

Classy Kemen



Three of Britain's finest shots, George Digweed, Richard Faulds and Kevin Gill have made the switch to Kemen guns. Also three of the six finalists in the recent Lonato OT World Cup were using them (including the winner). So what's the attraction? Andrew Harvison (left) endeavoured to find out.

Though Kemen started from scratch in a brand new purpose-built factory in 1990, its origins lie in the heart of the Spanish gun trade. The founders are Sarruguarte brothers, who apart from their own family being one of Spain's best known makers, one of them also worked for AYA.

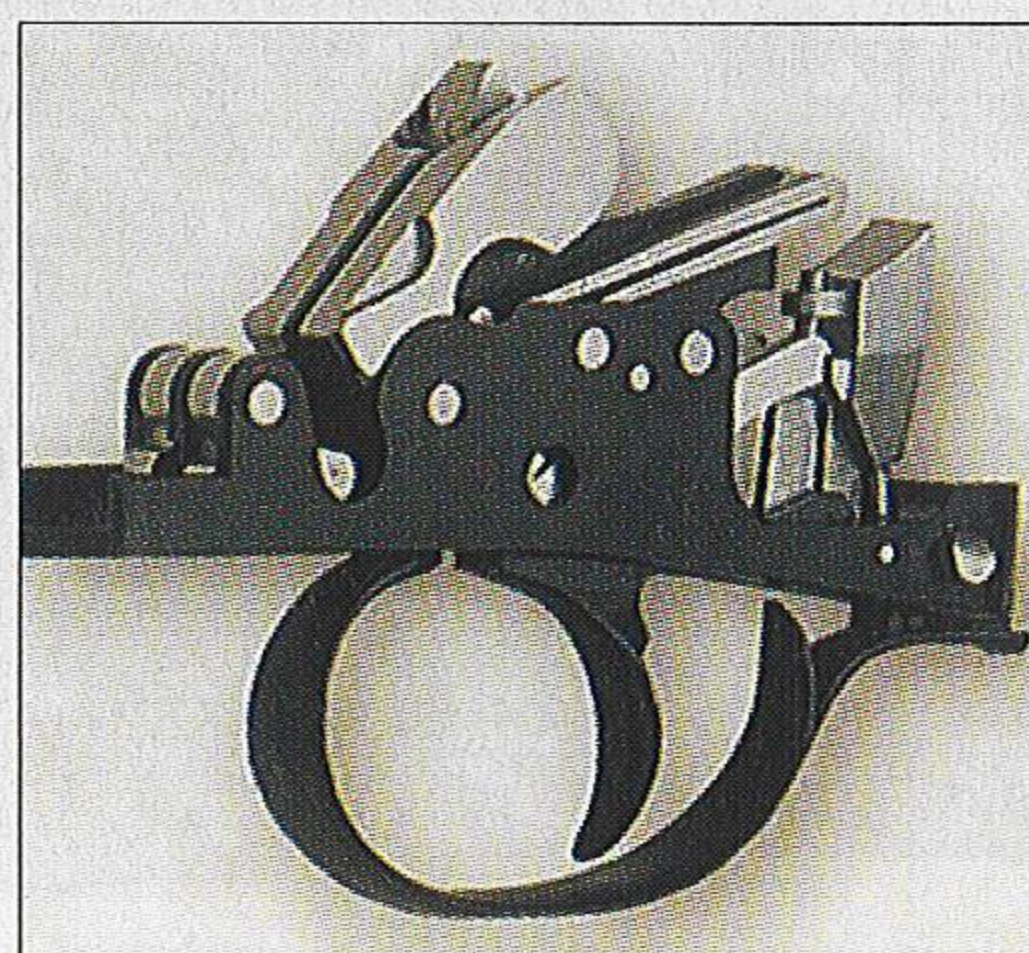
They saw the dramatic slump in demand for side-by-sides and the dominance of Italy and Japan in production line guns. But at the same time they suspected that there was still a gap for a top quality competition gunmaker. So they created Kemen, still based in the heart of their country's famous gunmaking region, Elgoibar in Northern Spain. And what an astute decision it has proved.

Taking on board some of Spain's top craftsmen, who in the

new factory have applied their skills to producing only high quality guns, both for competition and also game shooting.

Apart from the quality of build, an undoubted key to their success is that they will make each gun to the customer's particular specification - not simply dimensions, but type, rib, stock, fore-end and even barrel weight can all be produced to a customer's requirement at no extra charge. And the waiting time from order to delivery is just 2-3 months.

One aspect of the gun however does surprise me. Its design appears to be a copy of the Perazzi action. As imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, this should be of less concern to the user than the Italian makers who inspired them. And I'm a very



Fully detachable trigger mechanism.

big fan of Perazzi.

As for the gun itself... just fabulous. From the moment I pulled the test model, a KM-4 Sporter, from its sleeve I was impressed. It looked good, and instantly there was a ring of class about it.

The plain black action and schnabel fore-end worked well together, and with its 32" barrels it had the classic looks of a thoroughbred. On the gun in question it was an ordinary piece of wood on the stock, but strangely this didn't detract from the overall professional impact.

Initially I wasn't keen on the appearance of the rib, but my view was changed when I put it to use.

As for the making... it is only when you handle a gun like this and take it apart that you can properly appreciate the difference to a standard grade competition gun. The finish was excellent, and the gun opened and closed as sweet as a nut. Detachable trigger too.

I couldn't wait to try it.

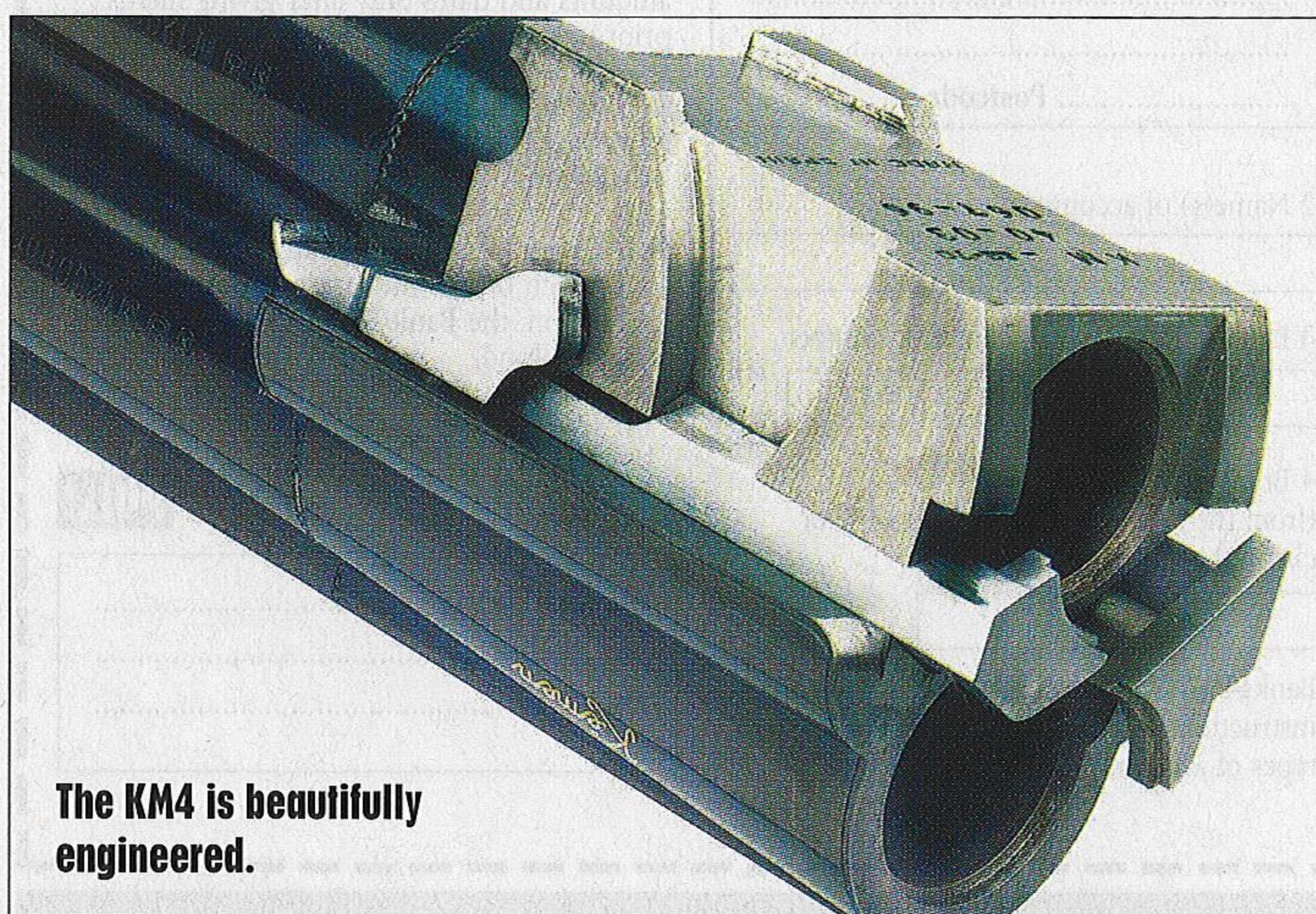
This particular gun with its long barrels weighed 8lb 3½oz, but while weight is important it is balance and handling characteristics that are crucial. The balance needs to be just behind the centre of the leading hand, causing the gun to be lively but controllable; able to do exactly as you wish with the muzzle at the target.

Then there is that indefinable feel that a gun can have. Guns of identical make and model will differ - occasionally you will come across one which for you has that special quality, the control which sets it apart. I once had a Browning B25 that had it (which I rashly sold!).

This gun had it - unquestionably. I tried a variety of targets - crossing, quartering and an awkward long quartering teal. The tapered rib (11-7mm), which I did not like originally, led the eye straight to the target. Briley choked to just over ½ and ¾ it smoked the clays, and gave me such confidence that I was practically picking my spot - each time different, but with the same devastating effect (cartridges were Hull Storm and Gamebore Clear Winner and Blue Diamond).

If I was in the market for a new gun and could afford the price I would buy one without hesitation.

Price £3,495 (inc VAT). ■



The KM4 is beautifully engineered.

UK Distributor: Tony Kennedy Gunmakers, 22 Church Street, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 8AR. Tel. 01566 774465. Gun testing can be arranged at venues around the country.