

William Larkin Moore
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Dealers of Fine Sporting Arms

Purchasing a made to order, hand- made, high grade gun

Also known as a “***Bespoke***” gun.

For the purposes of this discussion we are talking about double barreled shotguns, although many of the thoughts and processes are the same for any hand made gun.

What is a hand-made gun?

- Compare production and semi-production guns like those made by Beretta or Browning vs. hand made guns.
- Every gun is built to order even if it is ordered by a dealer for their own inventory.
- No inventory is created or maintained by the manufacturer.
- No totally interchangeable parts

Practical Limitations

- Be realistic with expectations vs. price
- Ask individual makers only to do what they are capable of doing well
- Match engraving and wood type, style, quality, cost etc. to gun price
- I know a guy in this country who is a good engraver, can I have him engrave my gun?
- Consider the gun as a whole, including strengths and weaknesses
- If a specific detail (i.e.: checkering) is important to you then address that concern directly.

Choosing a maker

- Type or configuration of gun
- Country of origin
- Price: How much perfection can you afford? Or do you want to pay for?
- What do you expect in finish quality or manufacturing techniques?
- As an individual, what is important to you? Some makers do certain things better than others and some makers will refuse to build a gun with certain features that they themselves do not like

Choosing a model

- Configuration: SxS or O/U
- Action type: sidelock, boxlock, hammer gun, trigger plate, others
- Price
- Special features: action shape, sideclips, third fastener, crossbolt
- Engraving: many models are based on engraving style

Action types



Action Features



Gauge or caliber

- What is the primary / secondary application?
- What limitations does the shooter or intended use impose? Items such as disabilities or issues such as “non-toxic” only shooting areas
- Other reasons to order a particular Ga/cal: aesthetic preferences, size, weight, competition rules

Weight, balance and barrel length

- What is the primary / secondary application?
- Traditional specifications: Game gun, pigeon / waterfowl gun, target gun weights and barrel lengths
- Balance: what is this? Hand made guns can be specified to balance neutral, muzzle heavy or butt heavy in the amount specified by the customer.
- Myths and practical applications regarding barrel length: velocity, swing, sight radius, moment of inertia

Barrels

- Chokes: constrictions, choke tubes
- Chamber length
- Type of top rib
- Finish: interior and exterior:
corrosion protection, colors, luster
- Other aberrations: Porting, long
forcing cones, oversize bores

Common side by side top ribs



Action finish

- Purpose
- Traditional finishes: case colors, coin, gray
- Other finishes: satin chrome, satin nickel, high tech



Triggers

- Single vs. double triggers
- Articulated trigger
- Reliability
- Cost
- “I have never shot a gun with two triggers, is it difficult?”
- Most high grade guns do not offer SST



Safety and other action features

- Automatic vs. non-automatic safety
- Hand detachable locks: H&H, hidden
- Pinless locks
- Action shaping
- Extra springs and pins



Type of stock

- English or straight grip
- Pistol grip: full, round knob, Prince of Wales, capped
- Monte Carlo comb
- Palm swell
- Grip shapes: diamond, oval, round



Type of forearm

- Splinter
- Semi-beavertail
- Beavertail



Type of butt

- Checkered butt
- Buttplates: wood, horn, plastic and rubber
- Steel butts: skeleton, heel & toe plates or checkered steel
- Recoil pads: materials, styles, colors
- Leather covered pads



Checkering

- Standard patterns
- Ornamental patterns and styles
- Certain regions or makers offer many options while others do not



Wood

- Turkish
- English
- Claro / American
- Costs: what comes standard? What is available?
- Can I select the wood for my order?
- Suitability of a particular piece for a particular application



Stock dimensions

- Being “fitted”: Planned use for gun, expectations, participation, conditions, prejudices of person doing the fitting.
- Right or left hand
- Drop at comb
- Drop at face
- Drop at heel
- Length of pull
- Cast on/off
- Pitch

Personalization and other fine details

- Gold or silver inlays: initials, names, dates, gifts etc.
- Gold or Silver ovals in stock
- Gold crest in forearm
- Gold lettering: maker's name, "safe", serial number
- Cocking indicators
- Guard bow: rolled edge, pierced, sculptured, shaped, engraved
- Top lever: pierced, sculptured, shaped



Engraving

- Traditional styles / patterns
- Engraver selection
- Options: cameos, design integration
- What is possible? Are you looking for an original “Masterpiece” work?
- Engraving should compliment the rest of the gun
- What is the minimum engraving I can get.
- Costs
- Time in production



































Time to deliver a hand made high grade gun

- It takes time: hand made guns have from 50 to over 1000 man hours of hand labor.
- Delivery on most Spanish guns average between 10 to 15 months
- Delivery on most Italian/ English/ Belgium guns average between 1 to 3 years depending on grade and engraving
- There ARE exceptions in both directions, this is normal and depends on many factors such as engravers schedules, machining schedules, suppliers etc.
- Importer / dealer cannot control delivery date

Resale

- Is resale value a concern of yours?
- How much personalization is too much before resale value is affected.
- “Killer” specs, what to avoid if you are concerned about re-selling your gun.
- Cost of options vs. resale value

End results

- A personal, functional, beautiful, affordable gun.
- Very few things available in the world today of any description are built from scratch with only you, the end customer in mind.
- Any questions or thoughts?

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