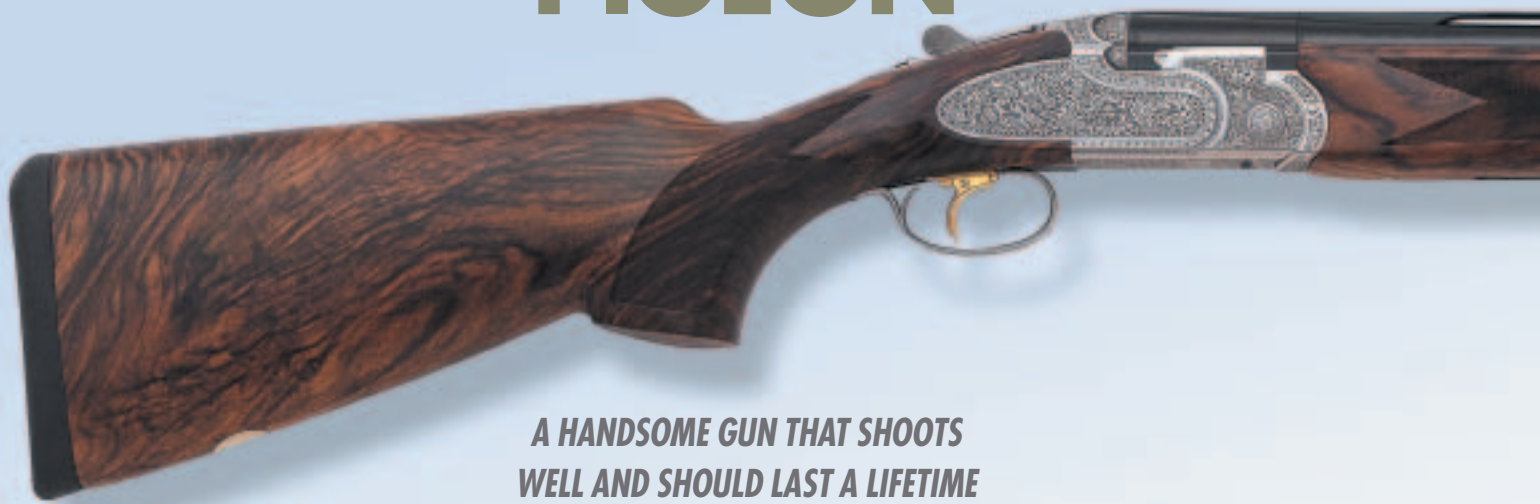


BERETTA 687EELL DIAMOND PIGEON



**A HANDSOME GUN THAT SHOOTS
WELL AND SHOULD LAST A LIFETIME
SAYS **TOM CERETTO****

In almost three score years of shooting, fondling, testing, admiring and writing about shotguns, few really stand out. They are for the most part a blur of mechanical contrivances for the taking of game and breaking clay targets. Some were good, some were bad, some were outstanding and some were memorable. In the memorable category is the Beretta 687EELL Diamond Pigeon.

The first time I laid eyes on this gun was during my skeet shooting days more years ago than I care to remember. A long time squad-mate of mine, Bud Wittich, brought his new EELL to Faskell's Gun Club outside of Waupaca, Wisconsin to baptize it to registered skeet.

Faskell's is no longer there and neither, unfortunately, is my friend Bud. He is in that great skeet field in the sky running 100 straights, time after time, with a .410 bore – something he rarely did when he was with us!

What first impressed me about the 687EELL Diamond Pigeon was how graceful it looked. It was long and slender with a low profile and looked almost delicate. The lovely scroll engraving on the false sideplates was outstanding. The demo gun I am now shooting is even better looking than Bud's was.

One of the first things I noticed when I looked closely at the Beretta EELL for the first time was that the bolts that locked the action

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in place looked awfully small and delicate for the job they were intended to do. They were then, and still are, a truncated cone with flattened sides. I no longer dwell on how delicate they look. I have friends who have put over 100,000 rounds through their 687 series Berettas and their shotguns still perform admirably. The locking bolts on the 682, 686 and 687 series Berettas are self-adjusting for wear, but I have never heard of one shooting loose for any reason.

TECHNICAL DETAIL

Like all Beretta over and under target guns the receiver is CNC machined out of a solid block of steel. The machining is flawless and there is not a tool mark visible. Not even on the bottom of the receiver or where the twin cocking rods fit in the recessed grooves machined out for them on each side of the receiver floor. The trunions on either side of the receiver that the barrels pivot on are replaceable. The trigger on my demo is about as good as it gets.

There is absolutely no slack and both barrels briskly release at 5.1 pounds. Because the trigger was so crisp I didn't think trigger pull would be quite that high, but it was. The trigger is adjustable fore and aft about 10mm. A small screwdriver to loosen and tighten the setscrew on the trigger is included.

If you are going to equip a 687EELL Diamond Pigeon, or any 687 series Beretta target gun, with sub-gauge tubes you might need to have a gunsmith install a .410 bore recoil block in order to engage the second barrel. Whoever you purchase the sub-gauge tubes from should be able to inform you if that would be necessary or not.

The safety hangs from the top strap and snaps firmly into place when operated. The barrel selector also snaps to the right or left with authority. It would not be easy to accidentally move the safety or the barrel selector. The machining and checkering on the safety and barrel selector are well done.

The engraving on the side-plates and receiver is a very tasteful English scroll. The top lever and trigger guard are also

engraved with a scroll motif. Pushing on a small button protruding through the receiver faceplate releases the top lever for storage. To put it succinctly, the entire receiver and false side plates are almost a work of art.

The barrels are hammer forged and do not have a ripple in them. The bottom barrel measured 0.730 and the top barrel measured 0.729 bore diameter. The sides of the monobloc are tastefully machine turned and add to the aesthetic appeal of the shotgun. The 687EELL sports a 10x8mm tapered ventilated top rib and a solid side rib. The checkering on the top rib is very well executed. Five 2³/₄" long Beretta Optima Bore flush choke tubes and a choke tube wrench come standard. The barrels have factory installed long forcing cones that are spot on concentric.

CHOKE ISSUE

The only issue I have with the 687EELL is with the choke tubes. I firmly believe all shotguns that are sold as sporting clays target guns should have extended choke tubes to facilitate changing during

competition. I am willing to give Beretta a little slack on this point because extended choke tubes do take away from the aesthetic appeal of the shotgun. But I am sure that most sporting clays shooters who purchase a 687EELL will purchase aftermarket extended choke tubes. The lack of a light modified choke tube of 0.015 constriction kind of rubs me the wrong way too. A gun that costs \$6,495 should have a fuller compliment of choke tubes than those shipped. Maybe I am getting too picky in my old age, but I don't think so.

HIGH GRADE WOOD

The wood on my demo is of a very high grade with quite a bit of marble cake evident on the stock and forearm. Metal to wood fit around the side-plates and receiver is very well done with nary a gap showing. The wood stands slightly proud of the side-plates and receiver and is sufficient for a refinishing if necessary. The stock has a hand rubbed oil finish and highly compliments the almost exhibition grade wood on the stock.

I searched very hard to find a blip on the fine 16 lines per inch checkering, but I didn't find a single over-run or blemish. I like the right hand palm swell because it is not overly done. Many shotguns have very large palm swells that are a bit too large and almost uncomfortable. The palm swell on this gun is just about perfect – not so large as to be obtrusive, but large enough to be comfortable and let you know it is there.

As everyone knows by now, I am not a big fan of Schnable fore-ends. But I have to admit that the Schnable fore-end on this gun is tastefully done. Probably the best I have ever seen. The fore-end tapers down and smoothly segues into a nicely shaped Schnable. If everyone manufactured a Schnable fore-end as nice as this I wouldn't get into a hissy-fit over most of those that I see. The slender fore-end fits very nicely into the palm of your hand. Like the stock, the fore-end also exhibits some nice grain, but not quite as nice as that on the stock.

The machining and engraving on the fore-end iron is commensurate with the machining

and engraving on the receiver. First class. A Deeley and Edge improved style fore-end latch attaches the fore-end securely to the barrels. The fore-end snaps on firmly and is rigidly attached to the barrels without an iota of wobble. I have tested more than a few over and under shotguns that have had fore-ends that moved a bit side-to-side when attached. To me that exhibit's a lack of attention to detail and makes me wonder about where else corners may have been cut.

When I first mounted my friend Bud's 687EELL Diamond Pigeon way back, my first thought was that I could shoot it well. Every 687 series Beretta I have shot since I have managed to shoot reasonably well, right out of the box. I think part of that has to do with the fact that Beretta has done their homework well and from the beginning have stocked their guns to American tastes. Beretta knows their markets and caters to each market well. That's why they have been around for almost half a millennium.

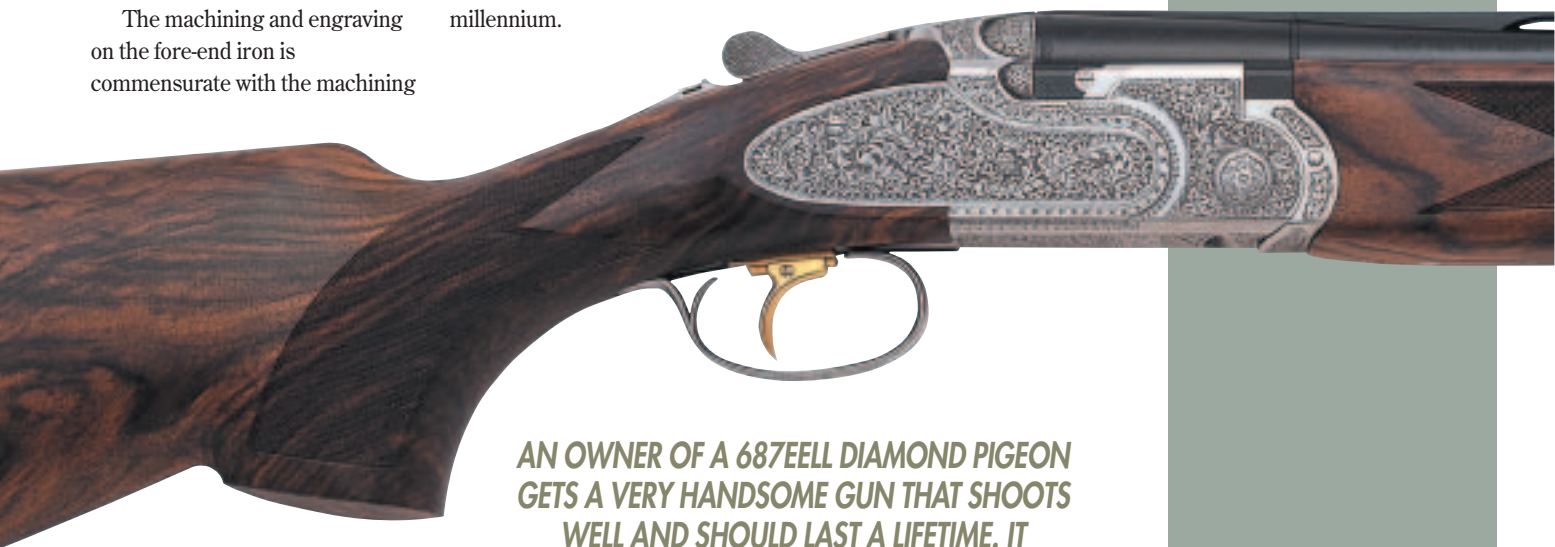
ON TEST

To me the acid test for a sporting clays gun is how it swings onto the second target on a true pair. With its almost perfect balance my 687EELL demo gun was easy to transition to the second bird. The minimal, but adequate, palm swell and the well-shaped fore-end made it easy to acquire targets coming from any angle. It was fun to shoot even though I knew I would have to return it. An owner of a 687EELL Diamond Pigeon gets a very handsome gun that shoots well and should last a lifetime. It doesn't get any better than that.

At \$6,495 it is not an inexpensive shotgun, but anyone that purchases one will have a shotgun that has the sex appeal of a Las Vegas showgirl and is built to a very high standard. If I had that much loose cash burning a hole in my pocket I would order one tomorrow. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURER:
FABBRICA D'ARMI PIETRO BERETTA GARDONE VAL TROMPIA (BRESCIA) ITALY
U.S.A. IMPORTER:
BERETTA U.S.A ACCOKEEK, MARYLAND
ACTION:
LOW PROFILE IMPROVED BOXLOCK
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE:
\$6,495
GAUGE: 12
SAFETY: MANUAL
GUN WEIGHT: 7 LBS 9 OZ. (WEIGHED)
LOP: 14.7 INCHES
DROP AT COMB: 1.50 INCHES
DROP AT HEEL: 2.36 INCHES
BARRELS: 28" (TESTED) 30" AND 32"
RIB: VENTED 10MMX8MM TAPERED
CHAMBERS: 3"
BORE SIZE: 0.730 AND 0.729 (MEASURED)
CHOKES: CYLINDER, IC, MODIFIED, IMP. MODIFIED AND FULL
TRIGGER: SINGLE SELECTIVE
TRIGGER PULL:
4 LBS 1 OZ AND 4 LBS 1 OZ. (MEASURED)



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