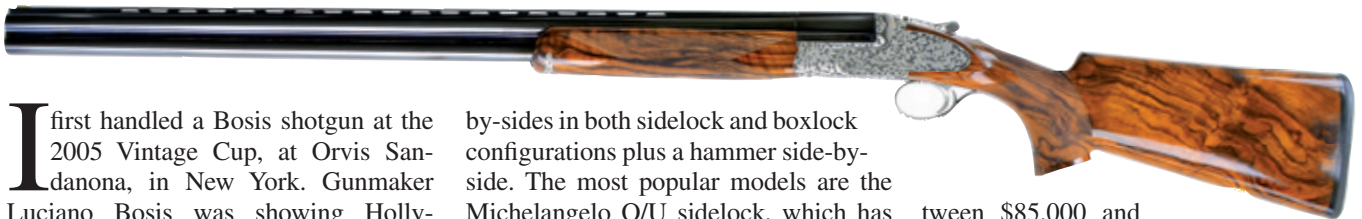


The Bosis Wild



I first handled a Bosis shotgun at the 2005 Vintage Cup, at Orvis Sandanona, in New York. Gunmaker Luciano Bosis was showing Hollywood writer and director John Milius the Michelangelo pinless sidelock over/under and was kind enough to include me in the explanation. Milius wrote the screenplays for “Dirty Harry,” “Magnum Force” and “Apocalypse Now” and directed films like “Red Dawn” and “Conan the Barbarian.” Obviously our kind of guy. He’s also a fine-gun aficionado and knows the good stuff. And Bosis definitely makes the good stuff. Arguably, the best stuff.

Bosis has spent his life in the trade. He started working for a gunmaker when he was 12 years old. In the mid-1970s he worked for Perazzi for five years before striking out on his own in 1977. Doug Tate’s article “Bosis Is the Most-est” (Jan/Feb ’08) covers the company’s background very nicely.

Bosis’s shop is right behind his house in Travagliato, Italy, south of Gardone. It is a small shop with five craftsmen and Luciano’s daughter, Laura, running the office. Laura told me that the firm makes 20 to 22 guns annually. The shop contains little modern machinery, but that doesn’t mean everything is done the old-fashioned way. Due to its size and small production, Bosis outsources many of the basic parts. The key is that the company uses only the best suppliers who *do* have the latest machinery and the best-possible steels. In this way Bosis can combine the most modern metallurgy with traditional hand fitting and finishing. I don’t remember who originally wrote that “It is only the last file stroke that counts,” but there is truth in it.

Currently Bosis makes O/Us and side-

by-sides in both sidelock and boxlock configurations plus a hammer side-by-side. The most popular models are the Michelangelo O/U sidelock, which has been in the line since 1980, and the Wild O/U boxlock, introduced in 2008.

Asking someone to loan you a gun from one of the best makers in the world is a sometime thing. Owners are justifiably reluctant to trust their babies to a ham-fisted gun writer, and it’s not fair to ask that a store turn an expensive new gun into a discounted used one by sending it off for testing. But sometimes things work out. The most accommodating Covey & Nye, in Manchester Village, Vermont, distributes Bosis guns in the US. When I contacted manager Lars Jacob, he told me that he could loan me



The test gun was set up as a sporter, with 32" barrels and neutral balance. The non-detachable trigger was built into the action on a triggerplate with high vertical sides and a solid dividing wall.

one of the Covey & Nye partners’ personal Wilds, and I was most appreciative.

The Wild comes in trap, sporting and field configurations. Whereas the Michelangelo game gun costs be-

tween \$85,000 and \$115,000, depending on options and engraving, the less-complicated 12-gauge Wild starts at about \$29,000 for the basic gun in the white. Expect to pay an extra 5 percent for the 20-gauge. Our test gun was set up for sporting clays and was heavily optioned with sideplates, “best” full-coverage engraving, serious wood and other extras. It would retail for nearly \$50,000. Currently expect about an eight-month wait for delivery of a Wild with standard engraving.

It is always difficult to review a gun such as this, because Bosis builds each one to the customer’s preferences. There really isn’t that much that is standard to the gun other than the design of the action and the quality of the workmanship.

Our test Wild sporter weighed 8 pounds 10 ounces, had 32" barrels and had a neutral balance, which made it feel lighter than it was. This is not typical of most current sporters, which tend to be nose-heavy with barrels that long.

Had the Wild been ordered in a field version, it just as easily could have come with a weight of less than 7 pounds. It all depends on what you ask Bosis to do.

The Wild’s barrels were of monoblock construction. Luciano Bosis’s time at Perazzi is evident in the design of the ejectors. They are similar to those on the MX8 right down to the little pop-out button that holds them in place and makes disassembly so easy. The Wild uses the same short hinge stubs (now standard on almost every Italian O/U) and the same

Boss-inspired bifurcated-lump side lugs too. The latter permit a low profile.

The barrels were chrome lined and had Briley Thin Wall chokes installed. Six chokes came with the gun. If you prefer fixed chokes, simply order the gun that way. I did not see the steel-proof fleur-de-lis stamped on the barrels, but steel-proof barrels are an option. Barrel bores were a modern .735", and they had exceptionally long 5" forcing cones.

It goes without saying that the barrels were perfectly joined and ripple free. All solder joints were flawless, among the best I've seen. The side ribs were solid and ran all the way back to the monoblock. The vented top rib was hand-filed, flat and tapered from $\frac{3}{16}$ " to $\frac{1}{4}$ ", ending with a Perazzi-style white-plastic "inchworm" front bead. A classy solid top rib is available on the field versions. Bosis literature says that the barrel process has the tubes forged, normalized, annealed, slowly cooled, hardened, water-cooled, re-hardened, oil-cooled and annealed again. The Website goes into great detail as to the type of steel and treatments used on all of the different parts of the gun. I've never seen that detail shared by any manufacturer. Clearly Bosis gives a great deal of thought to metallurgy. This translates directly into durability.

Little things stand out. The monoblock shoulders are left hollow to reduce weight. That's new to me. The forend latch hook soldered under the barrel is a little work of art, perfectly machined and polished.

Although we all know that the barrels make the gun, it's the receiver that always gets the attention. It's also the area that permits the gunmaker to strut his stuff. The metal used in the action is mentioned as being 18NiCrMo5 steel. I'm not a metallurgist, but Luciano obviously is, and he's very proud of the specific steels used in each major part of the gun. He mentions that he has the leaf springs hand-made in Belgium, where they make the best that he has found.

Our Wild's receiver bottom was left square in the rear to accommodate the optional decorative sideplates. This added a bit of weight, which is suitable for a target gun. A Wild field gun can be ordered with a fully rounded receiver for lighter weight and better carry.

The action lockup is similar to that on a Perazzi, with the hinge stubs, bifurcated lumps and mid-breech locks engaging the monoblock just below the ejectors. But then it gets interesting. Instead of

Everything about the Wild had been brought off with the highest quality of design, materials and craftsmanship. The full-coverage engraving, for example, was an impressive deep floral pattern by the Italian master Pedretti.

Perazzi's single central cocking rod, Bosis has two spring-loaded cocking rods in the bottom of the receiver. When the gun is opened, the rods are pushed back by a large rear extension of the forend iron.

The non-detachable trigger is built into the action on a triggerplate with high vertical sides and a solid dividing wall. This allows each leaf-spring/sear combination to have its own vibration-free compartment without the possibility of the slightest lateral movement, although it does make it a touch trickier to replace a leaf spring.

The trigger on our gun was non-selective, but a selective trigger with the selector button behind the trigger blade is an option. Triggers are inertial, not mechanical. Pull weights are to the customer's preference. Our trigger was exceptionally crisp, with virtually no creep, slop or over-travel.

All of the interior parts are machined steel, with the exception of the stamped flat spring on the manual safety and the ejector trip wires. Even the inertia block, a part usually cast, is machined and polished. In fact, everything inside the action and forend that I could see was polished and left bright. There wasn't a file scrape or tool mark anywhere. The action was simple, tremendously strong and very, very well made.

The wood on our gun was exactly what you would expect on a gun of this price. It was a first-class piece of Turkish, with the forend taken from the same blank. Naturally, stock and forend dimensions are up to the customer, as is the selection of the blank. Metal-to-wood inletting was flawless. The hand-cut checkering was extremely fine yet pointed up well enough to provide a good grip. Wood finish, probably a Tru-Oil or similar, was properly applied and fully filled the



grain without any quality holidays. The long trigger tang was nicely inletted into the stock's pistol grip and held in place by an ingenious hook catch, not the usual tang screws.

The full-coverage engraving on the gun was an impressive deep floral pattern. The work was by Pedretti, a name well recognized among the best Italian engravers. Of course engraving is up to the buyer. Finishes can include simple bluing, French gray, Tenifer, case coloring (St. Ledger, in England, or Schilling, in Germany), plus as much engraving as desired.

The forend is retained by an Anson pushbutton and latch. The pushbutton escutcheon was elaborate, fully engraved and perfectly inletted into the forend. The optional gold Luciano Bosis shield of a lion rampant below a crown was let into the center of the forend. The forend iron at the rear was engraved in the same coverage and style as the action. The interior metal on the forend was as highly polished as every


part in the receiver. Since nothing made by the hand of man is perfect, the interior of the forend wasn't quite as well finished as the exterior, and the interior of the head of the stock was left unfinished. I understand that the latter is often done intentionally to allow the wood to breathe, but I had to find something somewhere to whine about.

The Wild came with the Briley chokes, a spares kit consisting of a pair of leaf springs, a spring tool, firing pins and rebound springs, plus various turn-screws needed to get into things, snap-caps, deluxe wooden cleaning rods and other little bits. All was cradled in an optional stunning Nizzoli leather case of the very best quality. The warranty is for two years. Covey & Nye is working on establishing a US repair agent.

Shooting the Wild sporter was not exactly what I had expected of a clays gun exceeding $8\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. The relatively light barrels made it more agile than I had anticipated. The barrel length helped precision on the long shots yet didn't seem to penalize the short ones, owing to the barrels' light weight. The recoil was low, thanks to the gun's overall weight, with perhaps some help from the rigid action with low barrel placement and the

long forcing cones. Mechanical function was correct in all respects. The superlative trigger was much appreciated. But the next Wild sporter could be different in balance. It all depends on how the buyer wants his gun set up. Bosis can do whatever is asked.

Personally, I'd love to shoot a Bosis Wild in a field version set up for driven birds with 30" tubes, a rounded action, a solid top rib, neutral balance, moderate weight and wood to make grown men cry and young girls swoon. The Wild now also comes in 20 gauge, so this adds further temptation.

John Milius's character Dirty Harry was famous for saying, "Make my day!" I'd like to rephrase that to have Luciano Bosis "Make my gun!" I can't think of anyone who could do it better. 

Author's Note: For more information, contact Covey & Nye, 802-549-4848; www.coveyandnye.com, or Fabbrica Armi Luciano Bosis, www.bosis.com.

Bruce Buck's most recent book, Shotguns on Review, is available for \$30 (plus shipping) from 800-685-7962; www.shootingsportsman.com.