

A REVIEW BY **TOM CERETTO**

# VINCI SUPERSPORT



In the far north of central Italy, in the Province of Pisaro-Urbino, lies the Municipality of Urbino. Founded in the fifth century BC, Urbino became a Roman colony in 285 BC and later was governed by the Papacy. In 1375 the city was freed from the yoke of the Papacy during a rebellion and came under the influence of the Duke of Mantefeltro. The small city of Urbino, population 15,627, is best known as the birthplace of High Renaissance painter Raphael Sanzio da Urbino. To competitive shooters and hunters around the globe, Urbino is better known as the home of Fratelli Benelli Spa – manufacturers of shotguns with the patented Inertia Drive System.

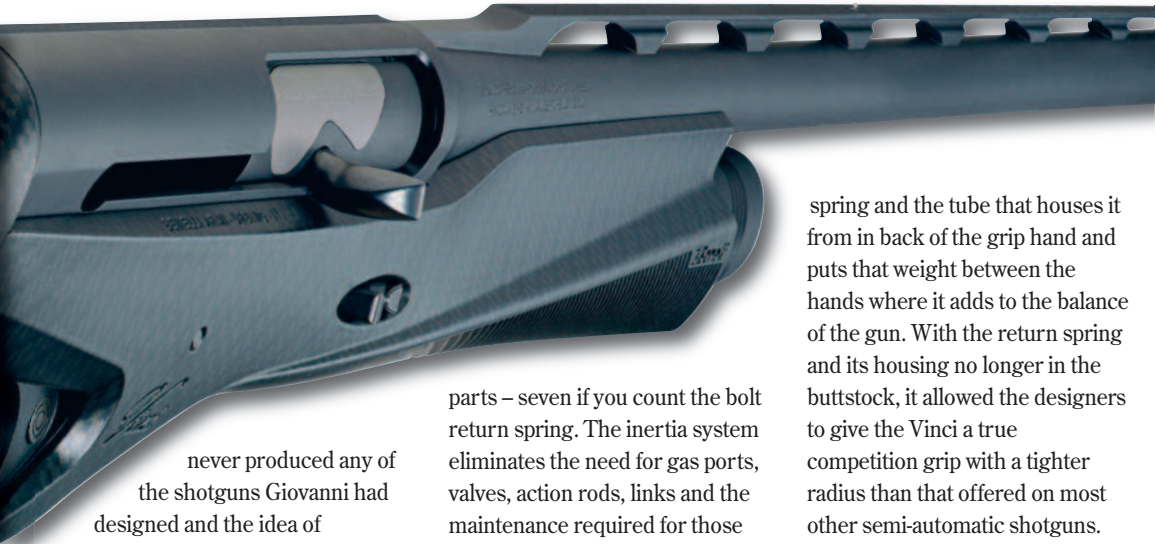
Benelli was originally well known as a pioneer in automotive engineering and a manufacturer of motorcycles, small trucks and motorscooters. Starting in 1923, Benelli successfully raced their motorcycles with Tonino Benelli leading the racing team. Benelli may have remained a motorcycle manufacturer if not for Giovanni Benelli's interest in firearms. In 1920 he built a side-

by-side shotgun with external hammers for his personal use. In 1941 he built himself a 12 gauge semi-automatic with a light alloy receiver. He received four patents on his shotguns – but Benelli

## Six Moving Parts

What has remained the same with the Vinci, as on all other Benelli shotguns, is the simple Civolani bolt composed of only six moving

function at all. By locating the return spring in the action, the Vinci design allows the gun owner to clean the return spring or have it replaced quite easily. It also removes the weight of the return



never produced any of the shotguns Giovanni had designed and the idea of manufacturing shotguns remained dormant until 1960. It was then that inventor Bruno Civolani from Bologna approached Benelli with his innovative semi-automatic bolt design we now know as the Benelli Inertia Drive System. The Civolani inertia drive system was then (and still is) the simplest action for a semi-automatic ever invented. Perhaps Italy's most famous son, Leonardo da Vinci, put it best when he said, "Simplicity is the highest form of sophistication." I am sure the folks at Benelli were familiar with da Vinci's statement when they named their newest shotgun creation the Vinci.

In 2000, Pietro Beretta Spa purchased the firearms manufacturing segment of Benelli who now operate as a semi-autonomous unit within the Beretta corporate umbrella and also oversees the distribution of Franchi, Stoeger and A. Uberti firearms and Stoeger air rifles in the United States out of their headquarters in Accokeek, Maryland.

parts – seven if you count the bolt return spring. The inertia system eliminates the need for gas ports, valves, action rods, links and the maintenance required for those items. Heavy or very fast loads can be very destructive to action rods, valves and bolt buffers – the Civolani in-line inertia bolt system eliminates the problems.

The new Vinci design allows the bolt return spring to be moved from the buttstock to the receiver. This may not at first glance seem to be that important – but it is. Return springs and the tubes they are housed in get full of rust, unburned powder residue, oil and just plain gunk and can stop functioning properly or refuse to

spring and the tube that houses it from in back of the grip hand and puts that weight between the hands where it adds to the balance of the gun. With the return spring and its housing no longer in the buttstock, it allowed the designers to give the Vinci a true competition grip with a tighter radius than that offered on most other semi-automatic shotguns. This makes the distance from the grip to the trigger shorter and more comfortable to use, especially for people with small hands.

When I first picked up the upper or barrel module, I thought, 'wow this is heavy', but actually it's not that heavy when I realized I was picking up not only the barrel, but also the entire action housing with the bolt assembly and return spring installed. The gun balances very nicely and most of the weight is between the hands.



**THERE ARE ONLY SIX MOVING PARTS IN THE BENELLI INERTIA DRIVE – SEVEN IF YOU INCLUDE THE BOLT RETURN SPRING.**

## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>MANUFACTURER:</b> BENELLI ARMI SPA, URBINO, ITALY
<b>IMPORTER:</b> BENELLI USA, ACCOKEEK, MARYLAND
<b>GUN TYPE:</b> 12 GAUGE INERTIA DRIVE SEMI-AUTOMATIC
<b>RECEIVER:</b> MATT BLACK STEEL ALLOY
<b>TRIGGER PULL:</b> 4.2 LBS
<b>SAFETY:</b> PUSH BUTTON MANUAL
<b>AVERAGE WEIGHT:</b> 7.1 LBS
<b>BARREL:</b> 30" AS TESTED 28" AVAILABLE
<b>BARREL FINISH:</b> MATT BLACK
<b>NOMINAL BORE:</b> 0.724"
<b>CHOKES:</b> CRIO EXTENDED
<b>CYLINDER:</b> 0.003"
<b>IMPROVED CYLINDER:</b> 0.013"
<b>MODIFIED:</b> 0.022"
<b>IMPROVED MODIFIED:</b> 0.023"
<b>MODIFIED:</b> 0.030"
<b>FULL:</b> 0.037"
<b>CHOKE LENGTH:</b> 3 3/4" KNURLED
<b>RIB:</b> VENTED ELEVATED
<b>RIB WIDTH:</b> 8MM MATT FINISH
<b>SIGHTS:</b> FIBER OPTIC FRONT BEAD STEEL MID BEAD
<b>STOCK &amp; FORE-END:</b> COMPOSITE
<b>LENGTH OF PULL:</b> 14 3/8" ADJUSTABLE
<b>DROP AT COMB:</b> 1 3/8" ADJUSTABLE WITH INCLUDED OPTIONAL INSERT & SHIMS
<b>DROP AT HEEL:</b> 2" ADJUSTABLE WITH SHIMS
<b>RECOIL PAD:</b> REMOVEABLE SOFT RUBBER TWO INCLUDED
<b>OAL:</b> 51 3/4"
<b>ACCESSORIES:</b> FIVE CHOKES, TWO RECOIL PADS, TWO COMB INSERTS, HARD CASE, STOCK ADJUSTMENT SHIMS AND GUN OIL

## Consistent POI

When you start to install the composite lower unit that contains the magazine tube and the trigger group, you quickly realize that there isn't any hanger welded or brazed to the barrel. This eliminates the problem of inconsistent point of impact. Anytime you braze or weld something to a barrel, there's the danger that the point of impact may be affected by heat. By using a semi-free-floating barrel that's not directly attached to the barrel, the Vinci designers have almost eliminated that potential problem.



VINCI SUPERSPORT WITH RAISED COMB (ABOVE), AND BELOW THE STANDARD COMB.

A free-floating barrel also eliminates the problem of heat transfer down the hanger that could warp the barrel slightly. (Even a change of a couple of millimeters at the muzzle grows exponentially larger at 40 yards).

Another problem with semi-automatic shotguns that can crop up on occasion is a barrel ring that is not aligned perfectly with the magazine tube at the time it is attached. This too may cause the point of impact to change from the pressure it exerts on the barrel.

Even if the hanger is perfectly aligned, just cranking down too hard on the fore-end nut can change the point of impact and crack a fore-end. Because the barrel is permanently attached during manufacture on the Vinci, that process not only eliminates the problem of over tightening the fore-end nut, but also not tightening it enough. If the barrel on a semi-automatic is left too loose, the barrel will slide back and forth and can cause wear and friction on the inner surface of the receiver – another source of problems with softer alloy receivers as a competition shotgun ages.

## More Specs

The barrel has a slightly elevated vented rib with a red fiber optic front sight and steel mid bead – a pretty standard set up these days on almost any shotgun. Five extended Benelli Crio Chokes are included with the Vinci, but not my

favorite, a light modified choke. (Both Trulock and Briley produce light modified chokes for all Benelli shotguns if you want one.) I have found that Benelli chokes generally have tighter constriction by a few thousandths than most factory chokes. That's OK by me.

The trigger group is housed in the composite lower unit. It's a totally new design and it functioned smoothly for all that shot my demo gun. It may be one of the best triggers on a self-loading automatic I have ever shot, but it's still not as good as a high quality over and under box lock or side lock shotgun – don't expect miracles.

At first glance the composite stock on the Vinci Super Sport looks exactly like the composite stock on the standard Benelli Super Sport, but on closer examination there is a difference. There are a few more recoil reducing chevrons on the Vinci stock. One of those chevrons, that helps control recoil, loops around the upper part of the stock just aft of the comb. Another one loops around the bottom of the stock just aft of the grip. The chevrons do dampen recoil – and that helps to mitigate the advantage a soft shooting gas gun has over the inertia drive



“Either you like the aesthetics of black guns or you don't – there seems to be only a few that are completely turned off by them.”

action of Benelli shotguns.

Two ergonomic very soft recoil pads are included with the Vinci Super Sport. One has a  $14\frac{3}{8}$  inch length of pull and the other extends the stock another  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch for shooters that require a longer length of pull. Also included are

two comb inserts. One is flush with the stock and the other raises the comb so it's a semi Monte Carlo stock. Both the recoil pads and the combs are easily swapped by just peeling them off. There is also an assortment of shims for adjusting the stock up or down and adjusting toe out and toe in.

The Vinci Super Sport with a 30 inch barrel is a lengthy gun at  $51\frac{1}{2}$  inches. A 28 inch barrel is available, reducing the overall length to

$49\frac{1}{2}$  inches with the shorter recoil pad installed.

I will not dwell on the aesthetics of the Benelli and other black guns. Either you like them or you don't – there seems to be only a few that are completely turned off by them. I will also not dwell on assembling it and disassembling it as there is more than enough information on Benelli's web site with excellent illustrations on that.

## Durability

After shooting the Vinci, I think it might be an outstanding sporting clays shotgun for those that prefer semi-automatic shotguns. I have no idea about the durability of the Vinci. The field shotgun models have been around for quite some time and it seems to be a durable firearm. I know of one thing for sure – Benelli has never built a shotgun that turned out to be less than very durable. They are the most popular loaner shotguns for shooting thousands of doves in Argentina. More than that I can not say. ■

