



A new rifle on the New Zealand market – the Zoli features European styling and craftsmanship. (Photo: Steve Boyd)

# ZOLI PRO S BATTUE .243 —

A CLASS ACT FROM ONE OF ITALY'S OLDEST GUNMAKERS...  
REVIEWED BY PETER MAXWELL

I've always had a liking for all things Italian; their cars, their motorcycles, and their guns, so when Steve Boyd of The Mai Mai Supplies Ltd offered NZG&H the opportunity to examine and testfire the new range of Zoli rifles he's importing, it didn't take me long to head down to his home and pick one up.

Steve and his partner Catherine Park operate their business from a pleasant rural property in the hills above Katikati in the Bay of Plenty, importing NSI (Nobel Sports Italia) shotgun ammunition, along with Italtrap and Castellani accessories, and both Zoli hunting rifles and shotguns.

Zoli began making firearms in the Brescia region of northern Italy many centuries ago, and immediately following World War II the old firm was re-established as Antonio Zoli s.r.l., producing once again a large range of high quality firearms; shotguns, drillings, combo guns and rifles. These are available in a variety of grades with multiple choices of finish and custom options.

Getting his business off the ground here in New Zealand, Steve is limiting his initial offering

of Zoli rifles to a pretty generous 14 models in 12 calibres; .243, .270, 7mm Rem Mag, .300 Win Mag, .25-06, .270 Wby Mag, .308 Win, .338 Win Mag, 6.5x55 Swedish, 7x64, .30-06, and for those who like making bigger holes in things – 9.3x62. There's a calibre here to suit any New Zealand hunting situation, plus a few to spare.

As for the rifles – you can choose from Bavarian and Stutzen styles, Classic, Pro Arco, Silver Magic or Pro Battue. Left



**TOP:** The two-position safety catch, and in front, the small bolt release lever. Note the hole in the rear of the bolt shroud – the rear of the bright stainless striker sits flush with this when the action is cocked.

**ABOVE & ABOVE LEFT:** The Zoli's bolt is exceptionally smooth in operation, and wobble-free regardless of its position in the receiver.

**LEFT:** The tubular receiver is a machined from bar stock and has an integral recoil lug (left).



hand versions of selected models can be ordered at a slight price premium. Standard prices begin at a competitive \$1995, climb a little, then head upwards sharply to wherever you want to go! These are beautifully made and presented rifles that exude European craftsmanship at its best.

## THE TEST RIFLE

Steve invited us to hunt with an AZ 1900 Pro Battue that he'd just sighted in with a Kahles KX 3-9x42 scope, an ideal combi-





**ABOVE:** The Kahles KX 3-9x42 scope proved to be superb in the low-light conditions of the Mamaku bush.

**RIGHT:** The Pro S Battue's barrel is fluted between the front and rear sights.

**BELOW RIGHT:** The trigger guard and mag well are combined into one cast-alloy unit.

**BELOW:** Like the front sight, the rear unit is screwed to the barrel and easily removed.

nation for our neck of the woods – the Kaimai, Mamaku and Te Puke ranges where fallow and red deer can be found if you know where to look and aren't afraid of a little leg work to get yourself into the right spot. This is hilly bush-clad country offering mostly close shots – Nik once dropped a deer here in a clearing at 314 yards, using my .260 Remington, but the majority of shots here are at considerably less than half that distance.

The Zoli 1900 action is an all-steel, one size fits all design, meaning it handles cartridges from .243 up to .30-06 in length. Both the bolt and the receiver are CNC machined from solid forged steel bar, then polished and surface hardened. The recoil lug is machined from the bar stock as an integral part



of the receiver. The cock-on-opening, 90-degree bolt has a recessed head that surrounds the base of the cartridge with a steel ring, and the bolt locks into the receiver via equally strong twin front lugs. There's a claw extractor built into the rim, and a plunger ejector. The bolt is glass

smooth in operation, and even when it's pulled right back to where it stops in the rear receiver ring it does not wobble or rattle.

The internal box magazine holds four rounds in a staggered configuration, and is easily top loaded with single rounds. The cartridge follower and leaf

spring are steel, while the one-piece mag well and trigger guard unit is cast alloy. There's a mag release lever set into the front of the trigger guard.

The 21", hammer-forged, free floated barrel has a recessed muzzle crown, and is fluted from under the rear leaf sight to the



**ABOVE:** The muzzle of the 21" barrel is crowned.

beginning of the riser that holds the front sight blade. Open sights are standard on all European Battue style rifles, and on the Zoli they're secured with small allen screws, thus easily removable if you want your barrel clean of any obstructions.

The safety catch is a two-position sliding button that locks the bolt closed – it's located in the usual position at the right rear of the receiver, and there's a small pressed steel bolt-release button just ahead of the bolt handle recess in the stock.

For a while I struggled to get the bolt out of the receiver and kept manipulating the bolt release button to no avail.



Then I discovered that with the safety catch in the fire position, the trigger must be pulled very firmly back past its normal release position, which drops the top of the sear out of the slot in the bottom of the bolt, allowing

it to be removed.

The trigger is a single-stage unit, crisp and absolutely creep-free, that came factory set at exactly 3lbs, perfect for a hunting rifle.

The Battue's stock is good quality walnut, with a Monte



**TOP:** The Zoli was testfired with five brands of .243 ammunition, ranging from 80 grain to 105 grain. Accuracy was consistent enough to allow any of these rounds to be used for hunting.

**ABOVE:** The walnut stock is pillar bedded at the rear.

**MIDDLE LEFT:** The trigger is creep-free, and came factory set at 3lbs.

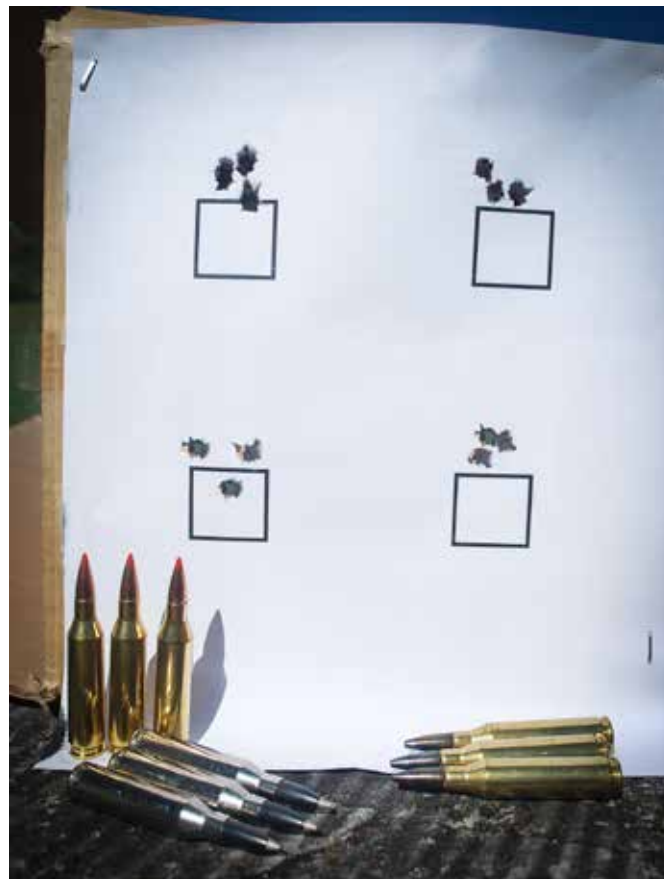
**LEFT:** Single loading cartridges into the four-round magazine is easy.

Carlo cheek-piece and a palm swell grip, and features fine cut chequering at 16 lines to the inch on both grip and fore-stock. A ventilated black rubber butt pad takes care of recoil. The rear action screw is pillar bedded, but



*"The Zoli is a traditional style European hunting rifle from a company with a long history of manufacturing high-grade firearms."*





the front screw is not – it screws directly into the recoil lug which locates in a recess in the stock. There is no bedding material used, the receiver and the recoil lug sit directly on the timber.

#### DIMENSIONS

The Pro S measures 41-3/4 inches overall (1060mm approx) and weighs a shade under 9lbs (4.06kgs) complete with the Kahles scope in its steel rings. A .30-06-length action and a walnut stock weigh what they weigh, so all-up this is not a lightweight rig. Bare weight is around 7lbs though, and a lighter scope and rings could be fitted.

#### AT THE BENCH

Along with the rifle came a packet of Hornady Superformance .243 ammo loaded with 95 grain SST projectiles. Steve reckoned that the accuracy of these in the Pro S Battue would impress us, and he wasn't kidding – after shooting several 100 yard groups smaller than half an inch (one three-shot group measuring just .41") I was convinced. Steve told me he'd shot a .36" (9mm approx) group

**ABOVE:** Representative 100 yard groups shot with the Zoli and the ammo listed (see text). The points of impact were very similar, although individual rifles may vary.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Steve Boyd, the Zoli importer, with a young red stag dropped cleanly with the .243 Battue.

**RIGHT:** John Campbell used the .243 Zoli and Hornady Superformance 95 grain SST ammo to knock over this red hind at dusk in the Pyes Pa area.

while he was sighting the rifle in, and although I couldn't quite match that, I believe him.

I also tested four other brands of ammunition; Federal Fusion 95 grain, Winchester 95 grain Ballistic Silver Tip, Federal 80 grain Classic, and Remington 105 grain Extended Range. The three lightest of these rounds shot inch groups or tighter, and better still, they shot very close to the same point of impact. The mean distance between the groups shot with the light 80 grain projectiles and the heavy 105's was just 1-1/4" (32mm) at 100 yards, which means



you could use either round for hunting medium size game out to around 200 yards/metres without having to worry about making any sighting corrections.

#### IN THE HILLS

My son-in-law John, who lives in Tauranga, agreed to take the Zoli out on a hunt. Although the Pro S has a different feel, and is a little heavier than the Remington M700 7mm-08 with its Zeiss 3-9x40 scope that he normally carries, he admired the Zoli's fit and finish, its balance and its wonderfully slick action. Late in the day, with the light fading in the bush, he managed to drop a red hind with the rifle, with an offhand shot at around 70

metres. The Kahles scope did a great job in the gloom, making accurate bullet placement easy.

#### BOTTOM LINE

The Zoli is a traditional style European hunting rifle from a company with a long history of manufacturing high-grade firearms. It is beautifully put together and finished, and it functions smoothly and reliably. It shoots straight too. Its looks set it apart from the typical stainless/synthetic hunting rifles every back country hut is full of these days. It's a rifle you could carry happily, knowing that you're holding a quality item that stands out from the crowd.

Peter

For more information on the Zoli range of firearms visit:  
[www.themaimaisupplies.co.nz](http://www.themaimaisupplies.co.nz)



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Since 1490

A rifle that will go the distance, maintain its value and represent a good investment requires a total commitment to quality right from the first stages of the design and engineering process.

**Zoli has followed this principle since day one.**

**MODELS AVAILABLE:** Bavarian, Pro, Pro Arco, Stutzen, Alpen, Classic, Silver and Black Magic, Super Exclusive.

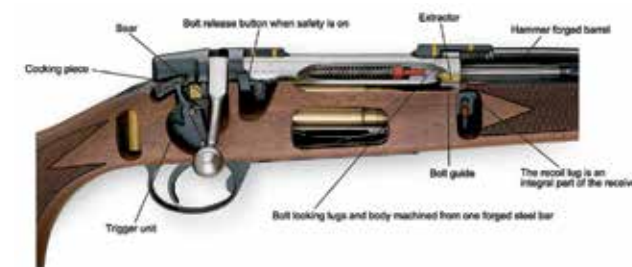
**CALIBRE CHOICE:** .243 Win, .25-06 Rem, 6.5x55 SE, .270 Win, .270 Wby Mag, 7x64mm, 7mm Rem Mag, .308 Win, .30-06 Spring, .300 Win Mag, .338 Win Mag, 9.3x62mm

**Prices start from \$1995**

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