



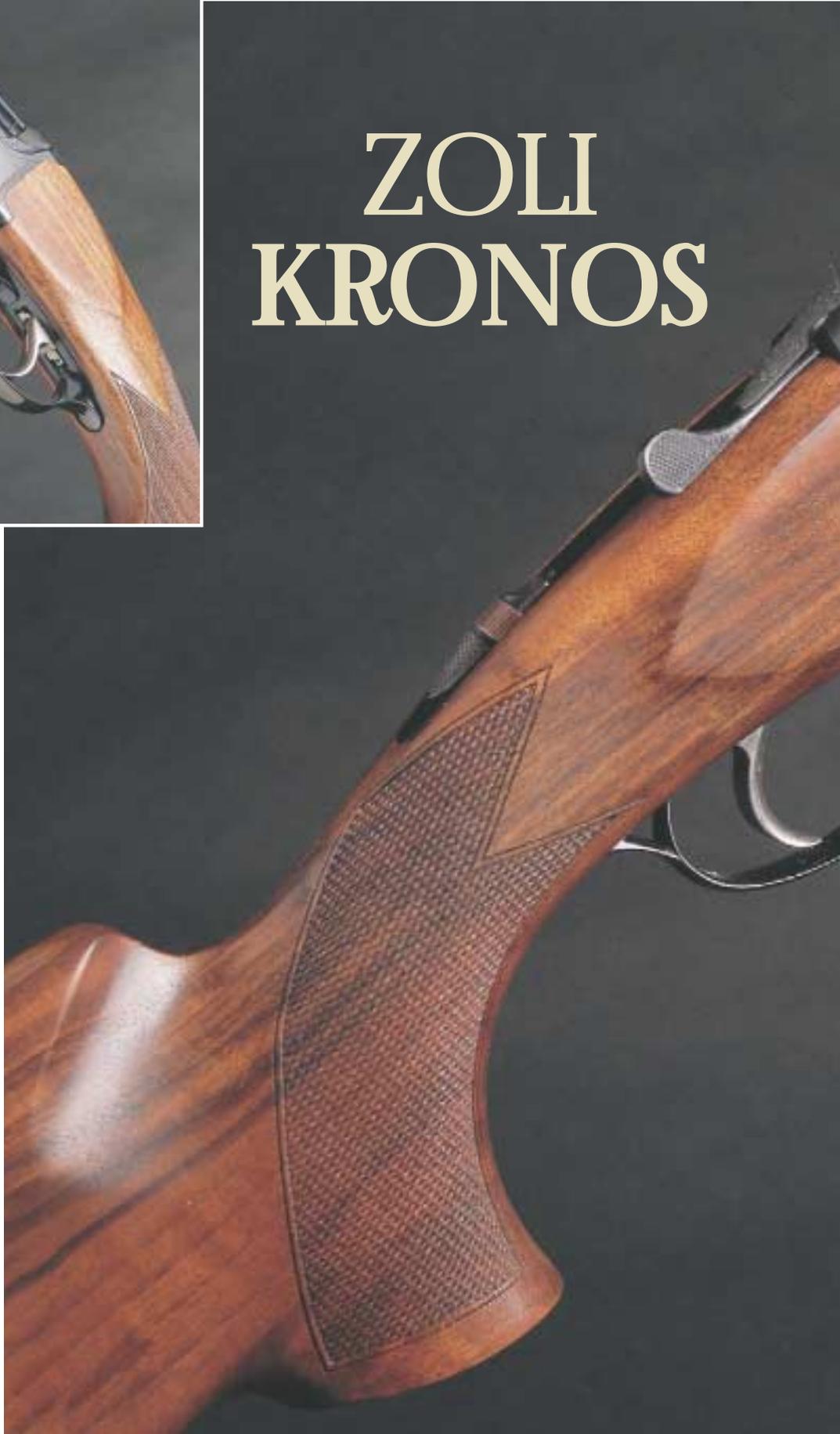
Another Italian newcomer joins the



# ZOLI KRONOS

What a year this is turning out to be for new guns. Everywhere you look there is something different — and not just from the familiar big names either. A whole raft of credible guns is becoming available from makers new or unfamiliar to the British market. Many of them are Italian, the origin of this month's test gun, the Zoli Kronos.

Unfamiliar the Zoli name may be to many British buyers, but that does not mean it has no pedigree. Dig into the history of the Italian gun trade and the name crops up repeatedly. Antonio Zoli S.p.A., the maker of the Kronos, has been trading for well over 50 years and is a part of the 'establishment' of the Brescia gun industry.





crowded sub £2000 sector. **Richard Rawlingson** puts it to the test.



Like many Italian companies however, Zoli has been going through changes in recent times. A new generation of the family is at the helm and the factory in Gardone, Val Trompia has seen a significant investment in the latest technology. With that investment has come a need to widen the sales network and that includes taking a much closer interest in the sporting side of clay targets shooting, for which read the English speaking world. A trickle of Zoli guns has found its way over here in the past but now a network of dealers has been built up to handle British sales and we can expect a much higher profile in future.

As we have discussed in these pages before, there is a revolution taking place in gunmaking with the introduction of new technology such as CNC machining and spark erosion techniques. Initially these were used to improve and automate existing designs, but in recent years we have seen the full potential of



the technology being used to create new models. Zoli have embarked on a product development programme they have dubbed the 'Revolution 4' project, so named because four distinct product ranges have emerged from a core design concept. Two of these — an Express rifle and a 'drilling' combination rifle/shotgun — are of no interest to us here and the third, a lightweight game gun, of only passing concern. The fourth element, the competition shotguns, is however, very much our thing.

## TECHNICAL REVIEW

I said earlier that the Kronos will compete in the sub-£2000 sector. Technically the recommended retail price is marginally above that but I suspect most dealers will want to keep below what is an important psychological price point. What it means is that the Kronos will be the cheapest gun available with a detachable trigger mechanism.

All the Zoli guns are designed with the lockwork built on a trigger plate that is quite separate from the main action frame. Not all will have detachable locks like the Kronos but the principle remains the same. It is a style of construction we associate of course with much more expensive guns, such as Perazzi or Gamba and it is possible to view the Zoli as something of a halfway house between conventional cheaper boxlocks and those premium brands. In this it is following the same kind of course already set by Marocchi and the Salvinelli Monza,



although neither of these two guns has had the cachet of the detachable lock.

True, the Zoli does not have the quick and simple catch mechanism that will be familiar to owners of guns like the Perazzi or Beretta DT10. To remove the trigger group a small wrench is needed to slacken off a grub screw. Nor, once removed, will you see the highly polished splendour of guns costing twice as much. The moving parts are finished to a high standard but the frame is left in a fairly rough state. The frame is quite slim which means there is plenty of wood around the opening, in what is a notorious weak spot on drop-lock designs

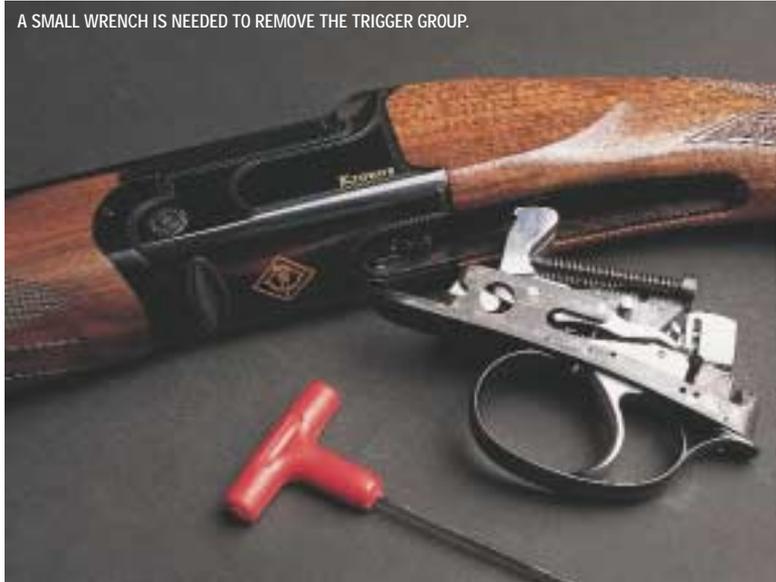
One of the benefits of detachable locks is rapid access for repair and the Kronos, commendably, comes with a spares kit that includes replacement coil springs and firing pins. It is essentially a neat and simple design, using a conventional inertia block to engage the second barrel. Barrel selection is by a sliding latch built into the safety — this has positive engagement and no apparent 'neutral' position in the centre.

Turning to the locking mechanism, this could be viewed conceptually as Boss/Perazzi style without the side lumps. As on a Perazzi, projections either side of the under barrel engage slots in the breech face where they are locked by a very solid looking bolt running horizontally in the action frame. Without the bifurcated lumps the frame is narrower than on a Perazzi-type gun, fore-aft location being provided by a small under lump that seats in the action floor.

As with the lockwork, the ejection system is simple, with little to go wrong or out of adjustment. The ejector springs are compressed on closing the gun and held in place by sears in the fore end. These are tripped by rods emerging from the knuckle of the action and give ample power and accurate timing.

The barrels are a conventional monobloc design of chrome molybdenum steel, chambered for 76mm (3") cartridges and bored at 18.5mm (.728"). Both mid and top ribs are ventilated, the latter plain finished and parallel at 11mm wide. A fluorescent red strip bead is fitted. This sporter model is supplied with five interchangeable chokes of reasonable quality, if not up to the very best in the class.

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THE BARREL SELECTOR IS BUILT INTO THE SAFETY CATCH.

**THE QUALITY OF THE MACHINING AND OVERALL FIT IS TO A GOOD STANDARD, AS IT HAS TO BE THESE DAYS IN THIS MARKET SECTOR. THE WOODWORK ON THE TEST SAMPLE HAD STRONG, STRAIGHT GRAIN ... THE GUN HAS A PURPOSEFUL, IF UNDERSTATED, LOOK. IT IS CERTAINLY NOT A GUN LIKELY TO DRAW A CROWD WHEN YOU TAKE IT OUT OF THE SLIP, BUT HANDSOME IS AS HANDSOME DOES AND GOOD LOOKS NEVER WON A SINGLE TROPHY.**

### COSMETICS

The plain black action is broken only by the styling lines and the Kronos name in gold. Underneath is the Zoli logo, also in gold. Anti-glare stippling is applied to the area around the fences and top lever. The quality of the machining and overall fit is to a good standard, as it has to be these days in this market sector.

The woodwork on the test sample had strong, straight grain, accentuated by the dark oil finish. The chequering (26 lines per inch) is neatly applied and overall the gun has a purposeful, if understated, look. It is certainly not a gun likely to draw a crowd when you take it out of the slip, but handsome is as handsome does and good looks never won a single trophy. The package is completed by a good quality lockable case.



## ON TEST

**AT ITS HEART THE KRONOS IS A INTERESTING GUN OF SOUND DESIGN AND DECENT BUILD QUALITY. THERE IS A VERY COMPETITIVE GUN WAITING TO GET OUT IF ZOLI CAN PULL ALL THE ELEMENTS TOGETHER TO MAKE A PACKAGE FOR OUR MARKET...**

Just about every Italian maker in my experience has fallen into the same trap (pardon the pun) when first attempting to build a gun for the sporting disciplines — even Beretta who in the early days drew heavily on the expertise of the likes of Barry Simpson and Brian Hebditch in order to get their sporters right. The problem is that Italy is a trap shooting nation and Italian competition stocks have evolved to meet the demands of competitors who shoot mainly the international trap disciplines. Differences apply of course, but you could characterise the Italian stock by a full pistol grip, with sharp undercut, palm swell and, typically, a chunky profile through the comb.

The 'trap' is that they seem to think that all a sporting gun needs is a slimmer fore end and multichokes and all will be well. British-style sporting stocks however are rather different. We like more open and thinner grips and stocks that are

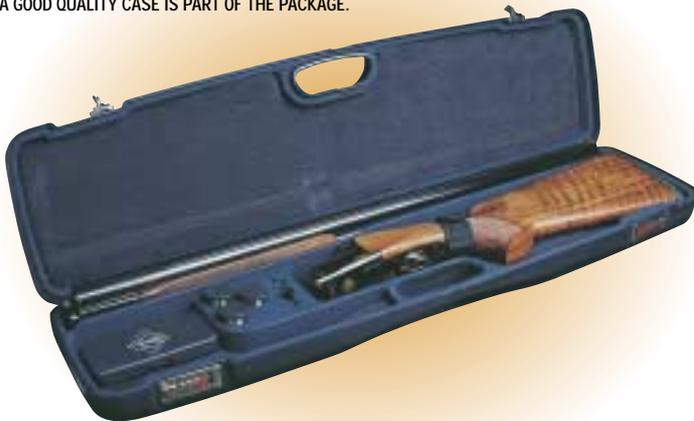
The other minor quibble is a very sticky rubber pad that grabs and hinders a smooth mount. It ideally needs a hard heel insert or a coat of gloss varnish on the edges.

Mechanically the gun performs well. The trigger blade is adjustable for position and the trigger pulls are nicely weighted at around 4lbs on my gauge. There is a small amount of free play but once this is taken up the pull is crisp and free of drag.

The test gun had 750mm barrels (29½") weighing 1560g (3lbs 6oz). The total weight was 3.66kg (just a fraction over 8lbs) and the balance was just slightly forward. This gives the gun fairly fast handling, but with enough inertia to keep it controllable.

At this price point a gun with a detachable trigger and competition pedigree should be a very attractive proposition. Indeed, if international trap is your game then the Zoli in trap specification has a lot going for it. The Anglo-Saxon world will, I suspect, be less swift to take the gun to its heart for sporting clays without a rethink of the stock,

A GOOD QUALITY CASE IS PART OF THE PACKAGE.



**...THE TROUBLE IS THAT THIS SECTOR OF THE MARKET IS NOW SO COMPETITIVE THAT NEARLY RIGHT IS NOT CLOSE ENOUGH.**

slimmer through the comb. Palm swells are a debating point but otherwise there is a fair degree of consensus.

The Kronos then has all those Italian characteristics and I would also rate the stock a touch high for an off-the-peg gun. Drop of 35mm at comb is fine, but most makers would opt for a little more than 45mm at the heel. The overall 'heavy' feeling is not helped by a semi-beavertail fore end that is again on the chunky side. Don't get me wrong — I like weight in my guns, but not bulk.

FIVE CHOKES AND A COMPREHENSIVE SPARES KIT COME WITH THE GUN.



preferably with input from a top shooter/coach. It was the route Blaser took by employing John Bidwell to work on the F3 and that gun is all the better for it. The trouble is that this sector of the market is now so competitive that nearly right is not close enough.

At its heart the Kronos is a interesting gun of sound design and decent build quality. There is a very competitive gun waiting to get out if Zoli can pull all the elements together to make a package for our market.

My thanks to Greenfields of Salisbury (01722 333795) for supplying the test gun. To find a stockist in your area call the importers Stephen J. Fawcett on 01524 32033.