

HOW PASSIONATE IS YOUR GUNMAKER?

The world of guns and shooting is a wonderful and mystical place. Most of us spend endless hours pondering our pursuits, our passions and maybe, even once in a while (if we are doing it right!), our sanity. And of all the endless things we think on – chokes, loads, leads, scores, glasses, gadgets and various other accoutrements – none is as focal as the guns we choose to shoot.

Granted, most of us shoot what we can logically afford. Some of us seemingly can afford anything, and if that's the case, more power to ya! A surprising number of us shoot guns that we basically can't afford, but somehow have justified. If you're nodding in agreement at this point, you may not want to let your wife read this article – especially if she bought into your 'justification speech'.

ASKS *ED ARRIGHI*



We are, in fact, blessed these days with not only a wide array of price ranges, but with a wide array of gun types. Many people that will drool over a London Best Sidelock and could actually afford one, choose to shoot production autoloaders simply because they prefer them. One of the nice things about the world of sporting clays is that you will see Champions, on a very regular basis, shooting almost bone stock, modestly priced production guns. It wasn't always so. In the 'old days' one was required to spend a substantial sum to acquire a reliable shotgun. I believe we have good old American ingenuity to thank, as well as companies like Browning, Beretta, Remington and Winchester among others, that satisfied the need for excellent quality firearms that almost anyone can afford.

There are however, people of passion in all walks of life and the gunmaking trade is no different. Some gunmakers take a whole different view of their trade and do not seek to make the most guns



ENRICO AND RENATO GAMBA.

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inspire into these objects a certain spirit and personality."

"I want to convey the fact that they are not only highly technologically designed, skillfully manufactured

and beautifully decorated but are part of myself, an obsession if you will."
"I was born into a gunsmith's family where together with the mother's milk they began immediately to teach me the how and why of our work. A work to which I am fiercely attached and which I am very proud to do. It is the kind of work which can only be done with and out of passion, or rather with love."

Wow! That just blows me away! You can feel the man's heart-felt desire to produce top quality products.

For those of you unfamiliar with the guns of Renato Gamba, you shouldn't be. With 26 world titles to their credit, some of the world's best make Gambas their chosen firearm. The company actually manufactures a wide range of shotguns, rifles and even some pistols, but it is the Concorde and Daytona K2 over/under models that are of most interest to sporting clays enthusiasts.

The Concorde features a fixed trigger while the top of the line

Daytona K2 sports a wonderful drop trigger mechanism in either selective or non-selective configurations. The main springs are of the coil variety and installed in such a fashion that they are actually captured in their location and in the extremely unlikely case that a main spring breaks, it will continue to function. Very ingenious. The K2 is the newest of the Daytonas and features a number of refinements over the original Daytona.

Many uninformed people see Gambas as 'copies' of Perazzis, but there are many significant differences which make Gambas feel entirely different. First, and most significant, is the fact that Renato understands the physical dynamics of what happens to an over/under when it is fired. Namely, the gun tries to rotate vertically around its center axis. It's what we call muzzle jump or flip. Renato figured out that the closer together you can make the barrels, the less the muzzle will flip. This necessitates a total



SKILLED HANDS IN METAL (LEFT) AND WOOD (BELOW) SHAPE EACH GAMBA.

nor the most money. A rare few simply choose to acknowledge their passions. Enter one of the nicest men you'll ever meet – Renato Gamba. Following are a few quotes from Mr. Gamba taken from the company's latest catalog: *"A producer not only wants to commit himself to make a shotgun or rifle of the highest order, but*



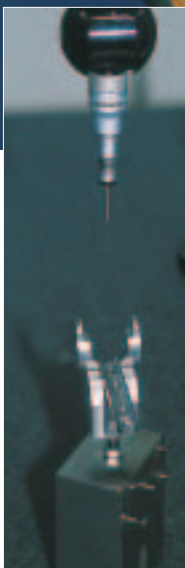


PLAIN OR FANCY – EVERY GAMBA HAS ELEGANCE (RIGHT). PRECISION MEASUREMENT OF EACH PART COMPLEMENTS TRADITIONAL SKILLS.

redesign of the action in order to locate the firing pins in the proper position. The net result is that Gamba over/unders are approximately $\frac{3}{16}$ " of an inch 'shorter' than competitor's guns resulting in a most stable over/under during recoil.

Additionally, in order to properly scale and enhance the dynamic feel of the guns, Gamba actions are also about $\frac{1}{8}$ th inch narrower than others. This combination, in conjunction with very slender fore ends and trim butt stocks give the guns a distinctly unique feel in the hands. It's almost like holding a lance or a spear. You pick one up and your brain immediately senses exactly where the barrels are pointing. It's really uncanny, especially if you are used to bulkier shotguns.

Fit, finish and aesthetics are incredibly important to Renato Gamba. You will immediately notice the much higher than



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GAMBA USES TOP STOCKERS SUCH AS THE FAMOUS ESSEVIERRE FIRM.



normal sheen of the bluing on the barrels. No matte black here. Through a special and labor intensive polishing and bluing process, Gambas are startlingly beautiful to look at. When you move into some of their more highly engraved or side plated and full sidelock guns, you will find them masterfully decorated by Italy's finest engravers and at that point, the guns become tasteful and elegant works of functional art. But trust me, they are still tough as nails. Handwork abounds and by Renato's own estimations, his guns are built only 40 per cent by machines (roughing out the

pieces) and 60 per cent by skilled hands.

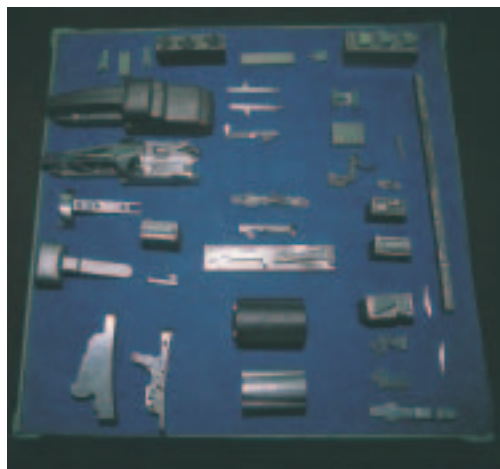
Look down the rib and you will see a file cut (not stamped or rolled) surface that cuts glare so completely that it'll amaze you. Once again, this is a little thing, but it is combinations of these 'little improvements' that produce a superior product.

Internally, innovations abound. I recently had one of my guns at a notable and very skilled gunsmith just to take a look and see if anything needed replacing. As he was disassembling the action and removing the bolt and firing pins, he said; "Look here, see how they have made these right and left spring followers identical? And see how they retain the firing pins here? These guys are really smart!" We ultimately replaced the firing pins, more because I had a new set on hand than anything else.

Now all of this wouldn't be worth squat if the guns didn't run reliably. Boy do they! I have a production grade Daytona that has had tens of thousands of rounds

through it and not only has it never balked, the ejectors are still so perfectly timed that it is always a joy to pop it open and watch those empties fly in unison in a perfect arc. This kind of ejector timing is indicative of only the highest quality work and is reminiscent of a London Best because it is very hard and time consuming to make happen. I have another – a lovely side-plated pigeon gun that has seen over 25,000 1¼ ounce pigeon loads and is still as flawless as ever.

A great deal of the balance of a shotgun comes from the barrels. Actually, from a combination of their total length, weight and internal balance. This is one area where Renato Gamba shines. Most manufactures offer barrel weights in the 1600 to 1700 gram range for 30" and 32" sporters. They then need to create a heavier 'rear half' of the gun in order to counter balance the barrel weight. Thus, the whole gun simply gets bigger. The 34" gun I shoot most has 1,550 gram barrels and I have a spare set of 32s that weigh 1,500 grams. My 31" pigeon gun sports a perfectly balanced 1460 gram set that seem to move by telepathic suggestion. And do not read that as whippy – it's more like instantaneously accurate. On a recent trip to the factory I saw a set of 30" barrels on a gram scale and asked about



them. They weighed only 1,380 grams and were built for an international trap shooter who likes very fast barrels.

Perhaps it is my dedication to the art and sport of shooting Classic Hammer Guns that endears me to Renato Gamba guns. Through a dear acquaintance, I have been able (lucky) to shoot more best quality doubles than any one person should be allowed. I have even been blessed to shoot the historic Lord Ripon's final trio of three matched Purdey game guns! That was a real treat. But, through all this, and largely *because* of this exposure, I have unwittingly (yeah, right!) become a fanatic about gun dynamics and my senses have just naturally become very sensitive to balance and

THE PROGRESSION FROM BLOCKS OF STEEL TO PRECISION PARTS.

not the case all across Europe. Today's public face of Renato Gamba Guns is Enrico, Renato's son. Enrico and (get this!) his F-350 Ford Super Duty Dually, along with a complete factory support rig, are regular attendees at most of Europe's biggest Sporting, International Skeet/Trap and Hélice shoots. And it's safe to say that the passion and dedication to functional dynamics are safely passing through to the next generation of Gamba Gunmakers.

Recent accomplishments of Gamba shooters include Gold

movement dynamics. The Brits had it figured out long ago. A game gun handles very differently from a fowling gun which handles differently from a target or pigeon gun. Renato Gamba feels this way also, and makes modern day masterpieces built for specific tasks.

While the Gamba insignia is infrequently seen in the US, such is

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Medals in the Junior (Mark Winser) and Ladies (Cheryl Hall) divisions of the 2006 World Sporting as well as numerous other medals in various International disciplines including the recent Skeet World Cup (Ladies – Silver).

US representation is currently handled directly through Enrico and the factory, although he has told me that the company is keen to establish a permanent importer/distributor relationship Stateside.

Current production time is about seven months, but the company does have some inventory ready to go Stateside. If you would like more information about the passion and products of one of the world's greatest Gunmakers, you can find the company at: www.renatogamba.it ■