well, two locking lugs at the bottom of the monobloc engage recesses machined in the floor of the receiver.
- The strikers are rebounding and powered by pin-guided coil springs. A single rod in the bottom of the receiver floor cocks the action.
- The sears hang from the top strap. For added safety, they have a second notch.
- The selective ejectors feature oversize cams. Disc retainers add strength to the system.
- An Anson-style push rod releases the fore-end. The fore-end iron has an interchangeable steel insert, which can be replaced should the fore-end come loose through exceptionally heavy use.

The first versions of the Ellipse released were sub-gauges in 20 and 28 gauges. Our testfire gun, however, was a 12 gauge with 30-inch multi-choke barrels and chambered for 3-inch shells. The barrels have a moderate degree of over-boring, and feature lengthened forcing cones. Five flush-mounted chokes are provided.

The single trigger is inertia-operated for the second shot, but, most unusually, there is no barrel selector. The bottom barrel always fires first. It must have been a conscious decision on the designer's part to dispense with a selector, for all other Guerini models have one incorporated in the safety catch. While it is true that barrel selectors are most often used by Sporting Clays shooters, I would prefer to have the barrel-selection option for the rare occasions in the field when I might want to fire the tighter-choked barrel (usually the top one) first. When shooting incoming driven pheasants, for example, it makes sense to fire the tighter-choked barrel

first because the bird is getting closer to you should a second shot be required.

As a nice refinement, there is provision for the trigger to be adjusted for take-up and over-travel by means of two tiny screws located behind the trigger. These adjustments, I feel, are best left to a gunsmith rather than an enthusiastic tinkerer, and our testfire gun proved to have a very crisp and positive trigger release that needed no adjustment whatsoever.

Testfire

As usual, we began by putting the Ellipse through its paces on the range, shooting at clay targets. Everything worked flawlessly. The trigger pulls were crisp, and the ejectors were well timed and powerful. Even with 30-inch barrels, the Ellipse proved to be a very responsive shotgun. Its point of balance was very slightly nose heavy and, while it was quick to point, the barrel length promoted a smooth swing.

Despite its relatively light weight (3.37kg) and the lack of a soft recoil pad, felt recoil was quite manageable even with heavy field loads. We patterned the gun using a grunty Remington pheasant load – 36 grams of #6 lead shot with a velocity of 1330fps – and it produced evenly-spread patterns with the Cylinder and Improved-cylinder chokes we were going to use for pheasant hunting. For a practical field test, we took the Guerini pheasant hunting in the Kapiti sand dune country. My favourite pheasant gun is a lightweight 20 gauge over-and-under, so I was a little apprehensive about how well this 30-inch barreled 12 gauge would respond to the fast and unexpected flush of a pheasant bumped into flight by a determined Labrador. I needn't have worried. The gun proved more than equal to the challenge. It secured a limit of these challenging birds in fine style. The field-gun styling of the Prince-of-Wales stock is ideally suited to this kind of shooting. The gun was easy to carry and a delight to shoot.

Conclusion

With a recommended retail price of \$6800, this Guerini is not an inexpensive shotgun. But when you consider the quality of its design and manufacture, and the outstanding attraction of its round action and engraving, it seems to me to represent good buying. You would be hard-pressed to find a gun of equal quality at this price. And it's more than just a good-looker. It's a fine-handling, very capable field gun. While its weight and its stock style probably make it more suited to upland game hunting rather than, say, hard-out waterfowling, its multi-choke versatility and its fine handling would make it a more than competent performer at most tasks required of it.

It is worth noting that for hunters who prefer ultra-lightweight 12 gauge shotguns, Guerini also offer a significantly lighter version of the Ellipse with an aluminium alloy receiver: the Ellipse EVO Light.

Interesting too is the news that this enterprising and innovative Italian firm has recently acquired a major interest in Fabarm. This acquisition is said to make them the second largest shotgun manufacturer in Italy.



SPECIFICATIONS

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| Make & Model | Caesar Guerini Ellipse EVO |
| Type | Over-and-under shotgun |
| Gauge | 12 gauge |
| Barrels | Length: 760mm (30in.) also in 710mm. Chamber: 76mm (3in.). Lengthened forcing cone. Bore diameter: 18.6mm Choke: Interchangeable choke tubes (5 provided). |
| Ribs & Sights | Solid top and mid ribs. Top rib tapered from 8mm at breech to 6mm at muzzle. Single brass sighting bead. |
| Receiver | Steel with polished coin finish. Rounded action bar. |
| Trigger | Single, non-selective. Inertia-operated for second barrel. |
| Safety | Non-automatic. Located on top tang. |
| Stock | Walnut with gloss oil finish. Prince of Wales-style grip. Cut chequering at 26 lines per inch. Dimensions: Length of Pull: 373mm (14.6in.) Drop at comb: 36mm (1.4in.) Drop at Heel: 57mm (2.25in.) Cast for right-hander. Recoil pad: None – wooden butt plate. |
| Weight | 3.37kg (7.4lb). |
| Accessories | ABS case with two combination locks. 5 choke tubes (Cyl, Imp-cyl, Modified, Imp-mod, Full) + wrench. Gun socks, sling swivels. |
| RRP | \$6800 |
| Distributor | Rick's Outfitters Ltd |