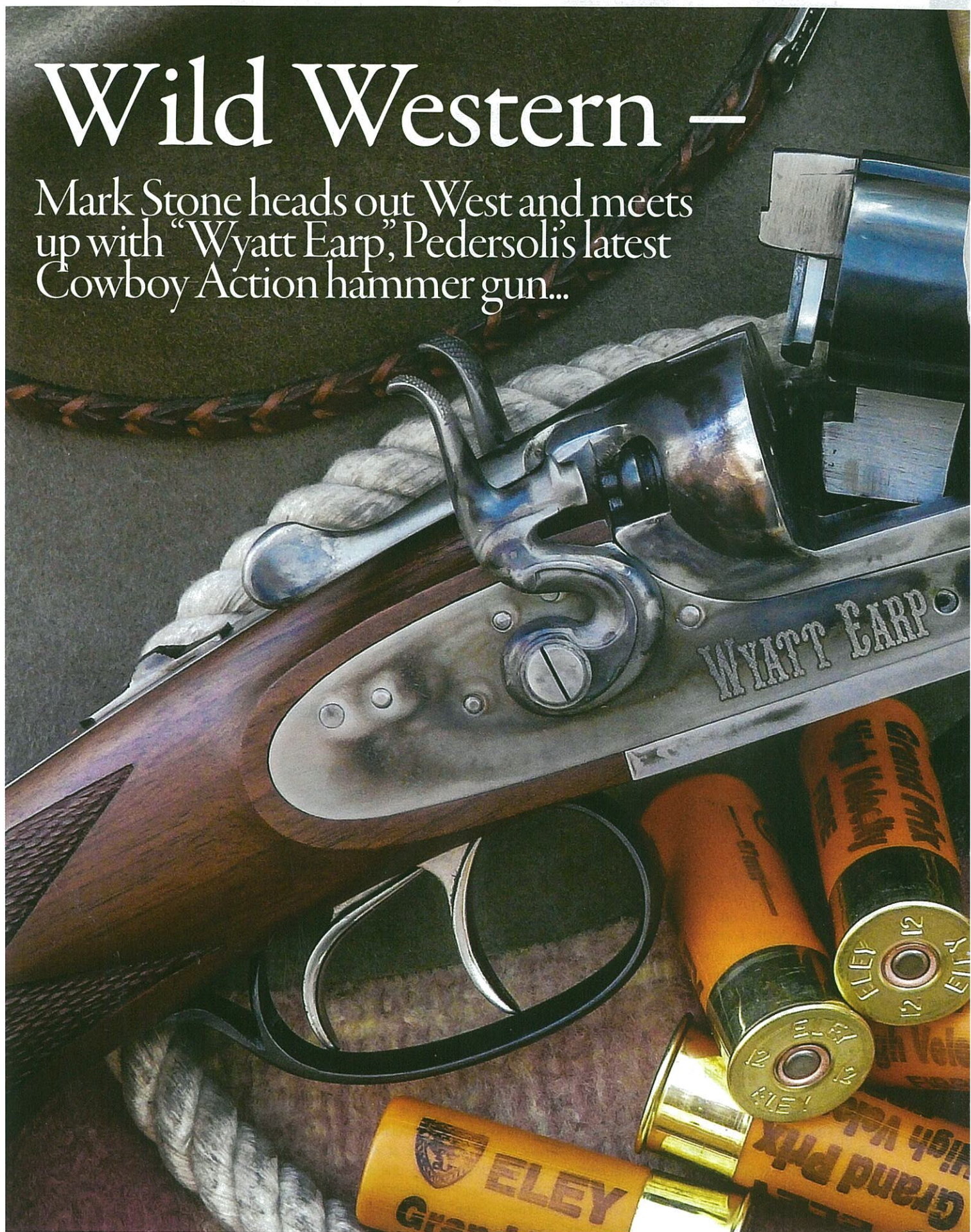


Wild Western —

Mark Stone heads out West and meets up with “Wyatt Earp,” Pedersoli’s latest Cowboy Action hammer gun...





It's been a couple of years since I enjoyed a day's Cowboy Action Shooting, as much a social occasion as it was a day spent shooting authentic replica firearms. But while the day was thoroughly enjoyable, one of the almost universal comments was the struggle most of the shooters present had in acquiring a genuine "period" external hammer 12-gauge. They were to be had second-hand but often in poor condition, and modern versions were becoming difficult to find.


Now Davide Pedersoli has solved those smoothbore problems in the shape of the "Wyatt Earp", a genuine recreation of the Wild West side by side 12 bore. This shotgun is as authentic as they get to a degree when I tested it I had an overwhelming urge to fit a pair of spurs to my boots! But before we mosey on down and find out what it's like to shoot, it might be an idea to take a look back in time and find out exactly why this style of shotgun came into being, along with a few facts about the man himself – Wyatt Earp was/is one of the most famous names in frontier folklore.

ON GUARD

As the American west opened up so did the demand for a good, usable all-round gun, the shotgun being an obvious choice. However, while honest folk used them lawfully, outlaws such as Charles Boles (aka "Black Bart") found a short-barrelled, sawn-off shotgun to be the perfect tool for his twenty eight stagecoach hold-ups. "Bart" was eventually jailed for six years, but the stagecoach remained an easy and often lucrative target – numerous

MAIN PIC: The light colour case hardening effect adds to the Earp's period looks.

LEFT: Modern "chopper lump" barrels with 3" chambers give the Earp versatility, and allow alternative uses.



*Extractors only – no ejectors
– means you have to remove
the spent cases yourself.*

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the name of Wyatt Berry Stapp Earp became engraved in frontier history until he died at the age of 80 on 13th January, 1929 in Los Angeles, California. If you’re going to engrave the name of a legend on the side of a faithful reproduction, you won’t go far wrong with Wyatt Earp.

STOCK IN TRADE

Renowned for recreating a multitude of period weapons, especially those of the Wild West, Pedersoli’s short barrelled side-by-side hammer 12-gauge looks right the moment you open the box. It’s a no-frills shotgun built to do a job – a smooth, wide, Anson-type latched Beaver-style fore-end almost envelopes the short, gloss black 20” barrels, while a small brass bead sits just above the fixed choke muzzles. There’s also a 5–7mm smooth tapering rib extending into a securing slot cut into the top of the standing breech.

The seven-pin action is defined by a light colour case-hardened finish, the blues and browns extending down the entire length of the side-locks, all around the base of the action, the top tang, sliding manual safety-catch, top lever, and the scrolled, shaped hammers – even the checked hatching atop each spur benefits from the effect.

Apart from the gloss black trigger guard and the chromed trigger blades, the only other ornamentation are the words “Wyatt Earp” engraved in western style script along the right side of the action.

While the safety prevents the hammers from being released and striking the firing pins, it still allows the Earp to be



ABOVE: The gun comes with 20" barrels and weighs 6lbs 6oz.

RIGHT: A wide Beaver-style fore-end provides a good grip of the front of the gun.

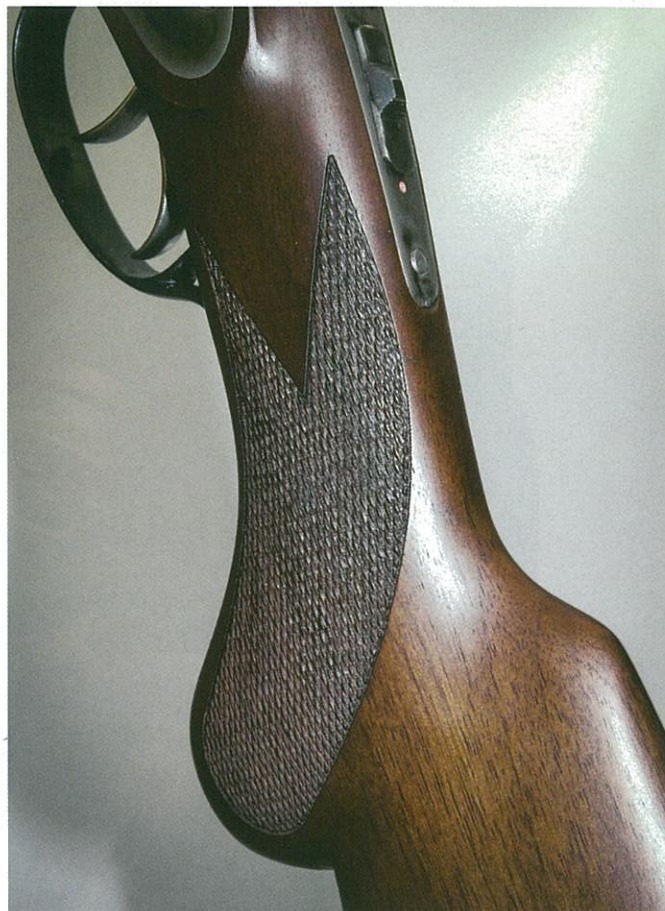
FAR RIGHT: The rounded butt pistol grip enhances the Earp's fast handling qualities.

opened and the hammers to be cocked. My advice is to load the gun and cock each individual hammer just prior to firing. One point of note is the rebounding hammer system. Some hammer guns re-cock the hammers when the gun is opened just as a hammerless shotgun does. The term "rebounding" refers to the fact that once the hammer has fallen and struck the firing pin, it then rebounds about 1/8" so it stands un-cocked but clear of the firing pin.

As for the grip and stock – the rounded pommel grip is the only part of the lightly oiled woodwork that features checkering, a large, fine diamond cut panel on each side, while the well-proportioned game-style stock is finished off with a period correct metal buttplate, inlet at the heel to facilitate a smooth, drag free mount. And while as I've already described the Earp as a simple, frills-free gun, the components have come together to form one of the most visually entertaining firearms you're likely to see, a testament to just how well Pedersoli do what they do and why their reproduction firearms are so sought after.

STAND AND DELIVER

The first thing you notice when you heft the gun to the shoulder is that for what it is,



LEFT: A steel butt plate rounds off the Earp's authentic appearance.

the dimensions are better than many supposed game guns, and a moment or two with my Arrow Laser Shot confirmed that the Earp's attitude is

seriously flat. And while the overall weight is just 6lbs 6oz the stock gives the shooter a good 14-1/4" length of pull to the front trigger with drops at comb and heel of 17/16" and 23/8". If there is a noticeable downside it's the trigger weight, the front breaking at 9lbs 6oz, the rear an even greater heave at 9lbs 10oz. Surprisingly though, once you've got used to them, the triggers don't seem anywhere near as heavy to break as they first seem, your unconscious self seemingly taking over as the sheer pleasure of shooting

the Earp comes into play.

Loading up with 28g Eley VIP filled with 7-1/2's, a round of improvised skeet, along with a few overhead clays thrown in for good measure, highlighted just how fast, quick handling and well balanced the Earp actually is. Even with cylinder chokes as wide as the factory has chosen, the pattern quality and evenness of spread is excellent, this little 12 gauge is as effective as many a purpose-built shotgun. Even the fact that you have to remove the spent cases yourself adds to the experience, while the satisfying click as each of the rebounding



ABOVE: Mark found Pedersoli's "Wyatt Earp" to be as authentic as they come and a pleasure to handle.

RIGHT: Cylinder bore muzzles allow the shot to spread fast and wide, giving effective patterns at close ranges.

hammers locks into cocked is an audible as well as a physical confirmation that Wyatt Earp is ready to take on the bad guys once again.

A change of pace onto Cowboy Action targets reaffirmed that Pedersoli has got this

short barreled shotgun exactly right. With a series of clay targets fixed to posts at distances from eight to twenty feet away, using a selection of 24 gram and blackpowder loads to add to the "smoking barrels" authenticity, eliminating six in less than forty



seconds was more than possible. I repeated this exercise six times – a hell of a way to burn up a box of cartridges!

NOT BAD

For what it costs, the fact is it's an absolute gem to shoot, and the patterning is excellent. It would make a genuinely interesting addition to any shotgunninger's collection and it's a weapon that could well start you into shooting "Old West" style –

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well made, authentic, and one of the fastest handling guns you're likely to pick up. But do remember that ownership of a pair of jeans, a leather waistcoat, a pair of pointy-toed stack heeled boots, and most importantly a deep crown Stetson hat, is more or less mandatory!

Mark