

## Gun Evaluation

Question; What do the Bugatti Veyron, Ferrari Enzo, Lamborghini Gallardo and Benelli Montefeltro all have in common besides Italian heritage? Speed Baby Speed!!!!

Gun Benelli Montefeltro Super 90 Gauge 20 MSRP \$1139.

Date 7/10/12 By Joe Piazza

Construction Materials - The M S 90 receiver is an aluminum alloy as are some of the trigger group parts. All other parts are steel.

Finish - Receiver and trigger group assembly has a baked on proprietary coating, trigger and bolt assembly are chrome plated and the other steel parts are blued. Walnut stock has a matt finish.

### Specifications

Weight Empty – 5.6 lbs

Action Type - Semi Auto Inertia Operated

Barrel Length - 26" Ventilated Rib raised .2" off of the barrel textured and matte to eliminate glare. Tapered at the muzzle past the bead to eliminate snagging when casing the gun

O/A Length – 47.5"

Trigger Weight - 6.8 lbs

Trigger Travel Pre Engagement Travel - .002" Engagement to Discharge - .042"

Over Travel - .012" Total Travel - .056"

Trigger Operation Perception - Very shootable for intended purpose, virtually no pre-engagement or over travel. The trigger group resets quickly and actually feels more like a stock AR. No shooters commented on the trigger negatively or positively speaking to the lack of trigger function expectations in a shotgun.

Stock – Walnut, non-descript    Checkering – 12 LPI , decent for machine done

Utilitarian in all aspects, no pistol grip cap

LOP - 14-3/8" (Short Stock also available @ 12-1/2" Drop at Comb: 1-1/2"

Drop at Heel - 2 ¼" (Short Stock: 2-1/8")

Drop at Comb – 1"            Grip Type - Pistol    Recoil Pad – Black ventilated rubber

Capacity - 5 Rds.

Sights – Front bead Red fiber optic .078 diameter, mid-vent bead silver metal .060 diameter

Sight Perception – Both beads are smaller than they should be especially for older eyes. This was the only detail that all shooters felt could be improved. The mid-vent bead was useless @ .020 thicker than a paper clip.

Safety – Rear of trigger guard, cross bolt, right to left, red ring on circumference

Features – Magazine control/cutoff button

As Shipped Includes – Choke tool, 4 chokes, stock Shims for inside the stock and receiver to butt stock joint

Disassembly Time - Unpracticed 2 minutes not including the 5 minute internet search to figure out how to extract the bolt handle. Although the instructions say to "Tear" it out, it did not seem to budge with just finger pressure. Not wanting to mar the finish or damage anything I went on line and found that many others had the same problem. The best solution I saw and the one that worked easily, was the boot lace method. Simply tie the boot lace to the bolt handle and yank much like yanking out a tooth, old school.

Reassembly Time - Unpracticed 1min 45 sec    Impression – True to Italian tradition with the left out secret ingredient that makes it work.

Pre Range Impressions – This is a light and wispy shotgun much like a Franchi AL 48 in weight and balance. Construction is bullet proof and all parts move freely as

if on bearings. The finish is average not memorable and beyond design it won't take any prizes for exceptional appearance. Wood to metal fit is average and not any better than any common brand of semi-auto. Recoil pad and spacer was not flushed, the stock profile dimensions exceed the dimensions of the receiver but the fore end was nicely mated to the barrel and receiver. The alloy receiver is finished with something similar to powder coating, nothing pretty here. Overall this Montefeltro was utilitarian looking but there are fancier versions available.

The design and function is where this piece stands head and shoulder above most semi-autos, simple and trouble free. Inertia operated action means there isn't any gas metering port in the barrel and no dirty gas is used to operate the system. The barrel is not spring loaded and does not move under recoil and there isn't any multi-ring braking/gas management system riding on the magazine. This eliminates most of the problems that cause failure to cycle in a semi-auto. No build up of crud and carbon from un-burnt/burnt gasses in the action and the resultant deterioration of functionality as the gas bleed hole becomes restricted with carbon. No sensitivity to the degree of lube or crud on the magazine tube, no chance of assembly error in placement of braking/gas bleed/rings and seals. No potential for o-ring failure. In fact when disassembled after 300 rounds the receiver and action were almost as clean as when unpacked. Only 3 major moving parts in the action and they are built tough. The bolt head locks directly into the barrel which reduces the number of components under stress. Benelli says that it has shotguns in the field that have endured half a million rounds without failure and looking at the bullet proof design I would be inclined to believe that. Eliminating all of the superfluous components necessary to gas operated actions also eliminates weight and complexity and that is exactly what this shotgun is all about.

Before going to the range I experimented with the shim system of stock drop adjustment. There is a simple chart that explains the possible combinations of components, which are clearly labeled, and the resultant adjustment and it was very simple to accomplish. I normally prefer a maximum amount of drop for a field shotgun so that shooting from un-choreographed positions comes without contortions. I was not let down by this system and as I predicted the max drop is

what produced the fastest bird acquisition and shot execution for me. Normally there is an increase in recoil/muzzle rise as the price for increased drop at the heel of the stock. By increasing the drop, we change the geometry of how the reaction of recoil force is applied to the gun and the shooter but we are talking about a 20 gauge and as you will see in the video, recoil was definitely not an issue even with full powerful loads. If there was one wish granted from the Benelli Gods I would ask for even more drop but I usually do feel that way unless the stock is custom or has an adjustable recoil pad/but plate. That's just me, not the gun.

### Range Impressions

The Montefeltro took me a while to get into. Coming with a wider selection of chokes than most, I tried each one with # 8 and # 7 1/2 shot to see how they performed. I was also looking for range so I was starting with the birds @ 30 yards out of the automated thrower. I was 60 rounds into this piece before I got the swing, lightness, balance, choke combination figured out. I really could not use the mid-barrel bead and although I initially thought the sights were inadequate they are in fact precise and do not distract from the target profile. When I hit the Modified Full choke, birds turned to powder in rapid succession and I synched my shooting style into the MS 90 and found the sweet spot.

The other shooters also took a while to start hitting high percentages with the MS 90 due mostly to the light weight. We were also shooting a Model 37 with a trap barrel and a Belgium A5 that day and the Benelli made those feel like old muskets, with bayonets attached. Whenever a new shooter picked up the Benelli after shooting the 37 or A5 he/she over swung the first couple of birds and the swing ended in a spastic barrel dance kind of like when a kids whips around a sparkler to leave a light trail. Too funny but emphasizing the difference in shooting dynamics given a drastic change in weight and balance.

The action has a magazine disconnect button that also took awhile getting used to as the instructions were a little vague on this detail. This feature can be valuable and I have used it often on an Auto 5 when hunting deer in NJ with slugs and OO buck or goose and ducks at the same time. Having the ability to insert a

shell of different functionality into the action without having to cycle all of the rounds out can be a blessing for someone who is prepared to take advantage of an anticipated opportunity. The alternative is rather clumsy and can eat fingers.

Speed Demon – The other much appreciated advantage of this action design is the blazing cyclic speed and recoil management. I could not overshoot this piece and it always seemed to want to go faster like the performance cars mentioned above.

The balance, weight and proportions of the MS 90 are excellent for this 20. The slimness of the fore end and the dimensions and angle of the stock at the wrist feel great and the gun becomes a very quick extension of your body like pointing at the bird with your arm and finger. The MS 90 would be a very good semi-auto choice for a small framed son, daughter or wife, the \$900 street price notwithstanding. Just don't think you will be able to keep your hands off of it when you pack for the hunt.

Overall

This piece is perfect for Doves, Quail, Chucker, Grouse, decoyed Ducks and Pheasants wherever you would normally use a 20. While the running pheasants of the Dakotas that flush wide in heavy wind might not be the ideal place for a 20, certainly the pen raised birds we hunt on the preserves in the east are no match for a skilled gunner with a familiar 20 to shoulder. For those of you who go to Mexico, Argentina etc for high volume bird hunting, the only thing better than the Monte would be a pair of Montes except that you will need to pace yourself to allow the shell boys to keep up. Smaller frame shooters, those that will hike to find their game and those that hunt fast game in confined spaces will more fully appreciate the 5.6 lb weight, balance and quickness. And of course there are those of us who just plain like light guns.

It is very difficult not to be partial to a piece of machinery that becomes a natural extension of your body and mind, to produce exceptional speed and performance. It may not have the fit and finish of a Beretta, but it sure as hell will outshoot some pretty fancy shotguns.