

Andrew Harvison casts his eye over the Beretta 687EELL Sporter Multichoke, a competition gun with the kind of refinements normally associated with much more expensive best hand-made models.

How do you improve a Beretta 686 or 687? These are models which have evolved with their worldwide popularity. Built largely as a result of sophisticated engineering technology but based on years of research and development, it must surely be difficult for Beretta to deliver an enhanced variety of what is a proven success.

Enter the 687EELL. Certainly not new to the market, but the model's introduction came by way of a game gun. Beretta having met with huge success with the 686 and 687 range, both in clay and game, saw an opportunity of creating a high grade model with all the apparent refinements of a hand-made SO sidelock, but still built using their own hi-tech production line techniques.

The game model was a

success, and continues to be so, especially in 20 bore. Alongside it a competition clay version has been developed, the latest variety of which I have been enjoying during the last month or so. What essentially is a clever piece of marketing, is also an extremely attractive gun falling into a price range where in many respects it appears to be a lot of gun for the money.

The standard of finish is exceptionally high. It looks lovely, the wood is of seriously good quality and the unfettered sideplates (minimal screws etc.) give the engravers lots of scope to express their skills, as can be seen from the photographs.

Yet underneath all of the embellishments, this is a competition gun built on the back of a wealth of Beretta experience. The gun seemed heavier (3.6kg) than I had

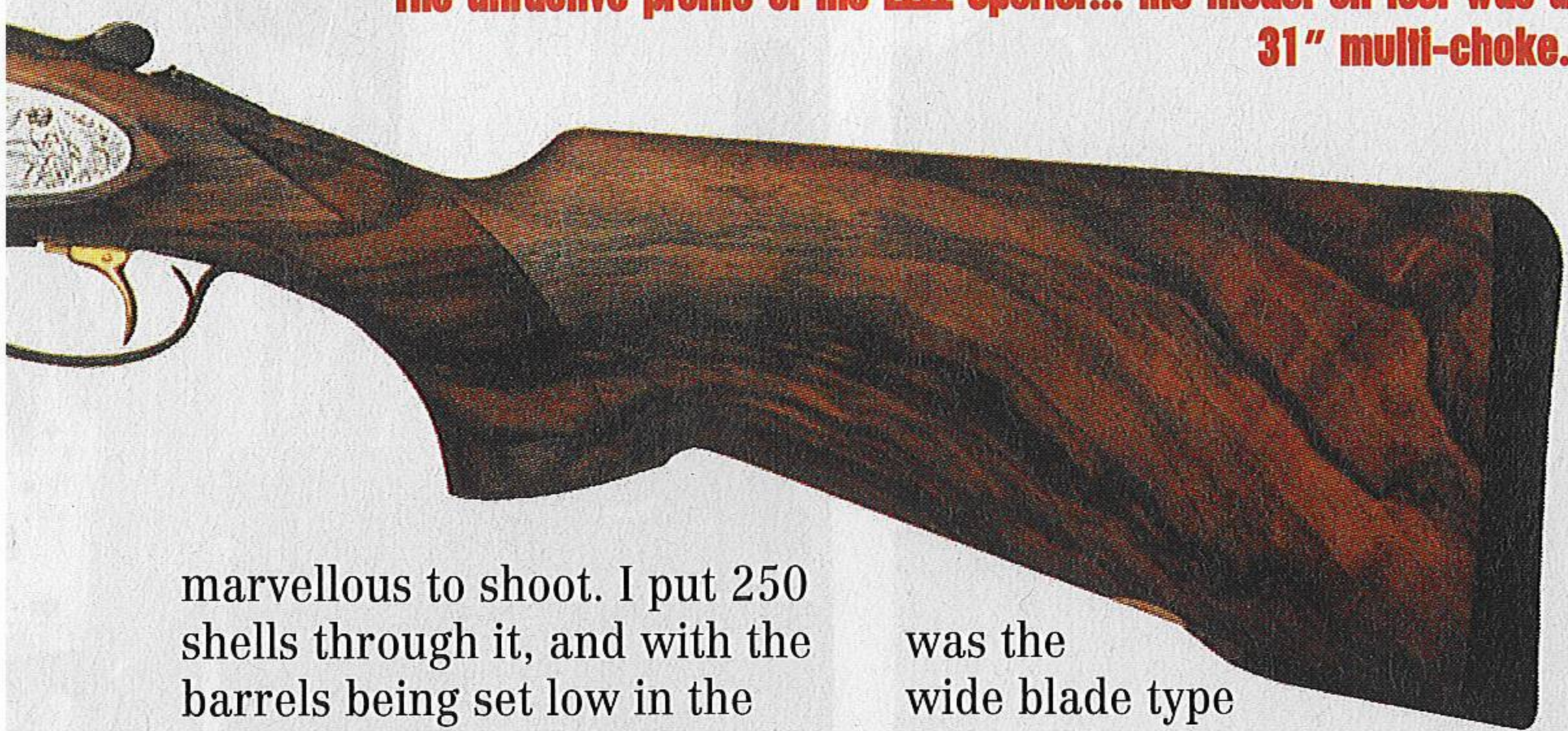
expected, and at first I found some difficulty in holding it to a line on crossing targets. I think that this was also in part due to the fact that when the gun was mounted I could see a fair amount of rib. But obviously when I mounted onto a target in earnest the gun was falling slightly away from my face, due to the barrel weight.

This, it must be said, is down to the user (me!) having been doing most of my shooting for the last year with a light-barrelled Miroku. This was something which I noticed on going back to a Beretta - you really have to power the barrels. Even after using one for 8 or 9 years, and enjoying a lot of success with it, I had forgotten that a Beretta handles differently to other guns. You have to work at it initially, but once familiar with them they are fabulous guns.

This particular model was

A Class Act

The attractive profile of the EELL Sporter... the model on test was a 31" multi-choke.



marvellous to shoot. I put 250 shells through it, and with the barrels being set low in the action, it was so smooth. In fact the recoil was so minimal that I wondered if it had been fitted with a sorbothane pad, when on checking I found that it was a standard Beretta pad, nicely leather covered.

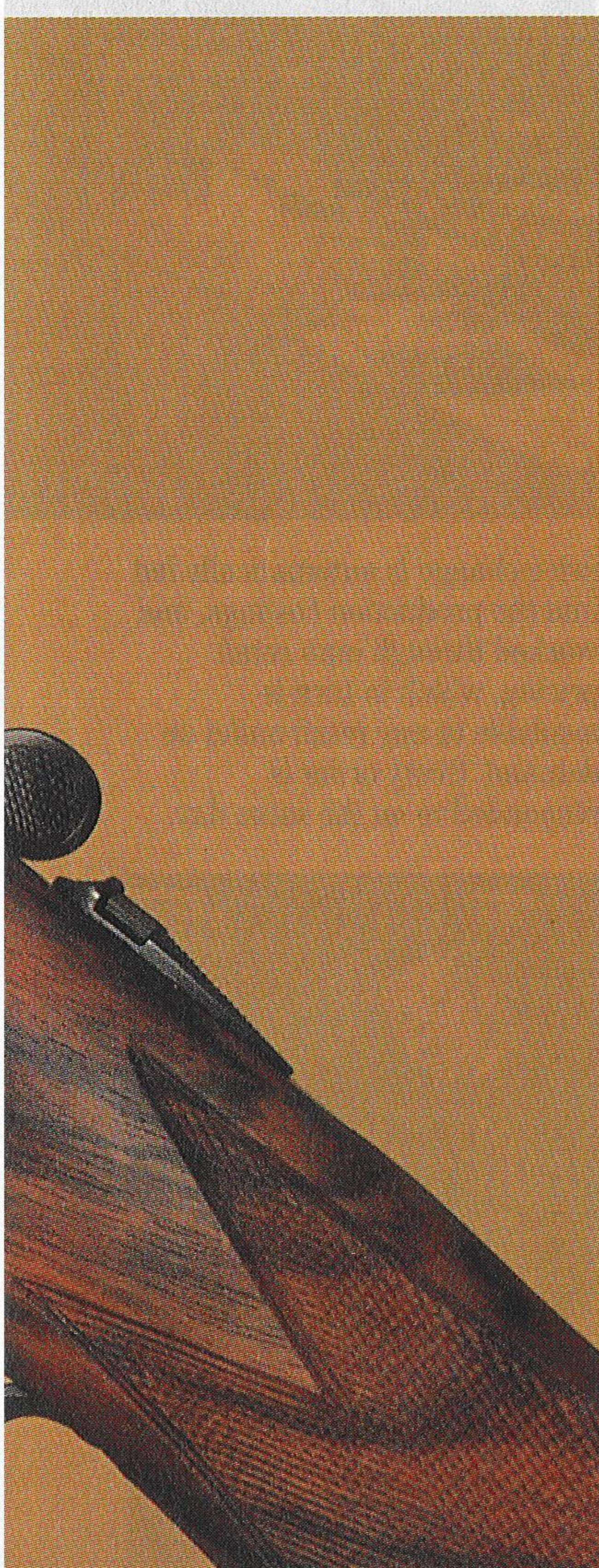
Once using a Beretta again I soon rediscovered how those heavier barrels can be an advantage, particularly on trap type targets. I shot a steeply quartering 40 yard teal with it and blew it to pieces time after time - the gun did all of the work.

The trigger pulls were excellent, and you would not find better on any gun of that price.

The only aspect I didn't like

was the wide blade type trigger which curves back. It didn't suit me and I found myself pressing it with the pad of my index finger, instead of the first joint. Perhaps the manufacturers should supply a spare standard trigger so the customer can have a choice?

The styling of the stock and fore-end were superb. Beretta have over the last couple of years or so finally acknowledged that Western Europeans are built differently to Italians. We are not by nature squat and beefy! Consequently stocks are now slimmer and grips designed with British and American shooters in mind.



When I was testing the gun at Kibworth Shooting Ground, a good friend, John Ainsworth, was practising some tower birds before going to a pheasant shoot in Yorkshire the following day. A loyal side-by-side man, I persuaded him to try the 687EELL on the long tower crosses that he was failing to hit with his own gun. Switching to the Beretta he found them almost straight away - he was very impressed and I'll bet it gave him something to think about on his journey north!

The barrels on this model were 31", a length which is currently quite fashionable. I shot well with it, but remain a believer in 30" and suspect that most of Beretta's sales will be 28" or 30" - with the all-round shot in mind, 28" could be a popular seller as an ideal gun for either sporting clays or game shooting.

The Beretta 687EELL comes with five chokes and a lined case. Priced at £3,450, yet it looks much more expensive than some models three times its price. I have to give it full marks (but at the same time ask Beretta to drop an extra trigger in the box!). ■