



**SPORTING
Gun
EDITOR'S
TEST**

AYA Legend De Luxe

AYA is renowned for its quality side-by-sides but it has now returned to the over-and-under market. But will **the editor** think the Legend lives up to its name?

Every now and then a new gun comes on the market that sends ripples of excitement through the shooting community. Spanish gun maker AYA is part of shooting folklore and anything that comes out of its stable causes much interest. Famed for its well-made and competitively priced sporting guns, which



The face proudly boasts the makers mark

were influenced by traditional English gun making techniques, these Spanish imports won the hearts and minds of game shooters. On any shoot in the country it is likely at least one person will be using an AYA side-by-side, such is the company's success and reputation.

Expectation

The latest gun, the AYA Legend will cause even more of a stir because it's an over-and-under, rather than the more usual side-by-side produced by the Spanish company. Having said that, AYA has produced over-and-unders in the past, including one named the Yeoman, not to be confused with the AYA side-by-side gun of the same name. Is this move towards the more 'trendy' configuration a nod to modernity? In part, yes. I spoke to Edward King managing director of ASI (importers of AYA into the UK) at The Game Fair where the gun was launched. He told me that the Legend was in response to the demand for over-and-under



Hand-made precision is everywhere

shotguns. Side-by-sides are still popular, but AYA wanted to exploit another area of the shooting market by producing hand-made over-and-unders.

Model tested

We tested the Legend De Luxe game gun in 20-bore, which has lavish engraving and handsome wood. It looked stunning. The deep acanthus leaf engraving, lustrous honey coloured walnut and gold letters inlaid on the deeply blued barrels almost

INFO ➔ Available in 12 and 20-bore (tested) ➔ Game and clay versions available ➔ Various barrel lengths ➔ Grade 3 walnut



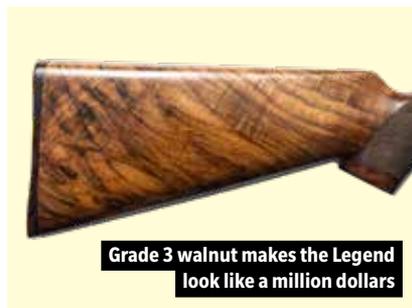
Look at the elegant outline and beautiful lines of this gun

stopped my heart. If you walked up to a driven shoot with one of these guns you would get lots of admiring glances.

Quality

AYA is known for its build quality and the new gun is no exception. Wood to metal fit was superb. The gun closed beautifully and has a double locking system to ensure the gun remains tight through many years of service. The barrel selector and safety catch on the top strap worked smoothly boasting its precision engineering.

There is a game and clay version of this gun, the clay weighing $\frac{3}{4}$ lb more and has a wider top rib. There is a range of barrel lengths, most will be ordered in 28 or 34in version, such is the fashion for



Grade 3 walnut makes the Legend look like a million dollars

longer barrels. And there is a choice of 20 or 12-bore. The 3in chamber would handle magnum loads should you want to do a bit of high pheasant shooting.

The 20-bore game version we tested was reasonably light at just under 7lb with 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ in barrels, and the balance point was

just in front of the hinge pin. The 20-bore Legend would make a lovely walked-up gun, although it looks far too fetching to be used for that.

Handsome is and does

On the gun we had to test, the walnut was beautiful and with its rounded fore-end and would be more suited to driven shooting. The gun we tested looked as if it had a drop-out trigger group. Edward King said: "The Legend has a fixed trigger group. The removable trigger group was considered, but it adds a lot to the cost while not providing much by way of advantage, unless you happen to buy a spare trigger group, which is in itself an added cost."

On a gun that cost £10,000-plus you >>

➔ Multi-choke ➔ Choice of straight hand, semi-pistol grip or full grip ➔ Imported by ASI www.a-s-i.co.uk ➔ www.aya-fineguns.com

would expect some element of customisation and there is a choice of grip, straight-hand, shallow pistol grip and a full pistol grip is available on the clay version. The stock can also be made to the shooter's own specifications and special engraving is also available for a supplement.

The sharp-eyed among you will have spotted that the Legend De Luxe looks very similar to the Zoli Pernice. This resemblance is not accidental. "The Legend is based on the Zoli. AYA consider that this is the ideal action with which to launch their return to the over-and-under market and allows them to build a handmade gun to the quality of finish and reliability that they are seeking," said King. As you would expect from a modern over-and-under, the Legend has flush-fit chokes, which makes it a versatile gun and also helps it keep its value.

On target

The length of pull on the test gun was ideal for me at almost 15in, although the comb felt unusually high and gave me a view down the rib that looked like a ramp. This is unusual because I like a high rib, but this shouldn't put you off because you have a choice of stock options and should get one to suit you.

Mounting the gun I noticed how light it felt. I am used to a heavier 12-bore, but even so the Legend is a fairly light gun at under 7lb, especially considering the barrels were nearly 30in. The balance was slightly forward of the hinge pin, bringing the weight back into the hands of the shooter. This can result in the gun being quite 'lively' to shoot, but the Legend was composed when shot and swung through the target in a controlled way, exactly what you want.

There was a little more recoil than I expected with the 24g cartridges we were using. However, the clay gun is heavier, so

Up close

1. The action is all hand engraved

2. A 3in chamber means Legend can handle magnum cartridges

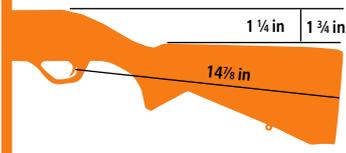


"The Legend wasn't good, it was great. The combination of its light weight and pointability made it a delight to shoot"



IN DETAIL

Weight:	6lb 14oz
Barrel:	29 1/2in
Length of pull:	14 7/8 in
Drop at comb:	1 1/4in at comb 1 3/4in at heel
Rib:	ventilated top rib
Price:	£ 10,660





The trigger was crisp and the weight of pull perfect

EDITOR'S VERDICT

The AYA Legend De Luxe is an over-and-under that offers performance and build quality. It's the first time in a long while that over-and-under shooters have been able to buy into this brand and that is something to be applauded. It's a gun that would suit someone who does a lot of shooting and needs something that will stand the rigours of the field (or clay ground).

It's not a cheap gun, but you get what you pay for. It is appropriate that this gun from a fabled gunmaker like AYA is called the Legend because it might very well be a name that passes into shooting folklore.

SCORES ON THE DOORS

Build quality	25/25
Handling	23/25
Styling	24/25
Value for money	24/25

Total: 96/100



The Legend scores another direct hit on some challenging targets

that will absorb the recoil associated with the intensity of shooting associated with a competition. Game shooters get through fewer cartridges than clay shooters and you would be wrapped up more, which will absorb recoil.

Crisp trigger

I loved the feel of the trigger. It was crisp with a predictable let-off point and the weight of pull was perfect for me. Just shows the quality of workmanship in this gun where the internals are hand finished and fitted. The walls of the action were robust as was the top lever, which seemed more solid than on other guns I have tested. The Legend closed without any jangles from the internals, another indication that this gun has bulletproof build quality.

When I picked up the gun I saw that the chokes fitted were full and $\frac{3}{4}$ – rather tighter than I am used to. I missed the first two targets, but hit the other eight. I tried some quick going away targets on the first stand to see if the gun would be good for a walked-up day. You had get on these clays immediately, otherwise they would disappear. The Legend wasn't good; it was great. The combination of its lightweight and pointability made it a delight to shoot. I really wanted to take this gun out on a walked-up day. The ease

with which it came on aim and the ease with which it was carried meant it would be ideal for that type of snap shooting. The only drawback is that the gun is too good-looking to drag through hedgerows.

High targets

I wanted to see if the Legend could handle a high pheasant day, so the next targets were high driven. After all, the 3in chambers can handle magnum loads. Again I shot rather well. The tight chokes certainly helped dust those distant targets.

Nick Ridley, our gundog expert was taking the photographs. He loves AYA guns. Having had a No.2 and a No.4 he appreciates the 'magic wand' handling of those side-by-side guns and uses his No.4 to lethal effect on a walked-up shoot. I gave him the new Legend to see what he thought of it. He liked the build quality, but after shooting it he said that it just didn't have the handling qualities of his side-by-side AYA. And this is the whole point of the Legend. It is not a gun to entice side-by-side shooters down the over-and-under route. It's a gun designed to enable over-and-under shooters to buy into the AYA brand and enjoy a beautiful and well-made gun. I think this gun has a long future ahead of it and it is great to welcome AYA back to the over-and-under camp. ■