

SHOOTING SPORTSMAN

BIRDS • GUNS • DOGS • PEOPLE • PLACES

MAY • JUNE 2020



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German shorthair with
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by Lauren Till.



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LISTEN TO A LADY'S TAKE

If you haven't yet tuned in to the "Orvis Hunting & Shooting Podcast," you've been missing a quality listening experience. Host Reid Bryant—yes, *that* Reid Bryant, one of *SSM's* Editors at Large and the Wingshooting Services Manager for Orvis—is well spoken, engaging and a talented interviewer. Subjects focus mostly on bird hunting and target shooting, with former guests having included Steve Grossman (Little Moran Grouse Camp and Wild Prairie Lodge), author Tom McGuane and *SSM* Associate Publisher "Terry" Bombeke. A recent episode was titled "Women in the Shooting Sports" and featured Syren Brand Manager Lynne Green discussing "Syren shotguns, clay sports and brand ambassadors in the 'influencer' age." Green is a hunter, instructor and competitive shooter with a passion for bringing women into the sport. Her perspectives on the importance of gunfit and competitive shooting are worth hearing. You can listen to the podcast free on Spotify, iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts.



TOP LEFT: RALPH STUART

Game & Gun Gazette



Guerini's New-Gun Gathering

The more I learn about Italian gunmaking, the more I'm surprised. At Caesar Guerini's 2020 Writer & Dealer

Event, held in February outside of Dallas, the surprises—including a few that had nothing to do with firearms—were numerous.

First, when my plane landed at the airport, it was a freakishly warm 82°. But before I had time to break a sweat, I was picked up by a straw-colored Suburban, in which I joined three other writers for the trip west.

"Do you think this heat will bring out the snakes?" I asked the driver.

"Probably not," she said, sounding unconcerned.

Probably not?! I thought, feeling very concerned.

The next surprise was the host venue: Greystone Castle Sporting Club. The dream of a Texas businessman, Greystone crowns a top-hat-shaped hill and lords over thousands of mesquite-spotted acres.

After passing through Greystone's gatehouse, we were greeted by guides, bird dogs and hunting trucks. Soon I was in the field with two other hunters and a pair of dogs—a Brittany that found the birds and an English cocker that made them flush. With plenty of hunting ahead of us and no snakes in sight, life was good.

That evening we enjoyed a dinner that included Greystone's famous



Greystone Castle was the host venue for Guerini's introduction of its new guns, including the Invictus II Sporting.

7 Spiced Crispy Quail followed by a viewing of the Super Bowl.

Monday kicked off with a presentation on Guerini's 2020 gun introductions. Guerini burst on the scene in 2001, and since then its shotguns have impressed hunters and shooters with their high-end features and mid-range prices. Wes Lang, president of Caesar Guerini USA, said that he's always trying to provide customers with "the next level"—which for 2020 includes an impressive array of guns.

The new field models—the limited-edition Maxum Gold Field and a 28-gauge version of the Revenant—continue Guerini's collaboration with Italian engravers Bottega Incisioni C. Giovannelli and offer the kind of features once reserved for shotguns costing many times more. To its line of million-round-capable Invictus target guns Guerini has added the Invictus II Sporting and the Invictus III Sporting

Limited. Both are eye-catching with color-case hardened actions and gold details. The action on the Invictus III also features impressive carved scrollwork.

Guerini also has added the Invictus I M-SPEC 34" Specialist. This 12-gauge features a black action with carved details, and its ultra-lightweight 34" barrels make the gun quick-to-target.

Guerini's Syren division is offering two new target guns this year: the Julia Sporting and the Elos N2 Elevate. The Julia combines women-friendly features like a modified forend and comfortable stock dimensions with a great-looking, sideplated action. The Elos N2 Elevate has the same for-women features plus an adjustable comb and the company's Quick Release Rib system.

After a morning of talking guns and then lunch, we enjoyed an afternoon of pheasant shooting. As the birds flew high overhead, I worked my way through Guerini's new offerings. My favorite was the Invictus III Sporting Limited—its great looks combined with just enough heft and the right feel to swing smoothly and knock down bird after bird.

The final surprise of the trip came the morning we left Greystone Castle: Two days after temperatures had been in the 80s, overnight lows were going to be in the 30s and there was a chance of snow. And snow is almost as improbable in that part of Texas as a medieval fortress. —GREGG ELLIOTT

Caesar Guerini Revenant

BRUCE BUCK

What makes a gun attractive varies with the taste of the individual. What one notices the most are the lines of the gun, the wood grain and the engraving. Sometimes it's *Handsome is as handsome does*; other times it's just plain *Wow! That's good looking!*

The lines of the gun are sometimes subtle, sometimes not. Compare a Perazzi to a Krieghoff. Now add the wood. I don't know of anyone who doesn't like killer wood, but tastes there differ in the type of grain preferred.

And then there is engraving. This is probably the most controversial decorative aspect of any shotgun. Guns with nice lines, nice wood and no engraving can be very attractive in a classic way. Guns scratched to death with improper engraving can fail to impress anything but the wallet.

Hand engraving has been around forever at all quality levels. Mechanical roll engraving had its limits followed by early laser engraving that also would work only on flat surfaces and to a single depth. Not so today. A five-axis laser engraver permits engraving to go around curved parts and be cut to varying depths. To some extent, it can replace certain levels of hand engraving.

As a relatively new gun company, Caesar Guerini has built a large following by producing attractive shotguns backed by exceptionally good service. Guerinis tend to cost a little more than the usual Browning or

Beretta, but you always get a little something extra that makes it well worth it.

Guerini is also very innovative, often expanding and trying something new to cater to its growing market. One of the company's best areas is improving the looks of existing guns. Sure, everyone does this by adding gingerbread to a plain gun, but Guerini goes a step further. Its new Revenant over/under is a perfect example. "Revenant" means a person who has returned from the dead or a long absence. Clearly this gun is meant to remind us of the engraved glories of the past.

First the basic stuff. The Revenant costs \$13,495. It comes in 20 and 28 gauge with 28" or 30" barrels (26" barrels are available on special order). For comparison, Guerini's basic Woodlander field gun starts at \$3,895. Our test Revenant was a 20-gauge with 28" barrels.

So what do you get for almost \$10,000 more than the Woodlander? The interior of the action is the same as most of the over/unders in the Guerini lineup. I discussed it in my reviews of Caesar Guerini guns in January/February 2004 (the Magnus Light), November/December 2009 (the Apex) and January/February 2011 (the Ellipse EVO). It locks up with the classic Browning Superposed full-width underbolt aided by four studs on the bottom of the monoblock. The barrels



COURTESY OF CAESAR GUERINI USA

hinge on standard receiver trunnions engaging the monoblock. Hammers are attached to the separate triggerplate, while the sears pivot down from the top of the receiver. The mainsprings are durable horizontal coils with inner bracing. In all the action interior is pretty standard for guns from the Val Trompia area of northern Italy and definitely a well-proven design.

One touch that surprised me was that the Revenant's inertia trigger was not selective. It always fired the bottom barrel first. Trigger pulls were excellent, with almost no take-up or play, and both pulls were at about 4¼ pounds.

Where this action cosmetically differs from the usual Guerini action is its receiver's curved lines. Nothing on the exterior of the action seems straight or flat. The bottom of the action is heavily rounded, which called for a considerable redesign, not just grinding off the edges. Even the sideplates are gently rounded. Other than one in the long tang, there are no screw heads showing. All of this gives the action exterior flowing, attractive

The Revenant, which comes in a Negrini case, has a Boss-style forend iron and an action exterior with flowing, attractive lines. The full-coverage engraving is most impressive.



lines that you can see and feel. Add to that the Boss-style forend iron tapering from the front of the action far into the forend as a visual receiver extension, and you have an absolutely gorgeous-shaped O/U receiver.

The beautiful lines of the receiver may not be immediately apparent to everyone, but the engraving sure will be. The Revenant is engraved to the absolute maximum from the sideplates through the Boss forend extension. In a tribute to hunting, there are quail on one side and pheasants on the other in more than two dozen gold inlays over silver fall foliage on a black background. The engraving is cut to several depths for more visual appeal. The engraving is done by Bottega Incisioni C. Giovanelli,

a modern engraving concern that combines EDM (electrical discharge machining), laser, hand engraving and a separate gold application. I was told that the Revenant's engraving takes 25 hours of the most advanced mechanical engraving backed up by 15 hours of handwork. It certainly is very well done, even under my 10X jeweler's loupe.

With receiver lines and engraving like this, what do you do to the barrels to make them stand out? The Revenant's are given a solid top rib, which is slightly raised, flat and tapers from ¼" to 3/16". I always have been a fan of solid ribs, because they are so smooth looking compared to the usual vent top ribs. Other than that, the Revenant's barrels look standard, with



SNAPSHOT

Make & Model:

Caesar Guerini Revenant

Gauge: 20

Action: Break-action over/under

Chambering: 3"

Finish: Game scenes in silver, gold and black; 100% engraving coverage

Barrel length: 28"

Weight: 6 pounds 13½ ounces

Chokes: Five screw-in flush chokes

Stock: Pistol grip, wooden buttplate

Accessories: Case, chokes, wrench, manual, lifetime warranty

Price as tested: \$13,495

solid side ribs, flush-mounted screw chokes and a single steel front bead, so appropriate on a field gun. The barrels are joined at the rear by a conventional monoblock. Solder seams and bluing on the barrels were flawless, as you would expect from a Guerini gun.

Inside the barrels, things are also pretty standard. In our 20-gauge there were 3" chambers with ½" forcing cones tapering to a bore of .626". This is a bit overbore compared to the nominal 20-gauge .615". The bore is chromed and has the CIP stamp of approval for steel shot. Five nickel-plated chokes come with the gun: Cylinder (.000"), Improved Cylinder (.008"), Modified (.017"), Improved Modified (.021") and Full (.029"). The chokes use a conventional taper to a 1" parallel, to stabilize the shot. They also require 17 full turns to seat in the

barrel. The tubes are marked with notches on the outer rims, so that the choke degrees can be discerned while in the barrels. The choke wrench is adequate and strong.

The forend attaches to the barrels by a conventional Anson pushbutton. The forend is heavier than usual but for good reason. Its configuration is that of a slender field version, which goes nicely with the smooth lines of the action, but the Boss-style forend iron proceeds 3½" up the top and rear of the forend, giving the gun a continuous engraved steel line from the receiver. This extra steel adds weight, even though it is thinned out as much as possible. The forend iron is also adjustable for take-up due to wear, so it won't come loose after many rounds.

The stock uses an open pistol grip and a separate wooden buttplate. The

dimensions given by the factory are 14¾" length of pull, 1½" drop at comb and 2¼" drop at heel. Our gun had modest cast-off and 5° of pitch. A left-handed stock is available, as is an English grip and custom dimensions. The computerized 26-lines-per-inch checkering is nicely applied in a conservative pattern, providing a good grip.

Wood-to-metal fit was first rate. This was particularly impressive, because all the wood-and-metal joints seemed to be on curves, where proper fit is more difficult. The excellent oil finish fully filled the pores, with no grain showing. Like the wood-to-metal fit, the walnut grain was just what you would expect on a gun of this quality: first rate.

The Revenant was shipped in a snappy Negrini leather-and-PVC takedown case suitable for air travel. Inside you get the five screw chokes and wrench in a plastic box, a multi-language manual and a lifetime warranty to the original owner. As mentioned, Caesar Guerini is well known for its exceptionally good service.

No matter how good looking a gun is, it is just a wall-hanger if it doesn't shoot. Our Revenant did just fine. It was mechanically correct in all respects and didn't miss a beat, even with the inertia trigger and light loads. Chokes stayed put. Point of impact was correct, probably thanks to the laser alignment of the barrels during manufacture. The 28"-barreled 20-gauge did weigh a hefty 6 pounds 13½ ounces. The balance was fairly neutral, but the moment of inertia was forward. One would expect a carrying 20 to weigh around 6¼ pounds, so this is a hefty gun and perhaps better suited to stand-and-deliver shooting (doves, driven and the like) than to all-day hiking. Then again, you wouldn't want to drag something this beautiful through the mud and bushes.

There are certainly lighter and less-expensive field 20s that work just as well, but if you want to go first class in the looks department, the Caesar Guerini Revenant definitely delivers. Those doves will fall out of respect. 🦉

For more information, contact Caesar Guerini USA, gueriniusa.com.