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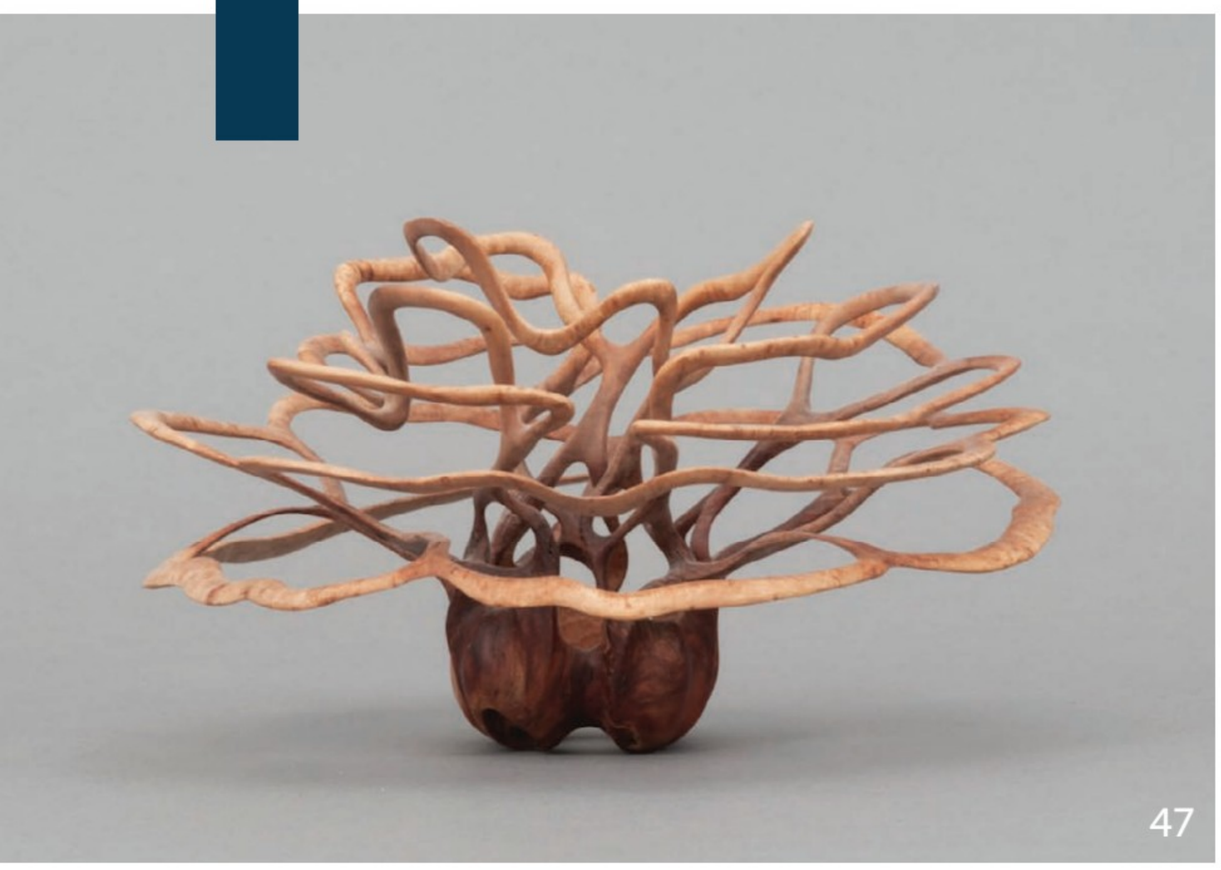



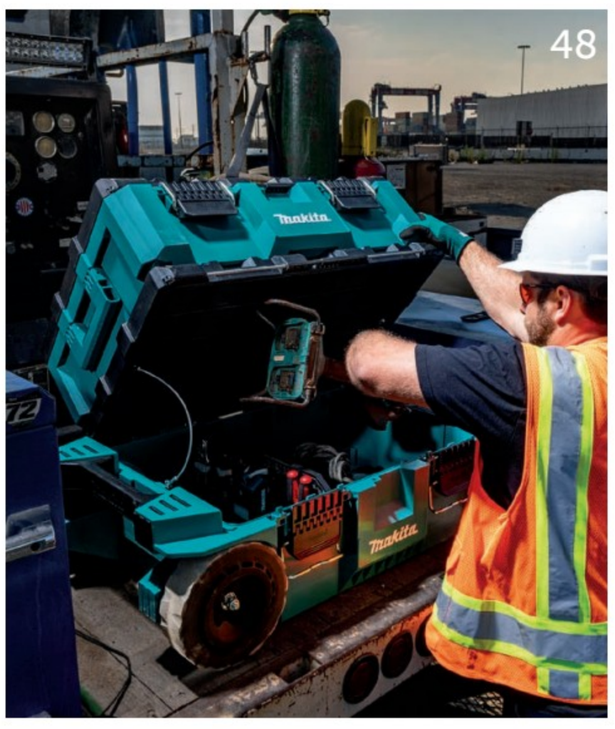

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BLOGS



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Asheville area woodworkers grapple with Helene's destruction

By Jennifer Hicks

We reached out to several woodworking operations in the Asheville, N.C., area affected by Hurricane Helene. A once lively and upbeat artistic hub and tourist destination, Asheville was essentially swallowed by flooding caused by storm surge on the city's French Broad River.

For Matt Christie, of Green River Woods in Ashville, the event was somewhat of a blur, but also something he will never forget. A furniture maker and urban lumber supplier, his shop was washed out, but fortunately, he and his family were safe and unharmed.

"The water came to the ridge of our building and with very little warning. We only had two hours, an hour-and-a-half maybe, on Thursday morning. The water estimate had just jumped 10 feet overnight, and we were expecting 6" to 8" of water," says Christie.

"We rushed in and put everything up, hundreds of thousands of dollars of kiln-dried slabs and lumber that we'd salvaged, milled and dried ourselves, a lot of them were slated for custom furniture pieces. We put everything that was purchased already, or reserved with a deposit or almost finished, up on sawhorses and thought we'd done what we could. We drove out through half a foot of water and the road was already closed."

More details on Christie's recovery story can be found on Page 56 in Out of the Woodwork.

Ray Gonzalez of Dark Sky Wood Designs, a furniture maker in Yancey County, says his location on higher ground spared his shop from too much flooding.

"In retrospect, we're pretty fortunate. We did have water come into our shop. It was probably about 6" deep or so. So, we were affected. We had some loss in materials and some products and stuff, but relatively speaking, compared to a lot of other folks, it's pretty mild," Gonalez says.

"The area is world-renowned for cabinetmaking, furniture making, and arts and crafts in general. So, it's a pretty devastating hit to the communities, especially in the Asheville region where they have a lot of co-op woodworking spaces for a lot of different makers. Those people got hit really hard down there, and many don't even know if they're going to open back up, and I think that's just really sad."

Brian Boggs, of Brian Boggs Chairmakers in Asheville, sent out a news release to his many contacts announcing he and his family were safe, and that his house and shop were only mildly affected. Regardless, the event still took an emotional toll.

"You all have heard the news, and we can assure you that the destruction in the town of Asheville is every bit as bad as the news portrays it. We are grateful for our good fortune in that our house and shop remained above river levels," Boggs shared.

"Even though we were there through the storm, the experience remains in a category of our minds that we reserve for imagined horrors. The level of devastation in western

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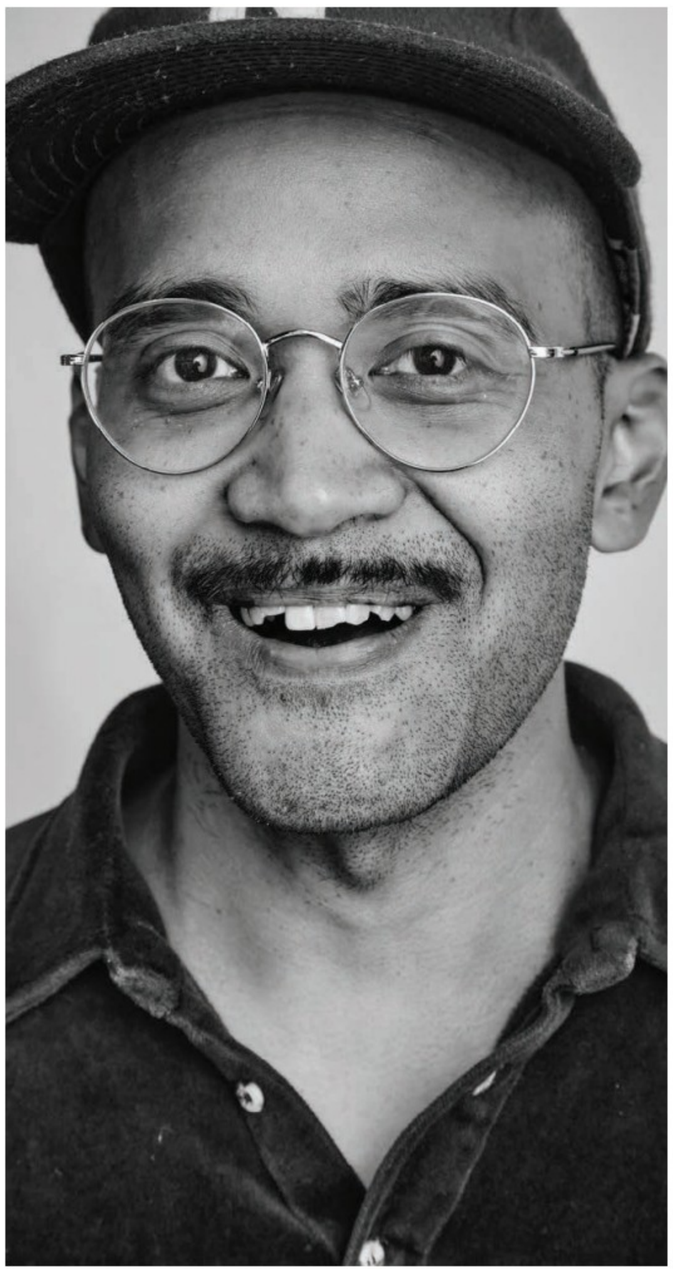







Thompson makes furniture, including this Tulip Bench and chairs, in Heath, Mass.

Charles Thompson awarded Mineck Fellowship

By Jennifer Hicks

The Society of Arts and Crafts has named Charles Thompson of Heath, Mass., as the winner of the 2024 John D. Mineck Fellowship, a grant of $25,000 awarded annually to one young-in-career, emerging or mid-career furniture artist, who wants to fulfill an apprenticeship, develop skills, purchase equipment and/or make the transition to independence.

Thompson is a green woodworker who is excited to use the award to further develop his teaching curriculum, studio space and equipment, and share his passion with others.

"I'm a self-taught, pretty hermetic woodworker. I developed my practice very quietly and in an isolated, protective way. Being recognized by the Society for Arts and Crafts is a huge honor and a little bit surreal," Thompson tells Woodshop News.

"The Mineck Fellowship shifts what's possible in my working life. I think it's an opportunity to reimagine the whole thing. I've truly never had a budget for tools or studio improvements, and now suddenly I do. What I hope is that I can use this opportunity to sort of format the elements of my practice – research, teaching, and making – to be sustainable into the future. I want to explore new objects, either historical or newly imagined, and develop a space to share those explorations. Part of the funds will be used to transform my studio, a barn that's seen a few too many winters, into a more enclosed and weatherproof place to work and teach."

Jurors for this year's competition were Jamie Herman, a furniture maker, sculptor and teacher; Heide Martin, a landscape architect and furniture designer; and Folayemi "Fo" Wilson, a furniture designer and maker, installation artist, muralist, and graphic designer.

The award is funded by the John D. Mineck Foundation and administered by the Society. Learn more at *societyofcrafts.org*. **W**

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WIA honors Mark Smith and Greyloch

By Jennifer Hicks

The Wood Industry Association (WIA) presented its 2024 Wooden Globe Awards at the International Woodworking Fair in Atlanta during the Night at the Tabernacle event. Mark Smith of Reed-Custer High School in Crestwood, Ill., won Educator of the Year and Greyloch, a custom cabinet manufacturer in Star, Idaho, was honored for its Commitment to Excellence through Technology.

Educator of the Year honors an instructor, educational institution, or company with a structured curriculum tailored to training individuals for careers in the woodworking industry. Recipients are advocates for the industry, and work to enhance the lives of others by sharing the opportunity and knowledge of the wood industry, according to the WIA.

Smith has developed a curriculum that builds student interest in the industry and exposes them to the tools and methods used in modern woodworking. The curriculum at Reed-Custer High School offers coursework in Orientation to Technology; CAD 1, 2, and 3; STEM 1 and 2; CAD/CAM 1 and 2; and Production 1 and 2. These courses provide students credit toward their high school diploma, college credits, and Woodwork Career Alliance of North America credentials.

"In addition to the curriculum, Smith works to expose his students to the industry through career days, manufacturing days, and attendance at industry events. He also has a broad network of supporters and contacts to connect students to future career opportunities," the WIA said.

The Commitment to Excellence Through Technology award honors companies that continuously invest in the most recent woodworking machinery technology.

"The recipients of this award are companies that provide a shining example that continued investments in high technology machinery provide the necessary competitive advantage to compete successfully in today's global market," the WIA said.

In 2023, Greyloch opened its new 96,909 sq.-ft. advanced cabinet manufacturing facility, a $44 million project that features a fully automated facility with the latest technology from Homag.



Mark Smith, with former student Nathan Minuth, accepting the Wooden Globe Award for Educator of the Year.

The mission of the WIA is to improve management operations, marketing programs, sales techniques, merchandising and distribution functions of those engaged in the domestic or foreign manufacture of woodworking machinery and ancillary equipment and/or the sale of such equipment in North America. Learn more at *woodindustry.org*. W

Milwaukee opens its largest manufacturing facility to date

By Jennifer Hicks

Milwaukee Tool has expanded further on its U.S. presence with the opening of its newest manufacturing facility in Grenada County, Miss. The new location, which will employ more than 800 people, marks Milwaukee's eighth location in Mississippi, and is the company's largest facility in the United States to date.

"Our rapid growth continues to accelerate, and this new facility in Grenada plays a crucial role in maintaining our trajectory of excellence in serving our distributor and user partners," Scott Griswold, group president of the professional accessories business unit at Milwaukee Tool, said in a statement.



An aerial shot of Milwaukee's new facility.

"This success is the direct result of recruiting some of the best talent around the nation, especially in the state of Mississippi. Our strong people and our unique culture are unlike anything else in the industry."

The company is reported to have invested over $60 million in the over 500,000-sq.-ft. facility. The Grenada location will initially produce Milwaukee's line of major accessories, including Sawzall blades, and will expand into additional product lines over time.

Milwaukee, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, says it has over 10,000 employees in the U.S. and over 4,000 in Mississippi. Learn more at *milwaukeetool.com*. W

MICROVELLUM LAUNCHES NEW CAD TOOLBOX SUBSCRIPTION

Microvellum announces that CAD Toolbox, its AutoCAD-based software package and part of the broader Toolbox suite, is now available through an annual subscription. CAD Toolbox is designed specifically for professionals involved in the production of architectural submittal drawings and shop drawings, offering a streamlined and efficient solution for both residential and commercial projects, the company said.

"CAD Toolbox is the foundational package in the Toolbox suite, which also includes MFG Toolbox and CNC Toolbox," the company explained in a statement. "Designed specifically for drafters and designers, CAD Toolbox streamlines and automates the creation of precise 3D room layouts, as well as detailed 2D plan views, elevations, and section drawings for a wide range of projects, including kitchens, closets, hotels, schools, store fit-outs, and other installations requiring standard or custom cabinetry or wood products.

"Although CAD Toolbox is built on AutoCAD technology, it operates independently without the need for a separate AutoCAD license, making it a more accessible and cost-effective solution for professionals seeking advanced design and drafting capabilities for woodworking projects."

Key features include comprehensive drawing and modeling tools; a parametric product Library, and easy subscription access, according to the company.

CAD Toolbox is available for purchase directly from Microvellum's website. Learn more at *microvellum.com*.

NEW DASHBOARD CREATION TOOL FROM CROWS NEST

Crows Nest ERP software now comes with a Dashboard Creation tool that enables unlimited dashboards to be created for each user, which then automatically updates in real time for each project.

"With the new tool, the company remains dedicated to offering the most customizable enterprise resource planning (ERP) software available for the woodworking industry," the company explained.

"Crows Nest ERP is tailored for project-based manufacturers, service providers, and subcontractors in cabinetmaking, millwork, casework, architectural woodworking, and other specialty trades."

The new Dashboard Creation tool supports multiple objects such as Pivot Tables, Grids, Charts, and more. Chart functionality includes Trend, Regression Lines, Constant Line and Strip presentations. It also includes "out-of-the-box" Project Cost Summary, Bottleneck, and Department Dashboards and many others, according to the company.

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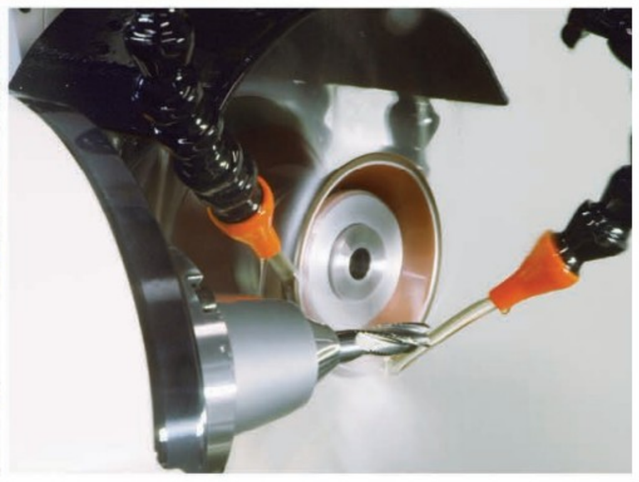

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WIA IS ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Every year, the Wood Industry Association (WIA) award scholarships to college students pursuing studies in wood technology, machinery, and related fields. Students may apply for 2025 scholarships through January.

To date, the WIA and former WMIA Education Foundation have awarded over $551,000 to 298 students.

Any college-bound individual planning to enroll or college student currently enrolled in a wood science or wood technology program is eligible. But the program, regardless of length, must be associated with an accredited two-year or four-year technical school, college, or university in North America. Applicants must have graduated from high school or its equivalent before July 1 of the scholarship year.

Learn more at *woodindustry.org*.

A TURN TO GROWTH EXPECTED FOR RESIDENTIAL REMODELING

After a mild pullback over the previous year, spending for improvements and repairs on owner-occupied homes is set to expand once again by the middle of next year, according to the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) from the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.

The LIRA projects that annual expenditures for home renovation and maintenance will grow by 1.2 percent through the third quarter of 2025.

"A continued thaw in new home construction and sales of existing homes bodes well for an uptick in residential improvement and repairs next year," says Carlos Martín, Director of the Remodeling Futures Program at the Center. "Additionally, stronger gains in home values and thus home equity levels should boost both discretionary and 'need-to-do' replacement projects for owners staying in place."

"Annual spending for home improvements and maintenance is projected to grow from $472 billion today to $477 billion through the third quarter of 2025," adds Abbe Will, Associate Director of the Remodeling Futures Program. "A quick return to growth after a fairly modest downturn ultimately means that residential remodeling and repair expenditures are expected to approach past peak levels moving forward."

WOODCRAFT PARTNERS WITH WOODPECKERS

Woodcraft is now the exclusive national retailer of Woodpeckers tools and will carry the brand's most popular marking and measuring tools, as well as power tool accessories.

"The partnership aligns two powerhouses in the woodworking industry," said Joe Young, Woodcraft's Director of Product Design and Development, in a statement. "For nearly a century, Woodcraft has been a trusted source of high-quality, dependable woodworking tools and equipment, so Woodpeckers' exceptional tools are exactly what our customers will want."

Woodcraft said it will carry 42 marking and measuring tools and 11 power tool accessories.

from Page 6

North Carolina has changed the region in ways we cannot know yet."

For any craftsperson looking for or to donate, a good place to start is the Craft Emergency Relief Fund's website at *cerfplus.org*. Other outlets include the American Red Cross (*redcross.org*), Samaritan's Purse (*samaritanspurse.org*), and Convoy of Hope (*convoyofhope.org*).

Woodworking machinery manufacturer Felder Group USA has shared its support to Convoy of Hope and encourages others to donate, if they can.

"The destruction caused by Hurricane Helene has deeply affected us," says Ruan du Toit, CEO at Felder Group USA. "Our customers, family, co-workers, and friends have been directly impacted by this disaster. By donating to Convoy of Hope, we hope to provide much-needed assistance to the cause and to keep the situation front of mind for everyone. They still need help, and we need to do all we can." **w**



After the storm at Green River Woods.



Regulations tighten exotic market

By Jennifer Hicks



Supplies of exotic wood species are generally readily available in retail and commercial markets in the U.S., but consumers should be aware of regulations with CITES (Conference of International Trade in Endangered Species and Wild Fauna and Flora) and economic factors that will affect the product sector in the near future, according to suppliers interviewed by Woodshop News.

"Right now, [exotics] are a very tight market overall," says Fabs Corte of Cormark International in Weaverville, N.C. "It's hard to say if this is trending or that it's not trending. When we look at the Covid years, compared to where we are now, there's been a lot of retracting. A lot of people aren't spending the money.

"I can't say there's really any species that's standing out or going gangbusters. I think volumes overall on everything are down. There are obviously more and more regulations coming in. I know some of the South American ones, like ipé and cumaru, have just moved to CITES, and that's going to change all of that importation. And ipé being a really big commodity wood, which is widely used, it's going to really affect that market, especially on decking and things like that."

Zebrawood is also very difficult to get these days.

"It's not even a national shortage, there's a global shortage with zebrawood. Right back to the mills. No one's got logs. We just can't find any zebrawood around which is crazy. I know zebrawood has never been a big volume seller because it's quite a pricey wood, but it's just tightened up a lot," says Corte.

CITES works to facilitate biologically sustainable trade and approximately every two to three years, a meeting of the Conference of the Parties is held to consider proposed changes to CITES Appendices and make decisions about implementing and enforcing CITES provisions. Dave Norman, of Parkerville Wood Products in Manchester, Conn., recommends buyers keep tabs on CITES' activity.

"There are a lot of exotic woods that come out of the rainforests, and lot of them are not the most green-friendly. It's just the way it is. So ipé, for instance, one of the leading ones for tropical decking, is getting a little harder to get because they're putting pressure on it with the CITES list.

"When popular woods like that go on those lists, it's harder for those countries to export it, so there are less mills that deal with it. It throws supply and demand out of whack, which means when it starts coming into the country, it's harder to get, because it's pricey, so some of these exotics are limited. There's not tons and tons of it out there."

Norman advises woodworkers to be prudent in planning their projects using exotic species, since sellers can't promise availability.

"You can't be picky," he adds. "It's not like buying walnut or oak where you get to start demanding the thickness, the widths, the lengths, when it becomes available, and when you can buy it.

"I just had a big engineering flooring company hit me up for 5,000 board feet of 4/4 zebrawood and they've been calling everyone and can't find it. You've got to be careful what you're promising the customers. It's one thing if you're playing with charcuterie boards and that kind of thing, but if you promise something big and you can't get it, that's another thing." W

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DO IT BEST MAKES BID FOR TRUE VALUE

Do it Best, the nation's largest member-owned co-op for hardware and lumber products, announces its bid to acquire substantially all assets from True Value, a Chicago-based hardlines wholesalers that filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy under private equity ownership.

The proposed acquisition would create a worldwide store network exceeding 8,000 locations in the U.S. and more than 50 countries around the world, according to the company.

"If Do it Best is the winning bidder, the transaction is expected to close by the end of the year, pending regulatory and court approval," the company said in a statement. "True Value will continue to operate under Chapter 11 protection with Do it Best providing a stalking horse bid. Under the agreement, Do it Best will purchase many of the True Value assets and business operations. To the extent True Value requires additional financing during the bankruptcy process, Do it Best has committed to provide incremental capital to True Value in an effort to help ensure independent True Value retailers' the ability to continue serving their customers throughout the process."

MASTERCAM NAMES NEW VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL SALES

Mastercam, a provider of CAD/CAM solutions, announces the appointment of Oscar Elizaga as Vice President of Global Sales and Services. Elizaga will oversee Mastercam's global sales and commercial operations, focusing on driving market penetration, revenue growth, and elevating customer success.

"I'm honored to join Mastercam at such a pivotal time in the company's journey," Elizaga said in a statement. "Mastercam's commitment to innovation and customer success aligns perfectly with my vision for growth. I look forward to working with our teams worldwide, alongside our Channel Partners, to enhance our market presence and deliver exceptional value to our customers, Mastercam, and the broader Sandvik Manufacturing Solutions organization."

"Oscar's extensive experience and strategic vision will be essential as we strengthen our global sales and service operations to drive market expansion and elevate customer success," added Susan Brandt, President of Mastercam. "His leadership will ensure we remain at the forefront of the industry, delivering innovative solutions and exceptional value to our customers worldwide."

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Improve workflow efficiency with Total Flatline Automation

By Jennifer Hicks

Total Finishing Solutions (TFS) introduced an innovative new finishing system, Total Flatline Automation, featuring the VD Simple Dynamic Reciprocating Sprayer at the 2024 IWF in August. The system allows for a single user to run cabinet parts through a conveyor setup, and have the parts finished efficiently through a patented spray system.

The key component to the system is the VD Simple Dynamic Reciprocating Sprayer, which ensures even spray results on finished parts with a linear application that avoids overlapping, and significant coating material savings versus other reciprocators on the market, according to the company.

"We physically have a patent that uses 25 percent less paint than anybody else's because it targets mills used and doesn't overapply. It's pretty earth shattering to me," says Ty Crowder, president of TFS.

"The cost savings in coating materials is the biggest highlight, but there are other benefits. Because the system is traveling with the part, we're actually on the edges for a fraction of a second more than other reciprocators on the market, so we get better edge coverage both inside and outside as a result."

It also features a material handling system with an automated loader and unloader that offers shops huge labor savings, according to Crowder. Designed for processing doors, face frames, trim and moldings, it eliminates the need for multiple employees traditionally required for loading and unloading parts. It also eliminates the need for a vertical oven to dry paint, making full paint curing possible in just four minutes.

"I think we have a pretty revolutionary product because everyone that has a flatline is paying three or four guys to run it, and we can get them down to a part-time operator just moving racks," says Crowder.

"The operator just takes a product and makes sure it's touching at least two of the flat stripes on the table, presses a start button, and sends parts through for spraying."

The system can be purchased with manual load and auto unload, auto load and auto unload, or auto load with part rotation and auto unload. Learn more at *totalfinishingsolutions.com*. **W**

Colonial Saw presents Automatic Crosscut Stop

By Jennifer Hicks

Colonial Saw has introduced the Automatic Crosscut Stop for Striebig panel saws. This feature helps eliminate mistakes, works with fractions or decimals, and can be added to Striebig Compacts from 2004 and Standards from 2005.

"This is a motorized stop for Striebig panel saws, much like a TigerStop or RazorGage, or Striebig's own EPS.X, which is only available on the automatic Control and 4D models," says Dave Bull, Striebig's product manager for Colonial Saw.



Colonial Saw's Automatic Crosscut Stop is controlled with a keypad.

"It will allow the customer to be approximately 30 percent more efficient than setting a stop manually, whether that is an 'analog' stop reading a tape measure, or even a digital stop, they both take time to set. So, they will be able to cut more parts in a shorter period of time. There will be fewer mistakes especially when compared to reading a tape scale or converting to decimal inches. This lets the customer put a less experienced operator on the Striebig, which is inherently a very safe machine to begin with, and get a lot of work done with fewer mistakes than any other saw in the shop."

Once installed, the user simply enters a dimension on a keypad and the stop moves to that exact position. It operates in either decimal inches or in fractions, and it has fractional keys for 1/8" and 1/16" increments. It can also go to 1/32" with the press of a button. Offsets for the other vertical cuts stations can be easily programmed, so users have the whole measuring range of the machine at their disposal, according to Colonial Saw.

The Automatic Crosscut Stop sells for $6,900 to $7,500, depending on the Striebig model it's purchased for. Learn more at *csaw.com*. W



Let the Finisher do the sanding

By Jennifer Hicks

Machine Tool Camp , introduces the Finisher, a fully automatic and customizable robotic system for sanding arched panels, Shaker, MDF, and other door types.

"Sanding in today's labor market is a very difficult job to fill. Cabinet shops and door companies around the country are having a hard time finding people to do that manual labor," says company president Scott Kauphusman.

"We have developed an automated sanding system, and the unique thing about ours is it is customizable. Operators can choose what kind of sanding path they want – up and down, left and right, and the amount of pressure put on a sanding head based on species of wood, so it presses harder on oak or lighter on cherry, etcetera."

Kauphusman emphasizes that the machine's repeatability and tolerance lead to better results.

"The robotic sander, being not manually driven, is just plain better. It can put the exact even pressure throughout the entire area without any manual light areas or heavy pressure areas. For example, if I'm sanding by hand, I might push harder on the right edge because I'm right-handed, and break that sharp edge by putting a slightly chamfered edge on the part."

The machine requires no programming by automatically sensing the size and style of the door. Loading and unloading is automatic. Two primary options are offered: portable loading/unloading carts and an automatic media changer.

With the portable cart system, doors that need sanding can be loaded onto



a cart in the manufacturing area and rolled to the robotic sanding station, where the cart interfaces with the machine, and the doors are then sanded.

The media changer will automatically change the abrasive material by peeling the used sandpaper off and replacing it. The operator can determine the time and duration for replacement.

Learn more at *machinetoolcamp.com*. **W**

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Photo

Maksiwa's new slider accepts dado sets

By Jennifer Hicks

Maksiwa International has recently added dado making capabilities to its model BMS.3200.IR sliding panel saw. The new Dado Edition can run up to a 10" dado set.

"In the past few years customers have been asking if this saw was dado compatible, and we didn't have that before. So, we looked around at the competition and it was hard to find a sliding saw with this capability," says Vitor Saar, Maksiwa's director of sales.

"We listened to them and came up with this feature for the machine, which was completely revamped in 2023 with new components and features. So, now for 2024, we started with the dado capability. We're just adding more and more to it and still keeping the exceptional value of it. It's a very affordable sliding saw."

The 5-hp, 12" saw has a scoring blade and a 126" sliding table, which moves on a roller-bearing mechanism. It's equipped with a 51" micro-adjustable rip fence.

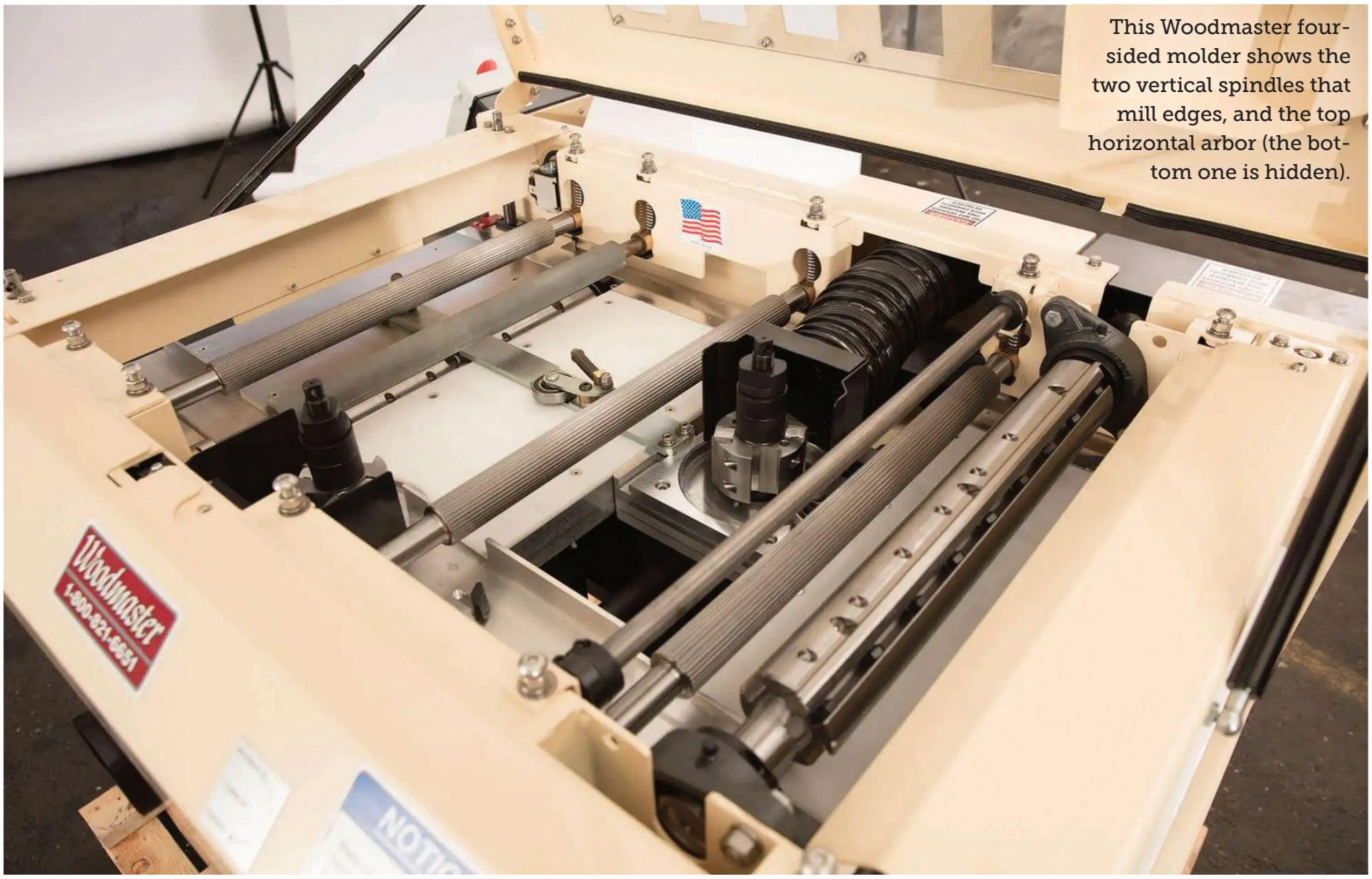


Maksiwa's new saw, model BMS.3200.IR, features a 126" sliding table and a 51" rip fence.

Other features include a control panel with digital display, overhead guards with integrated dust collection connected to a swing-away arm, two 4" dust ports, emergency off buttons on the front and back of the machine, and adjustable leveling feet.

The Dado Edition starts at $8,499 with a 12", 96-tooth carbide blade. A dado set is sold separately. Learn more at *maksiwa.com*. **w**





This Woodmaster four-sided molder shows the two vertical spindles that mill edges, and the top horizontal arbor (the bottom one is hidden).

Upgrading to a shaper or molder

How they work, what's the difference, and why they're a step up from a router table

By John English

There can be confusion about molders and shapers, and some of that comes from shops in Europe and the U.K. where they call a shaper a 'spindle moulder'. In North America, telling the machines apart is a bit simpler. Most of the time, molders have horizontal shafts and shapers have vertical ones. That's not exclusive, but it's a handy rule of thumb.

Molders can be quite complex. Depending on the shop's budget, they can address up to four faces of a board simultaneously and work on some very wide stock, while shapers primarily work on, or close to, solid wood edges. Both machines can raise a panel (within limits) or profile a molding, but each has strengths and weaknesses. For example, some molders and most shapers can be set up to do curved work for arches, bows, cathedral rails for cabinet doors, and the like. But some can't, so if a shop is in the market for a molder or shaper and curves will be involved, it might be advisable to do a little research on aftermarket and shop-built jigs for curved work before buying.

Just to paint a visual, a four-sided molder is basically two horizontal molder heads (top and bottom) and two vertical shaper heads (sides) that are staggered so the knives don't run into each other.

There's also some discussion among woodworkers as to the quality of cut. In an informal and highly unscientific quick survey of discussion boards, most shop owners are of the opinion that a shaper delivers a finer cut, especially across grain, and that molders seem more susceptible to minor chatter that will need to be sanded out. That makes sense when one is talking about small or inexpensive machines where the knives are thin, and the power feed doesn't have a lot of torque. But for professional machines, basic cut quality isn't an issue.

Some small thickness planers can be set up with profiled knives, in effect converting them to simple molders that can work on one wide face of a board at a time.

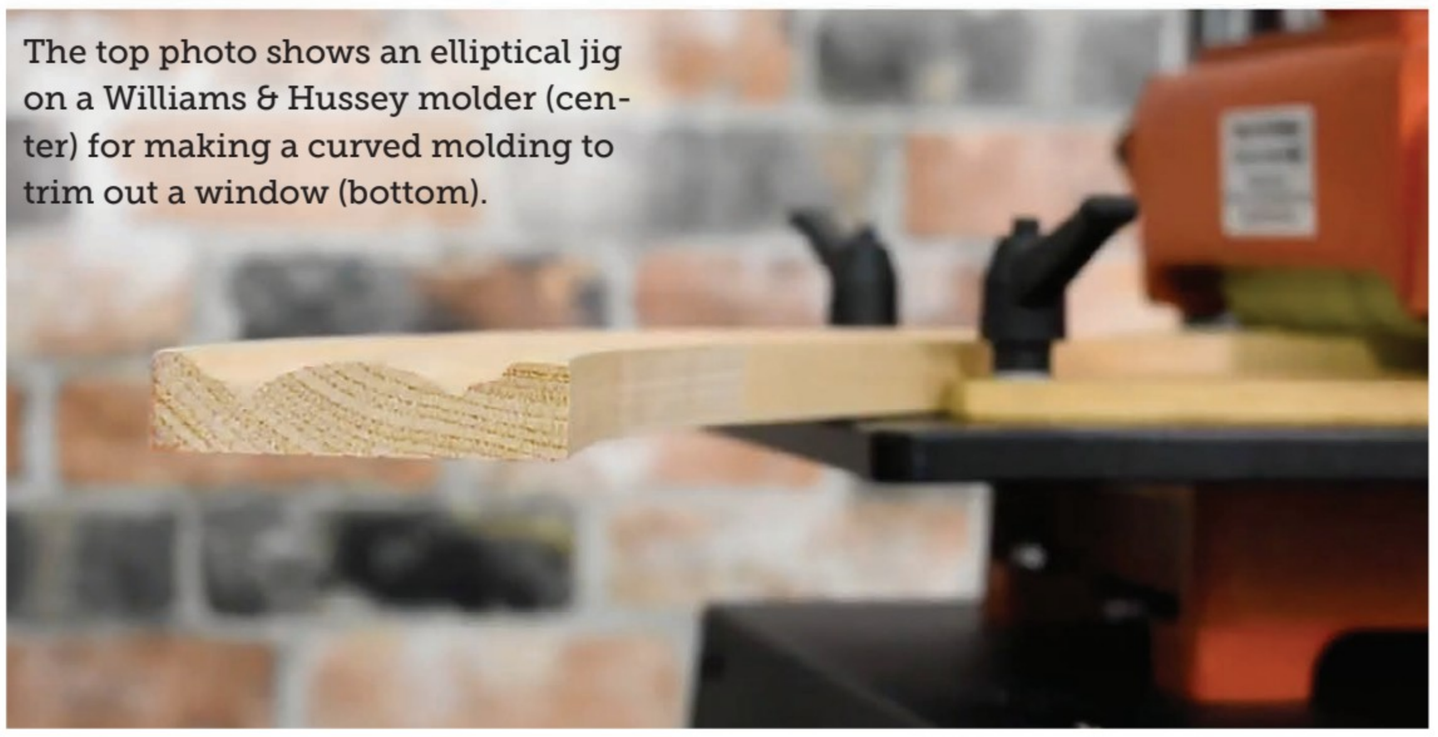
Cut quality also depends on power delivery. For shops buying an older version of a small molder or shaper, a mild vibration might be attributable to worn bearings. But surprisingly, another likely cause is that the pulleys are actu-

ally out of round. And in some cases, the arbor hole in the pulley has become misshapen over time and no longer runs true. Out-of-round pulleys can be machined or replaced, but a segmented belt rather than a standard V-belt can often solve the problem, too.

The scale of work is more relevant when it comes to molders and shapers than it is with most other traditional machines. A small shop can meet many of its profiling needs with a single molder head and a thin shaper spindle – there are some as slim as 1/2", but 1-1/4" is probably as small as one should go for any level of production work. Medium-sized shops doing frequent tongue and groove or flooring runs are probably going to want a multi-head molder. And small shops moving up from a router table to a basic shaper will discover that the tooling is more expensive and needs more frequent sharpening. Molders and shapers also have a learning curve, especially regarding safety. These more powerful machines engage more surface area so they're less forgiving than a router. Accessories such as power feeders and sleds can do a lot to protect fingers. On the other hand, belt-driven shapers tend to run a lot quieter than router tables, and they have the power to make deeper, wider and cleaner cuts, and plow through knots and dense species that might meet resistance on a router table.







The top photo shows an elliptical jig on a Williams & Hussey molder (center) for making a curved molding to trim out a window (bottom).

POWER STRUGGLES

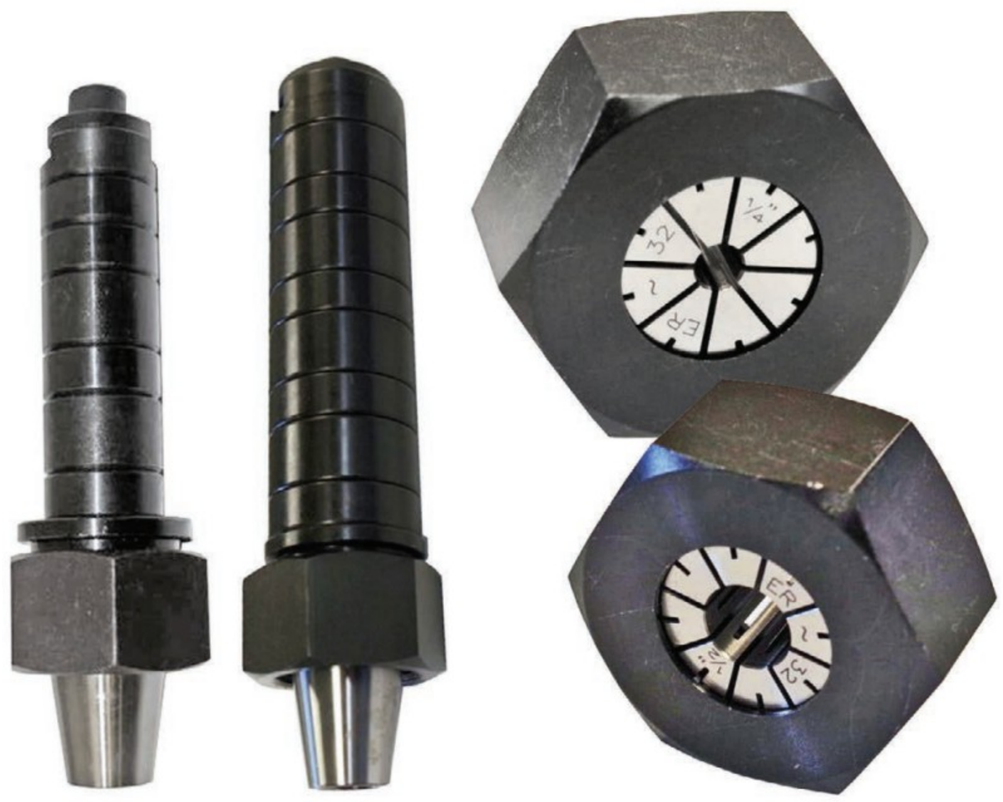
The best answer is that a well-equipped shop has both a molder and a shaper. It's all about the nature and volume of the work being done, and those considerations are also the reason that shops seek to upgrade from a router table.

A large table-mounted router can handle some sizeable bits, but their geometry is an important consideration. Some profiles are tall and thin, and they run the length of the bit, so they are vertical in nature and set into the fence. These are used to cut a design into the face of a part that is run on its edge along the fence, such as a picture frame or a small crown molding. Other profiles are quite wide, such as large round-over or panel-raising bits, and for these the part lies flat on the table and is guided by the fence or a bearing.

Both tall and wide router bits have limits, and those are imposed by a sensible assessment of the risk involved. The 1/2" diameter shaft on wide and tall router bits is quite adequate for the task, but the router itself is a significant parameter for the bit manufacturers. Bit makers know how far they can safely go in cutter width and height. Large cuts on a router table are taken at slower speeds and in incremental passes as a means to lower the risk and the stress on both the bit and the router. These practices facilitate the use of some quite large cutters, but they are in essence a compromise, an acknowledgement of the limits. But a shop that has already invested in high quality tall or wide router bits is ahead of the curve



Most shaper manufacturers can supply an adapter such as this one from Grizzly Industrial that lets a shop use 1/2" router bits.



As with other suppliers, Oliver offers a variety of spindles and collets for shapers that let the woodworker stack cutters or use router bits.

when adding a shaper, because these very large bits will behave perfectly in the larger machine.

A shaper has far more mass than a router, and most also have a more robust shaft. That combination, in conjunction with a larger belt-drive motor, lets them safely spin much larger cutters. The added mass means they take a second or two longer to reach optimum momentum, and veteran woodworkers often need to remind novices to let the machine get up to speed before engag-

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Woodworkers who have invested in high quality wide and tall router bits, such as these from Freud America, can use them in a shaper.



For shops finding new life for a used shaper or molder, the Power Twist Plus link belt from Rockler or Grainger can reduce vibration.

ing the cutters. But that momentum also contributes to a deeper cut with a smoother surface. So, the shaper saves time in terms of having to make fewer passes and having less sanding to do.

The motor in most table routers is a universal commutating brushed motor, which doesn't cost a lot and doesn't take up much space. But it's also not made for long and arduous production runs. A universal motor starts up and gets to full torque quickly, but it also runs at high speed so the brushes can wear out. Cordless brushless motors are just beginning to reach the performance levels required in an all-day router table.

The single-phase AC induction motors in small- to medium-sized shapers and molders have a rotor that spins inside a stationary cylinder called a stator. That movement creates a rotating magnetic field because the rotor is basically an axle covered in magnets which are attracted to the stator's magnetic field. They spin as they hit the poles, being dragged from positive to negative and experiencing attraction and repulsion in turn. The rotor needs to get up to speed on start-up, but once there it's quite powerful. Larger shapers and molders have 3-phase induction motors that can deliver a lot of torque. These types of motors are uncomplicated, tough and energy efficient.

MAKING THE CUT

There are some quirks with shapers, such as the opportunity to stack cutters (the number depends on the length of the shaft), and the machine's ability to run in reverse with the cutters turned upside-down. That



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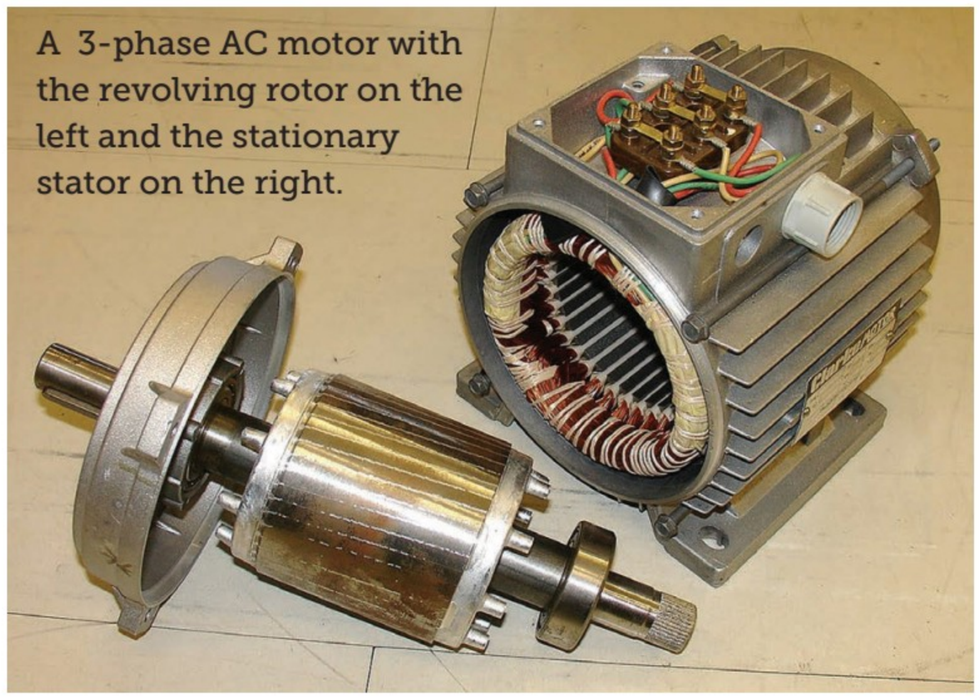


A 3-phase AC motor with the revolving rotor on the left and the stationary stator on the right.

can really help with difficult grain. For example, on a round tabletop with the grain running in a single direction, the edge grain could be shaped in forward, and then the end grain in reverse or some combination of the two, depending on whether contact is being made with or against the grain. With most projects the workpiece can simply be flipped over, but there's always that day when the grain runs wild and it's nice to have another option. It's a bit like climb-cutting on a router

GOING SHOPPING?
Here's a list of resources that may help.

MOLDERS

Casadei-Busellato America	casadeibusellato.com
Castaly/Lobo Machine	lobomachine.com
Global Sales Group	globalsalesgroupinc.com
Leadermac USA	leadermacusa.com
Mikron Woodworking Machinery	mikronmachinery.com
Northtech Machine	northtechmachine.com
SCM Group NA	scmgroup.com
Stiles Machinery	stilesmachinery.com
US Concepts	usconceptsinc.com
Weinig	weinigusa.com
Williams & Hussey	williamsnhussey.com
Wood-Mizer	woodmizer.com

SHAPERS

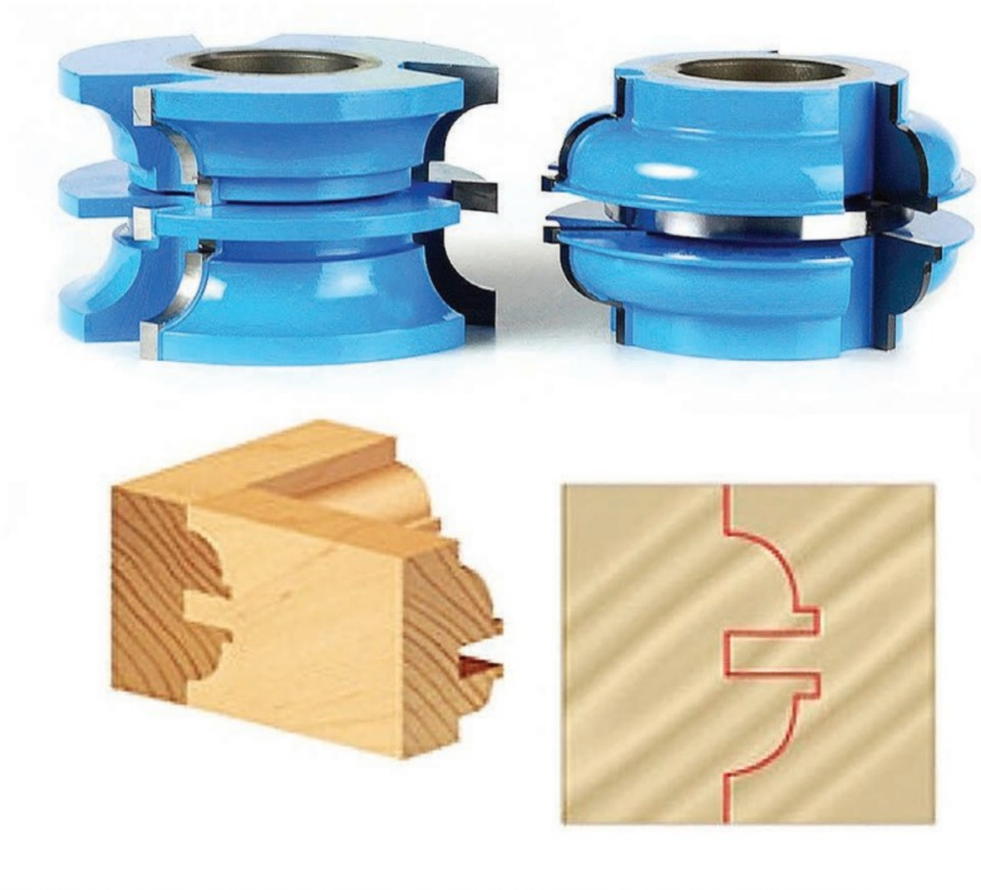
Atlantic Machinery	atlanticmach.com
Baleigh Industrial	baileigh.com
Cantek America	cantekamerica.com
Felder Group USA	felder-group.com
Grizzly Industrial/Shop Fox	grizzly.com
Ideal Machine	idealmanufacturingllc.com
Ironwood Machinery	ironwoodmachinery.com
JET Tools	jettools.com
JKL Machinery	jklmachinery.us
Laguna Tools	lagunatools.com
Larick Machinery, Inc.	pillarmachine.com
Northfield Machinery	northfieldwoodworking.com
Northtech Machine	northtechmachine.com
Oliver Machinery	olivermachinery.net
Powermatic	powermatic.com
SCM Group NA	scmgroup.com
South Bend Tools	southbendtools.com
Stiles Machinery	stilesmachinery.com

table but without the potential kickback.

A woodworker can run router bits in most shapers, but the reverse isn't true. That means the shaper can run a lot of tools (it will probably need an adaptor) that the shop already owns. Be aware that shapers usually spin at about half the speed of a router, so running a test board is good practice. At such slow speeds, large bits might tear out in difficult grain.

In general, the larger the shaper's motor, the thicker the spindle and the more adjustment it will have in Z (up and down). That can be a critical dimension in wider parts on a shaper, but molders don't have the same issue. They resemble thickness planers in configuration, so they can handle much wider boards. But because of that width, they meet far more resistance, so cuts need to be made in slow increments, especially on smaller machines. Molders are perfect for tasks such as paneling, flooring, architectural trim (especially Victorian reproductions), and making wide and flat T&G panels. Some versatile molders such as the Williams & Hussey machines can make arched window trim all day long, cutting out many steps that need to be completed by shops using edge-glued laminated strips and routers on trammel jigs.

That underscores the main reason for upgrading to a shaper or molder: they shorten the workday. That efficiency can release some profit, but it also lets shops offer more options to clients. There's good money in running a few feet of wide or fancy trim for renovation contractors, or high-end homes. And unlike building cabinets, there's usually no assembly required. **w**



There is a massive array of cutters available for smaller shapers, such as Amana's SC593 two-piece stile and rail set for exterior doors.

Images courtesy of manufacturers

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Stay mindful of the rules and respect the process

By Diane Shattuck

Do you really know your coating?

In last month's column we discussed the importance of using a wet mil gage to properly apply the correct amount of coating on your woodwork. The wet mil gage measures our application of the coating so we can ensure we meet the minimum amount of coating weight needed but not exceed the maximum coating weight that could cause our coatings ability to perform as designed by the manufacture for its integrity, durability and appearance characteristics. Diving a little deeper, I'll show how the basic numbers change when any reduction is added to the coating, how the clarity of the coating can shift, how the yield you get out of a gallon shifts with selection of spray equipment, and how the final sheen of your coating is affected by the total dry film thickness (DFT).

First a quick refresher on how we convert wet mils to dry mils. After determining the volume solids of the coating, multiply that by the wet mils applied. For example, applying a primer that has 42 percent volume solids at 4 wet mils, your math would look like this: 4 x .42 = 1.68 DFT.

Reducing the primer by 20 percent changes the volume solids calculation (.42 ÷ 1.20 = .35). That gives us a new result: 4 x .35 = 1.40 DFT. Two coats not reduced give us 2 x 1.68 = 3.36 DFT. Two coats reduced is 2 x 1.40 = 2.8 DFT.

When you start adding up your application system of the primer and pigmented topcoat, make sure you hit the target dry mils to achieve durability and integrity. Remember, putting too much on only hurts you making the coating too ridged and suspect to cracking. Don't do what I affectionately call the "more-on theory". The more I put on, the better it will be. No. More on and you just ruined it.

When figuring out the material square footage that will get out of a gallon of finish, we have a couple varying factors. We need to know the volume solids of the coating, the type of spray equipment's transfer efficiency (TE), and how much coating is applied as your total DFT.

Let's say we are working with the primer at 42 percent volume solids. You are spraying with an HVLP gravity gun with a TE of 65 percent, and we would like to finish with approximately 3 DFT of primer to sand before you apply your topcoat.

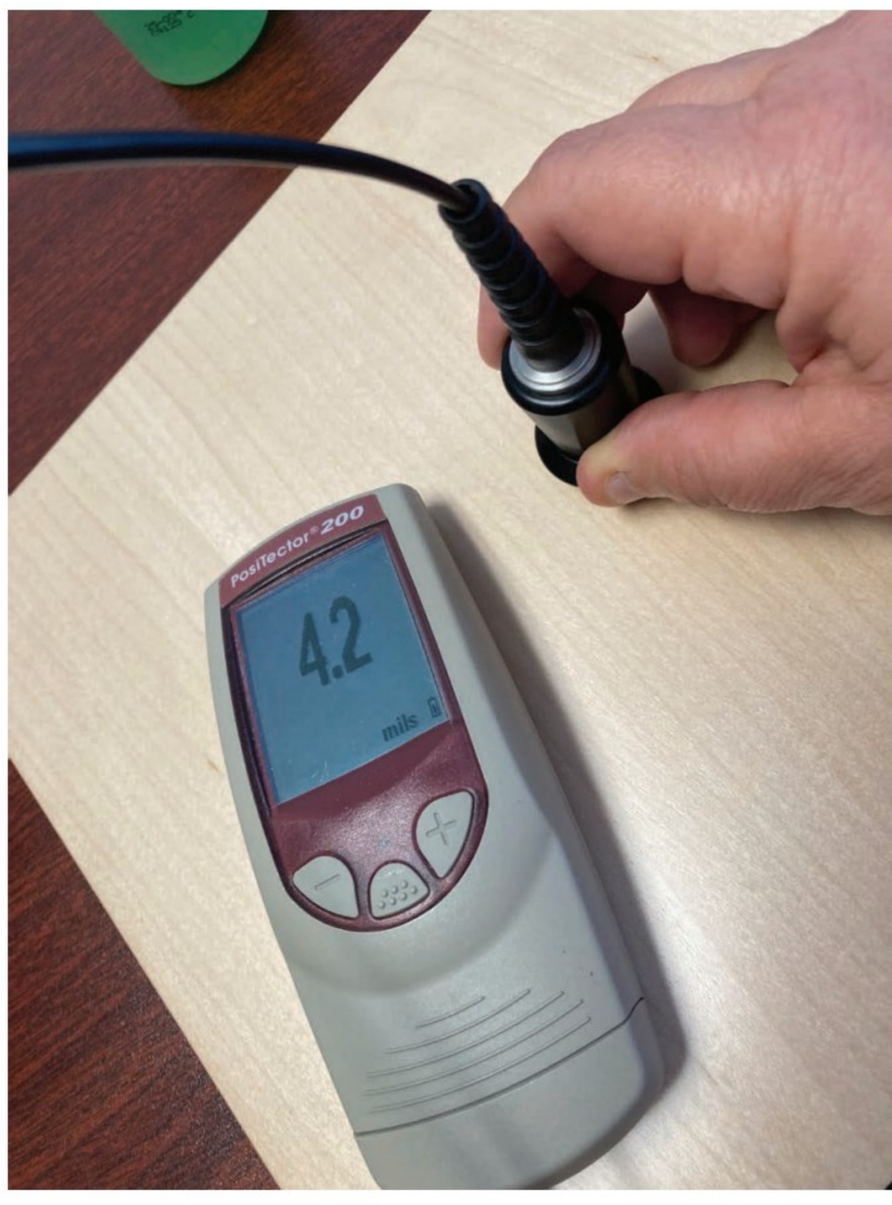
First, we must multiply by 1,604 (the total square feet for a gallon of any coating at 100 percent), then by the volume solids and the transfer efficiency to get the square foot coverage at 1 dry mil. The math looks like this: 1,604 x .42 x .65 = 438 @ 1 dry mil, then 438 sq. ft. ÷ 3 DFT = 146 sq. ft./gallon.

Reducing the primer 20 percent gives us 1,604 x .35 x .65 = 365 @ 1 dry mil, then 365 sq. ft. ÷ 3 = 122 sq. ft./gallon coverage.

Let's change the spray equipment to an air-assisted airless with a TE of 85 percent: 1,604 x .42 x .85 = 573 @ 1 dry mil, then .573 ÷ 3 = 191 sq. ft./gal.

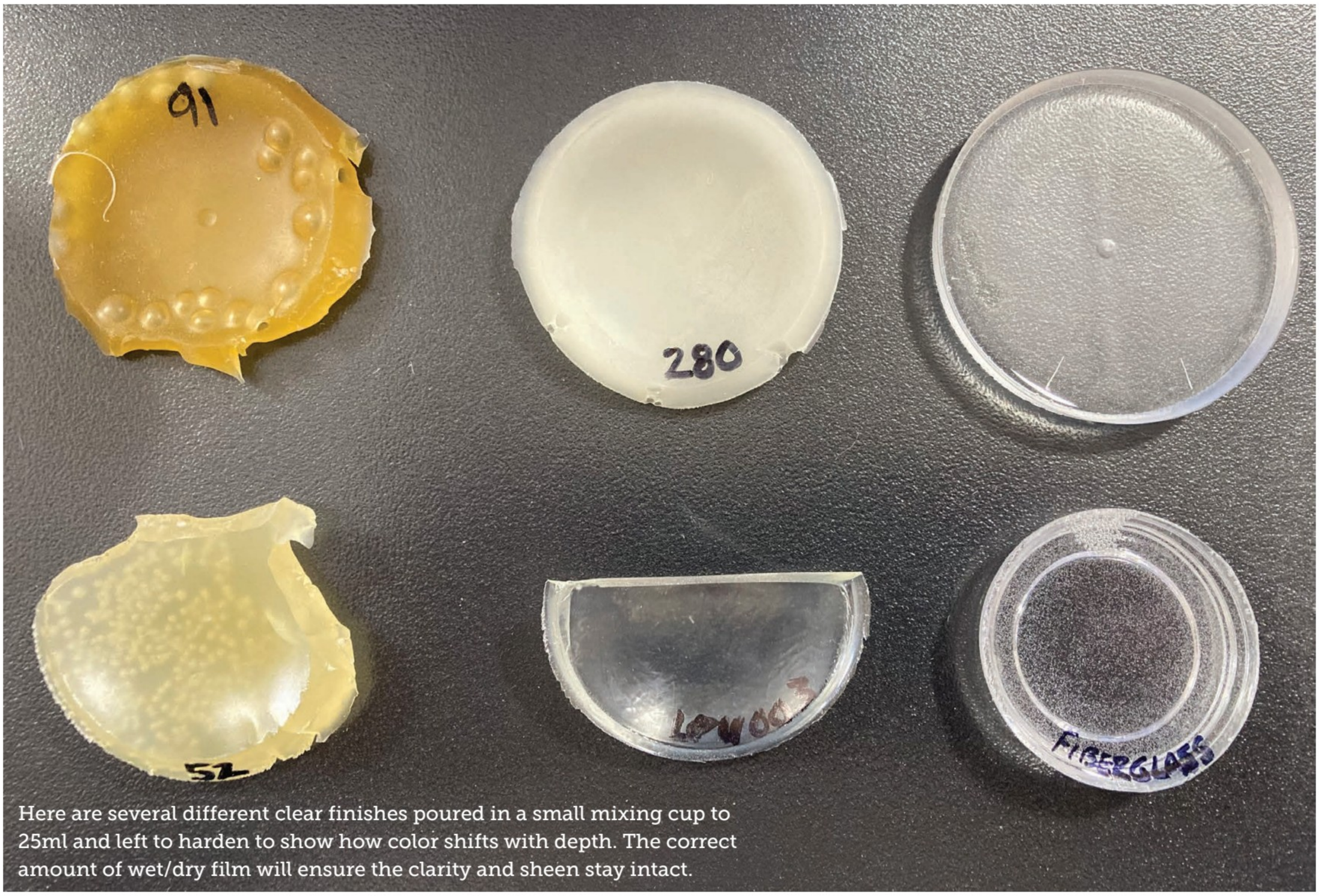
You may have noticed that the numbers changed dramatically when we changed the spray equipment in our math figures. Transfer efficiency, or how well our spray equipment delivers the coating, is a big factor.

Film thickness will shift the clarity and color. Depth and light play a part in how the color is viewed. When you apply more coating on the surface, you create more depth, which translates to more gloss and a warmer color. Thin films are cooler and duller.



An ultrasound tool to measure the depth of the coating without damaging the surface.





Here are several different clear finishes poured in a small mixing cup to 25ml and left to harden to show how color shifts with depth. The correct amount of wet/dry film will ensure the clarity and sheen stay intact.

Just because you are using a coating that says it is a dull finish, if you apply thick or too many coats, it will become satin or semi-gloss, but the appearance will have more of a haze or clarity issue due to the flattening agent in the coating to make it dull.

You now need to be mindful of your wet mil application, as well as how many coats you are applying in your total system, to ensure you achieve the correct sheen consistently on all of your parts. Have you ever damaged one or two doors during a kitchen installation and had to respray. Then, when you took them back to the jobsite, they didn't match the rest of the doors. They appeared slightly off color, or the sheen shifted. This could be due to the DFT of the doors verse the others.

When you work with clear coatings, they can vary in clarity based off what the manufacture uses in its formulation. When you start to layer the coating, you shift the color. The wet mils will shift that color quickly.

Pigmented colors are also affected by application. The primer's purpose is to hide and fill the imperfections. When thinned down too much or put on lightly, you do not get the hide, so the substrate will come through and influence the final topcoat. Just because you are applying paint doesn't mean it will cover everything evenly and be the same color, even if you apply several coats trying to get it to catch up.

What happens if you forget to measure the wet mils when applying the coating? Is there a way to measure dry mils? Yes, there are several DFT tools used in the coating industry. However, many are destructive to the piece. I like to use a non-destructive DFT tool called the PosiTector 200, an ultrasound that will read the depth of the coating without damaging the surface. This tool comes in a few different models that can measure different substrates and thicknesses as well as layers. The one I use isn't the top of the line but does a great job for wood coatings.

Before you finish your next project, be sure to know your coatings volume solids, maximum film build allowed, what your transfer efficiency of your spray equipment is, and how many wet mils you will be applying so you can be sure of your color, sheen and appearance is consistent.

Remember that when finishing, there is always possibilities of what I call "shift happening". Stay mindful of the rules and respect the process if you want to succeed. The coating doesn't have a brain. Your attention to application wet mils will keep you on the path to success. **W**

Diane Shattuck is a finisher, consultant, guest speaker, writer and teacher. She can be contacted at dianeshattuck@msn.com. Questions, suggestions and comments are always welcome.



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ADAPTIVE AND DYNAMIC

Westside Custom Cabinets rebuilds and rebrands in northwestern Washington

By Jennifer Hicks

Tracy Schroeder, principal of Westside Custom Cabinets in Poulsbo, Wash., knows that when the going gets tough, the tough gets going. A seasoned entrepreneur and former professional tennis player, she did an about-face with her career path in 2015 and took on her father's cabinetry business with the goal of improving sales by focusing on the high-end residential market. Now, she and her team of seven are following through.

"For the last three years, we've been consistent. I think last year we were only off $100 from the year before, and this year we're going to be about the same. During Covid was really the first year that we showed over $1 million in sales," says Schroeder.

Schroeder serves as general manager and works in the office alongside project manager and estimator Stephen Gorman. There are four in the shop and two finishers. Get-



A home library project.

ting the company to where it is now was no easy feat, but in under 10 years it went from a small operation with logistical challenges, endured a shop fire, and restarted to establish a broader service area with an eight-month backlog.

A HOMECOMING

Schroeder's father, Evert Sutphin, started the business in 2000. At that time, she was living in Los Angeles and running a high-end dog boarding and daycare facility. An ace at tennis, she then moved to Dubai for 10 years to work as tennis coach through Smart Sports UAE.

"I was a pro tennis player. I was teaching tennis over there. Now, I body build. That's what I do for my fun. But I was over there, and my friends were moving on with their lives. The summers were 130 degrees and you'd have to get up at 6 a.m. if you wanted to do anything.

"I'd been away from home for over 20 years. I started to think that my parents were getting older and decided to come back. My father asked if I wanted to give the company a try, basically. I thought 'well sure', because one of the things I really enjoy doing is the startup businesses. I've had a number of them."

Schroeder returned to Poulsbo in December 2015 and started at the shop, which was housed in a 2,500-sq.-ft.

Michael Jarvis fits a drawer front.



General manager Tracy Schroeder and project manager Stephen Gorman.

former chicken coop on the family farm where her father employed one other individual. Woodworking presented a steep learning curve, but she was a quick study.

"I didn't know anything about cabinetry at all. Most of my training into the industry was shadowing [my father] and seeing how he goes on jobsites and interacts with clients and contractors."

As her father faced medical issues in the next couple of years, Schroeder started doing more on her own. "I was fine with that," she says. "I have a very A-type personality. I like the challenge of building businesses and doing our best to make it the best company."

WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARED

The shop added several employees over the next five years and things were going quite well until a fire broke out near the finishing room. Everyone got out safely, but the building and machinery were damaged beyond repair.

"It happened during the morning shift. It was evidently, according to the fire marshal, an arc in the electrical system. The building was old. It was devastating, really devastating. It was heartbreaking because it was family property. This was something that my grandmother purchased in 1943, so for me, it was sort of a two-fold loss."

In the days that followed, Schroeder jumped into action. Adamant about keeping the business alive and the help employed, she worked day and night to secure a new location. She found a 3,000-sq.-ft. facility at the nearby Twelve Trees Business Park and moved in about three weeks later.

"One of the things that I really stressed out about was my guys. Because I knew when that shop burnt down, they were thinking they lost their jobs. I could have probably taken insurance money and probably said forget it, but I care about their families, and I care about their livelihoods. I want them to make money. I want them to continue to grow and make more money, so that they're happy and able to support their families well."

Things became much more efficient in the new space, and profitability spiked in 2020.

"Because of the fact that no contractors could work, we were able to recover and by the time everything was up and running, we weren't behind at all. It was amazing. We actually became better as a company when we moved in here. Our equipment was new. Our old edge bander that we had at my dad's chicken shack, we used to have to warm it up with a hair dryer."

A REFINED FOCUS

Since taking over, Schroeder has strived to create a completely new business model.

"My father didn't really want to focus on the high-end clientele that I did. He almost tried to discourage me from



The new shop.

Photos: Jennifer Hicks





A recent kitchen and bath from the shop's extensive portfolio.

moving in that direction. He wanted a more medium-sized spec kind of builder outfit.

"I really saw it going in the other direction, and 90 percent of our business now is on Bainbridge Island. I think in downturn time, and I have been a part of two downturns – 2008 with the dog business, then Covid – being in a high-end market can sort of keep you from falling apart because the clients have disposable income during those times."

The company has done more commercial work in recent years with government projects and small business remodels, but is still mostly residential. The service area now includes most of the Kitsap Peninsula, from Bainbridge Island to Tacoma, with some work in the Seattle suburbs.

"We do mostly Kitsap and Mason Counties, and a little in Jefferson County. We don't do much in Seattle. I recently went to Everett and it took five to six hours because of the ferry.

"One of the things dad said he didn't want to do when I came was find new contractors. With the market I was going after, I was looking at builders on Bainbridge. That's how the business started to morph into a different market."

Currently, about 15 percent of business is word-of-mouth, and the remaining 85 percent is derived from networking



with contractors. Schroeder still makes cold calls at new builds to introduce herself. She's very skilled at 3D design work, which customers appreciate.

"I certainly still go out on my own for design meetings. I do all the 3D work and renderings. A lot of people can't visualize a 2D image or CAD drawings at all. This is very helpful. Right now, we use Mosaic and Cabinet Vision.

"One of our appeals to contractors is that we take the headache off them for the design work. We tell them to have their clients come to us and keep them in the loop about their decisions and changes. This saves them hours and hours and hours of time."

DEBT FREE

The company's backlog has remained strong, even with mixed concern about the economy.

"Our suppliers are consistently telling us that the one area in Washington state that doesn't seem to be affected that much by the economy is the Kitsap Peninsula. So, you're seeing a slowdown in the Seattle area, but the suburbs of Seattle and other major cities seem to be doing a lot better than the city right now."

By paying attention to some of the other cabinetry shops in the region, Schroeder is very mindful of not growing too fast.

"We had to pull back. I think everyone in just this past year did. Four major outfits from Tacoma to Vancouver, Canada went out of business after Covid. In talking to them – we ended up purchasing some equipment from some of those – I learned a lot from the owners. One had 45 employees and 35,000 square feet. The auction didn't produce the amount of money they owed the bank, so they were under.

"What it teaches you is those people that are anxious to become really huge end up with this debt. I've just found that a little bit more conservative is probably better. Right now, we have no debt. So, it's better for me at least with what I've seen. I don't want to start acquiring major equipment in a large way."

Schroeder recently secured a lease on a larger 7,350-sq.-ft. facility just a few miles away and has spent most of the fall months preparing for the move. The new shop will have a CNC and other updated equipment.

She stays on top of industry happenings as a member of the National Kitchen and Bath Association and Cabinet Makers Association. A natural go-getter, her personal mantra is to embrace opportunities when they arise, and she knows this thinking will help her business flourish in years ahead.

"I think that it's important to ensure that we stay in business with consistent work and provide a good product, and that my employees are well compensated and able to provide for their family. So, it's really just about making sure that we all have jobs that we're happy with and compensated well for. That's the first priority. After that, you make your goals."

Learn more at *westsidecabinets.com*. **W**



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A new year invites change

Upgrading the shop can include improvements to technology, machinery, processes, and the working environment

By John English

This is a great time to think about shop upgrades. It is the beginning of a new tax year for most woodshops, and doing returns for the past year can help bring things into focus. Sometimes we're so busy filling orders that we don't have the luxury of stepping back to see where the numbers are falling. The new year is the best time to create a budget and see what's possible.

With a budget in mind, it's important to identify what needs to be upgraded, and to have a very clear picture of the return on investment for new purchases. It's easy to be tempted by baubles. For example, a shop owner who has a perfectly functional CNC might wonder whether it's time to trade up to something with a larger spindle, a vacuum table, and perhaps another axis or two. But rather than replacing the entire machine along with its dust collection, pneumatics, wiring and all kinds of ancillary jigs and fixtures, it might make more sense to simply upgrade the existing machine in small steps. That way, extensive downtime can be avoided, and the bottom line should be significantly lower.

When looking for potential upgrades, it helps to think about where the bottlenecks happen. If breaking down sheet stock is slowing production, then a second saw or router might help. But if everything only slows to a crawl as it goes through the spray booth, a new CNC may aggravate the problem by improving passthrough at the front end.

Another tell worth monitoring is lunchroom chatter. If employees are frustrated with a tool or machine and talk about it a lot, or worse yet try to bypass it and use other machines to do the same work, that's a red flag and a potential candidate for an upgrade. A good example would be if the shop has two table saws, and one rarely gets used. It may be time to trade the second one in for a better model, or perhaps a different type of machine altogether such as a vertical panel saw.

TECHNOLOGY

The phones in our pockets have become an integral part of life as they systematically replace cameras, encyclopedias, calculators, maps, alarm clocks, fax machines, radios, planners, libraries, and more. They also give woodworkers a wide range of apps for tracking how machines are working, where power tools are located, what maintenance is required, each machine's output, job progress, employee hours, and expenses.

There are apps to work out cut lists, optimize sheet goods, add photos and videos to bids or planning sessions, convert measurements and dimensions, calculate board feet, and even compare the density and construction qualities of various wood species. Apps for CRM (customer relations management) let a woodworker keep tabs of sales calls, bids and clients.

Power tool manufacturers have created apps to help woodworkers enhance the performance and battery life of their portable tools, and countless manufacturers have created specific apps to help woodshops find exactly the right machine tooling, bits, cutters, knives, screws, hardware and other catalog items for every task. It pays to keep up with the new apps, but it doesn't always pay to download and start using them. The idea of an app is to save time. If it isn't doing that, then it's time to delete it.

Most apps are available on the Apple or Android sites, but we're all aware that browsing through the options and trying out programs can become a little addictive. While most apps are more amusing than useful, there are definitely some that can upgrade a shop's performance and help bring order to chaos.

Beyond phones, other technologies are worth noting when it comes to shop upgrades. Battery power is beginning to take some significant steps, expanding into much higher voltage solutions that are now powering what have so far been stationary machines such as juice-thirsty table saws and dust collectors. There's no magic here, no new energy source. What's happening is that the manufacturers are adding more features to the circuit boards in the tools, batteries and chargers so the cells run cooler, store more energy, and deliver higher torque. And a corresponding improvement in brushless motors has fueled some significant advances.

MACHINERY

The number one and least expensive upgrade in a woodshop is to sharpen or replace dull tools. Poor edges force woodworkers to push harder on parts, and that's when accidents happen. They also produce burn and chatter, which eat into profits because of all the time it takes to sand or redo affected parts.

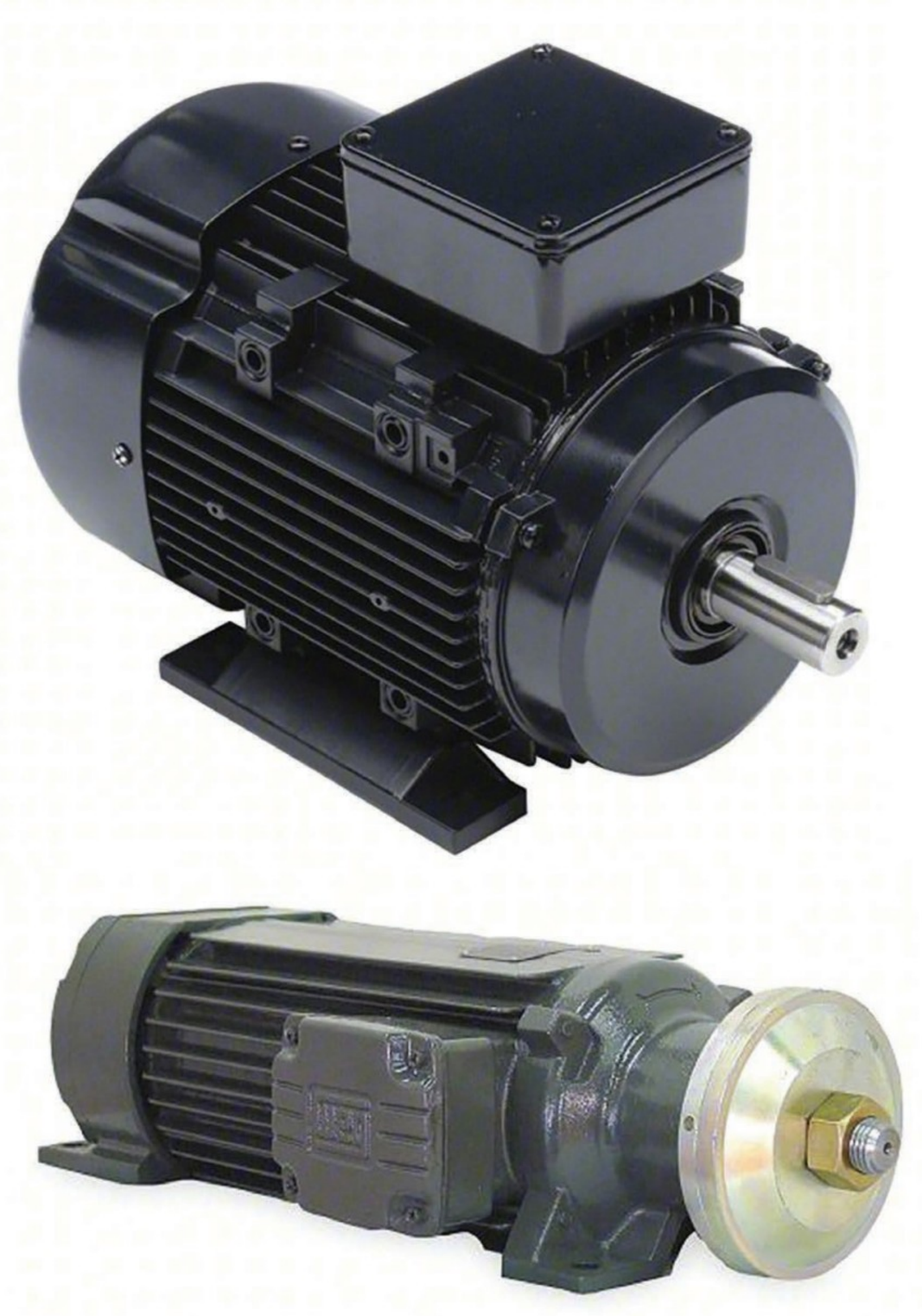
Another way to reduce rejects and avoid sanding is to keep the jointer well-tuned. This is especially important in shops that use solid wood more than sheet stock, because boards that aren't true will slow down every subsequent process. Step one is to install sharp knives or rotate the carbide inserts. Step two is to lay a straightedge along the beds and see how well they line up. Almost every jointer in America has a little sag on one or both tables, and many slump enough to impact results. Even a tiny drop in an



An aftermarket sliding table for the saw can improve speed and accuracy, and Woodsmith offers plans for a shop-built one.



With all the advances in battery electronics and features, it may be time to upgrade the shop's cordless options.



Upgrading to a 3-phase motor, like these examples from Grainger, can provide almost twice the power from the same current.

outfield table can cause a bowed cut. It's also important to place the straightedge at both edges of the tables (against the fence, and then away), so that any side-to-side tilt is revealed. That can usually be fixed by adjustments on the trunnions or adding thin shims to the sagging corner.

Adding a sliding auxiliary table for a cabinet saw could be a great upgrade for a smaller shop. Several manufacturers make these, such as Harvey (*harveywoodworking.com*), SawStop (*sawstop.com*) and Powermatic (*powermatic.com*). This is a separate but attached table, rather than just a table saw sled. Unlike a sled, the slider stays in place all the time and it improves processing speeds and accuracy, reduces set-ups, and adds another level of safety. That's especially true if the add-on is large enough to handle whole sheets. Woodsmith has published plans (*woodsmithplans.com*) for building a slider for small shops.

Some cabinet saws have enough room in the body for a larger motor, which might allow the shop to upgrade to 3-phase without having to replace the whole saw and all its jigs. The trunnions may need to be evaluated if the new motor is significantly heavier, but other than that this can be a relatively inexpensive upgrade if the shop already has a phase converter, or there's 3-phase in the building. The extra power produces cleaner cuts, less burn, a lower chance of kickback, and perhaps even a lower electric bill.

Beyond the table saw, is it time to add 3-phase machines throughout the shop? More torque means fewer passes, and a shop can get a lot more 3-phase machine for the same price as a comparable single-phase unit. Plus, those big old iron dinosaurs usually have plenty of tabletop and mass, which makes it easier to move parts and reduces vibration.

Doubling up machines might be an upgrade option, too. For example, selling a small jointer and planer and buying a larger combination machine may give the shop wider cut capacity and reclaim some floor space.

For shops with new employees or tired veterans, a saw with one of the new safety shutdowns might be worth considering. This may look like a big investment, but it pales when compared to the cost of a few fingers. Beyond SawStop, several of the large machine manufacturers are offering new saws with reaction technology, including the Hand Guard from Altendorf (*altendorfgroup.com*), PCS from Felder Group (*felder-group.com*), and Blade Off from SCM Group (*scmgroup.com*). The advantage here is that all four manufacturers build very high-quality saws, so the woodshop can gain a number of other advantages beyond enhanced safety. Cut quality, material handling capacity, and various degrees of automation are possibilities.

Adding a CNC can be a huge upgrade for a small shop, but it is important to think long and hard about what the

woodworker wants to make before taking the leap. CNCs are getting quite specialized, and there are models out there that come with all kinds of advantages such as a rotary axis, or perhaps more room to work on tall and thick parts (higher Z), or adaptability that opens the door to lasers, scoring knives, sign-making and more. Some CNCs are portable and can be hauled to a jobsite and set up in minutes. Other portable units are almost manual, and as the woodworker guides them, they automatically make small corrections to maintain a toolpath. Many shops only need a CNC to make doors or panels, so they may want to look at benchtop units rather than full-sheet processors. And that works the other way, too. A benchtop CNC probably won't work well for a case goods manufacturer.

For shops wondering if they're outgrowing their full-sheet CNC and thinking of the advantages of a 5-axis, an aggregate head could be a much less expensive option. The payback could be months, rather than years.

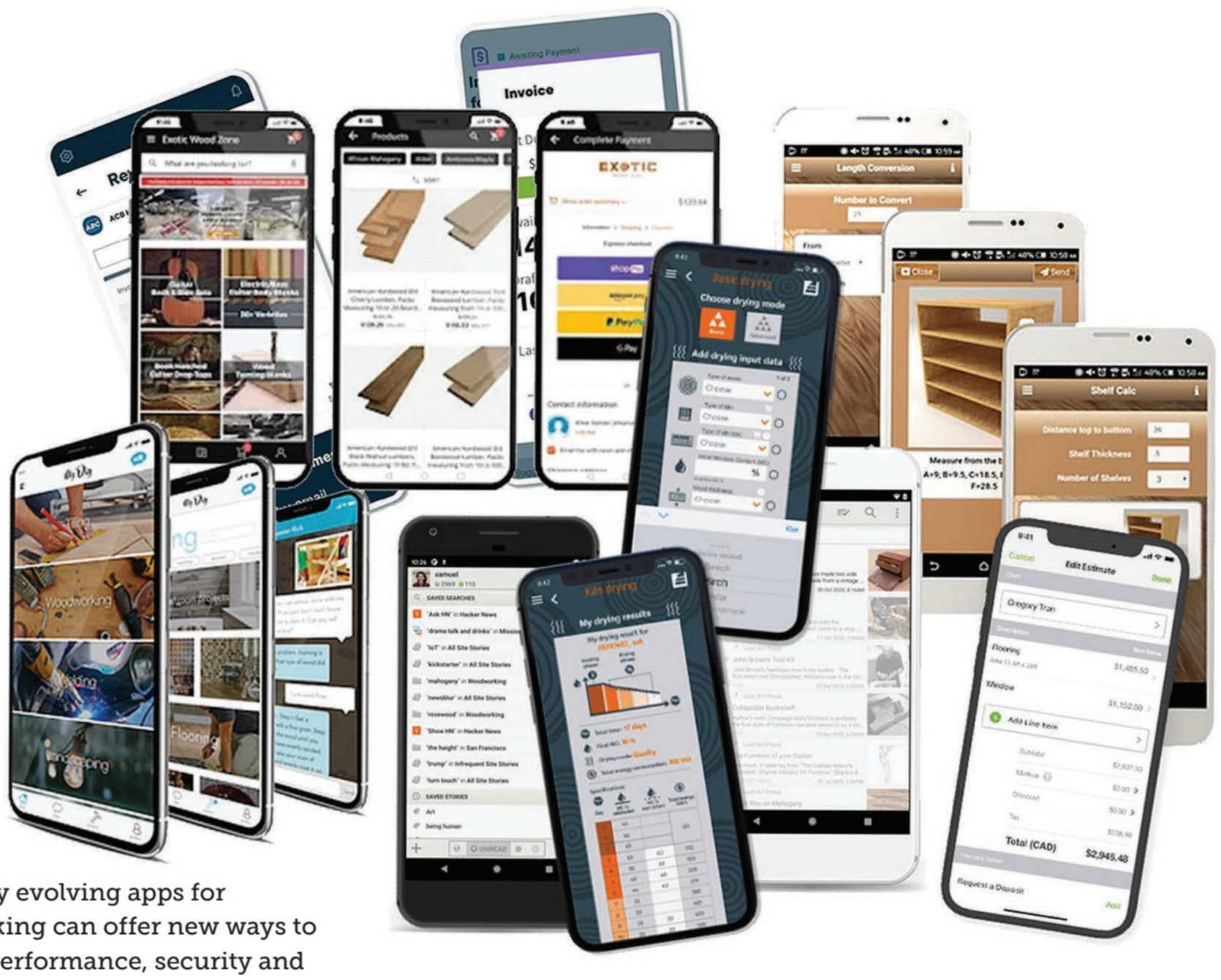
Sharpening is the easiest upgrade, but there's not much point in sharpening tools that won't hold an edge. So, a close second here is to upgrade the bits, blades, knives and cutters in the shop to the best that the budget will support. Diamonds are the most expensive tools, but surprisingly they may not be a bigger upgrade than some high-quality carbide solutions because tungsten can hold a finer edge. Insert tooling rather than solid carbide bits can be less expensive over time, but that's a call that needs to be made on a job-by-job basis.

PROCESSES

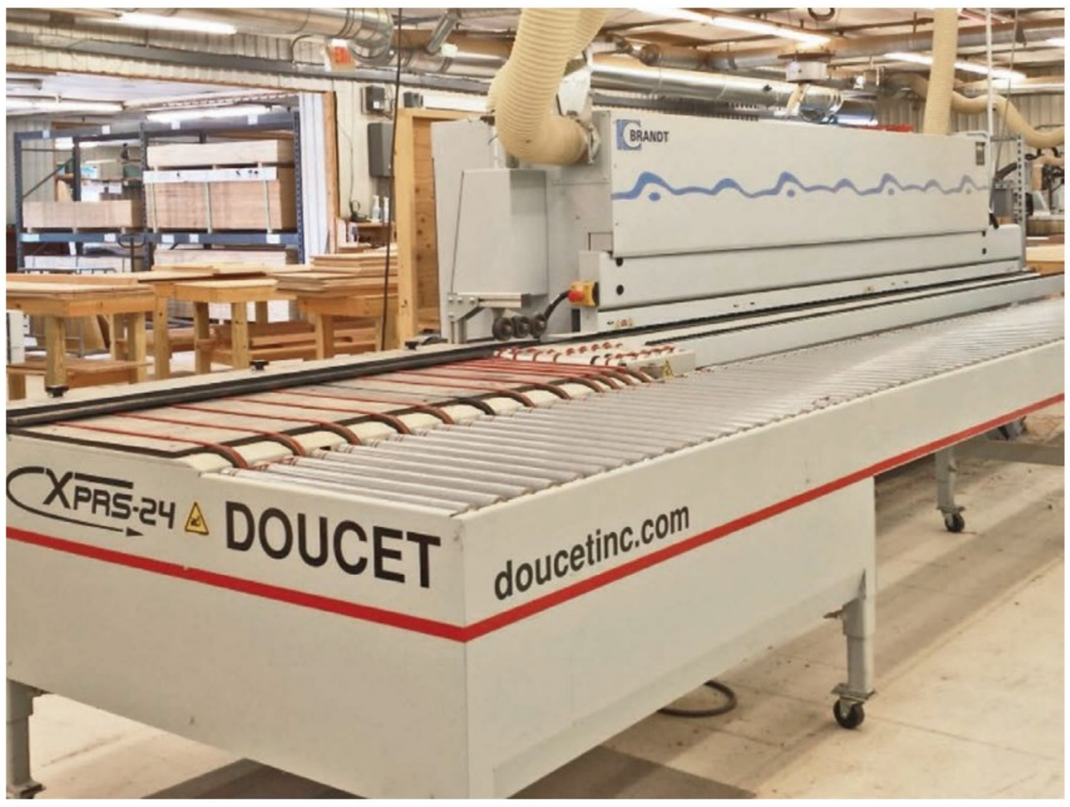
Anything that reduces sanding is a good idea. Better and sharper tools can make a big difference, but so can some basic shop techniques. The simplest of these is to make the last pass a light cut to avoid burn or chatter. Slowing down a bit on that final pass can also help (but not too much!). A pocketful of new router bit pilot guide bearings is an inexpensive shop upgrade that can pay immediate dividends. It's surprising how many bearings are loose, worn, off-center, damaged, or coated in gummy resin or some other forgotten residue. Many are not truly sealed and wood dust fines can work their way into the voids. That makes bearings stick or heat up.

Another inexpensive upgrade is to add battery-powered laser guides to older miter saws, drill presses and other tools that didn't come with them. The added accuracy is akin to the way that marking knives can leave a better line than a pencil. These cheap little lasers can be temperamental and annoying to set up, but once in place they can speed up processes and reduce rejects. They also make it a lot easier to sneak up to the cutline.

One of the most impactful upgrades for most shops is adding a track system to the finishing booth. This allows a woodworker to hang parts, gain access to both faces simultaneously, and move work through the booth smoothly without having to touch it. PaintLine (*paintline.com*), Sprayfish (*sprayfishinc.com*), Fast Rack (*fastrack-equipment.com*), and the PivotPoint and PivotLine systems



Constantly evolving apps for woodworking can offer new ways to upgrade performance, security and task management.



The Doucet SLC return conveyor from Stiles Machinery is a relatively inexpensive upgrade that can improve edge banding speeds.

from Guffey Systems (*guffeysystems.com*) all offer multiple solutions that cater to small and medium sized woodshops.

Loading and unloading processes are another area where shops can upgrade without breaking the budget. Carts that can be raised and lowered with a footswitch, crank, or electronic sensors will make a huge difference moving sheet goods. Another solution is a vacuum lift on wheels that picks up a sheet and lets the operator wheel it to the machine and drop it in place. Robot arms are also becoming less expensive, although units that can lift a full sheet are still quite an investment.

And labeling is a huge help here, where parts can be sorted and stacked according to when they will be used, and in the correct orientation. Upgrading to labeling can be as simple as a rubber stamp or printing labels in the office, or it can be fully automated and is often an add-on option for older CNCs.

ENVIRONMENT

Both wood products and employees will appreciate a shop owner who adds a dehumidifier. Humidity can cause material dimensions to change, and employees to tire. It can also rust every ferrous surface. If the shop doesn't have air conditioning, a few dehumidifiers and fans can transform the workspace on a budget. Fans alone won't work – they just move the moisture.

If you're a cabinetmaker, storage is what you do. Which means you can transfer that set of skills to the workshop to store parts closer to benches, build specialized carts for parts such as drawer sides and slides, or just make routines more efficient by creating custom storage for every tool so there's no more rummaging through the benchtop

Images courtesy of manufacturers

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or buckets. The same skills can be applied to organizing plywood cut-offs and short boards. For ideas, spend a lunch hour on YouTube.

MDF slatwall is surprisingly inexpensive and it can be used on every bare wall and vertical surface in the shop, including the exteriors of storage cabinets and the sides of workbenches. There are countless hardware and hanger options for this store-fixture system that let the woodworker hang everything from saw blades to miter gauges in plain sight, and up off the workbench.

A very inexpensive shop upgrade is to suspend extension cords and pneumatic hoses from the ceiling. Simple cup hooks might work, or garage bicycle hooks. The advantage beyond removing a tripping hazard is that this makes it easy to drop cords and hoses right where they're needed, rather than chasing them across the shop floor.

LEDs now offer countless ways for a woodworker to upgrade lighting, and subsequently the quality of work. LEDs are inexpensive both to buy and run, don't get too hot, and come in so many shapes and sizes that they can be placed just about anywhere. In addition to improving both general and task lighting, they can also be tuned for color, so they deliver warm yellow or bright white light as needed. They can replicate the color of the light where the cabinets or furniture will be installed, so they offer a preview of the finish.

Better filter bags can be a huge upgrade for a shop's dust collection system. The micron size in the weave can allow more volume or velocity, as can larger bags. This is an area where professional advice can really pay off, so it's worth chatting with a filter bag manufacturer. Automated blast gates (or even manual ones) can greatly improve the efficiency of a dust collection system and do so at a relatively low cost. Even a one-man shop can benefit from gates that open and close as various machines are used or turned off.

For shops with concrete floors, an anti-fatigue floor can be a sensible upgrade. Horse stall mats are a wonderful solution as they're heavy and durable, but they're also expensive. Better Life Technology offers some other options at bltllc.com.

During all these improvements, it's important to be aware of the domino effect. Upgrade this and you may have to upgrade that, so it's a good idea to treat the process as much as another project management task. One could put it on a spreadsheet, create a schedule, design some evaluation tools, and figure out ways to measure success. Rather than having a staff meeting right away to garner opinion, it might be more profitable to speak quietly to key players and create a roadmap before inviting comments from the entire team. Or not. Each shop has its own culture, and that's something you probably don't want to upgrade. **W**

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Prebena's new battery-powered framing nailer has the power to impact-drive nails up to 4" in length, including ring-shanks.

When some assembly is required

The latest fastening tools include cordless, pnuematic and hybrid options

By John English

Fastening means creating a mechanical bond between two parts using either plastic, wood, or metal hardware, rather than employing traditional glued joints. The hardware can be permanent like nails or, more often, temporary. One of the best features of temporary fastening is that it allows a piece of furniture or a cabinet to be disassembled for transport and then reassembled on the jobsite.

In most situations, all that's required in terms of a fastening tool is a drill/driver and the right bit. For permanent fastening with pins, nails and staples, the industry is moving from corded and pneumatic to cordless technology because of the convenience that batteries offer. And some of those battery systems are getting a lot more sophisticated, and powerful. The tools themselves are following suit, with new features that enhance safety and performance.

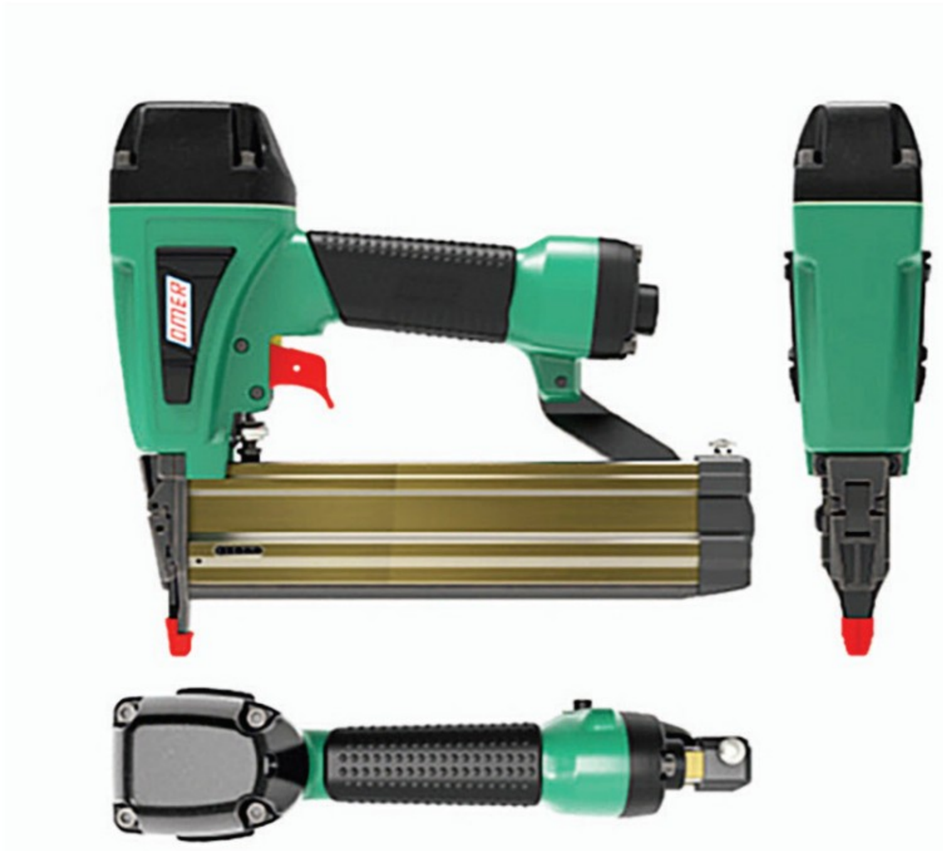
NAILERS AND STAPLERS

Grex Power Tools (*grexusa.com*) has been releasing models of its P635 pinner for 20 years and the latest version, the P635L, has new features such as Auto-Lockout with One-Touch override and an on-board adjustable Edge Guide. It handles nine different pin lengths (3/8" to 1-3/8", except 1-1/4"). The Auto-Lockout feature intelligently halts firing when you're down to about seven pins, which can then be fired with a single press of the One-Touch button. The Edge Guide lines up fasteners parallel to an edge, such as when pinning a back on a cabinet.

Kyocera Senco (*senco.com*) has a new lineup of finish and trim tools, including a 2-1/2" 15-gauge finish nailer; 2-1/2" 16-gauge finish nailer; 2-1/8" 18-gauge brad nailer; 1/4" crown and 1-1/2" 18-gauge finish staplers, and 1-3/8" 23-gauge pin nailer. They are oil-free pneumatic tools with advanced features such as the option to switch between contact and sequential firing, tool-free depth adjustments, rotating exhausts, and rotating belt hooks for left or right access. Some have dry-fire lockout and a quick-clear latch to clear jams.

Omer Tools (*omertools.com*). an Italian manufacturer, presents its new 440 Series of finish nailers and staplers with improved air exhausts, firing methods, and depth controls. They also have a revamped moving nose plate that has less spring tension and can move more smoothly. That means less force is required to open the latch, which is needed when a bent fastener needs to be cleared, or the operator is going through a regular cleaning regimen.

The PBL375B is a new 18-volt 15-gauge finish nailer from **Ryobi** (*ryobi.com*). Part of the company's One+ HP system, it's 25 percent more compact and 20 percent lighter than Ryobi's previous model, the P330, according to the company. It has a tool-free depth of drive adjustment dial and a selectable drive





The new 440 Series finish nailers (left) and staplers from Omer Tools include several improvements over the old 420 models.



Senco's new finish and trim fastening tool collection has features that address issues such as jams, dry firing and tool-free depth setting.



DeWalt has introduced three new impact drivers, including a 1/4" Quiet model.

switch for single sequential and contact actuation (bump) modes. The magazine capacity is 114 nails.

Milwaukee Tool (*milwaukeetool.com*) makes the full gamut of fastening tools from framers and pin nailers to a soon-to-be-released coil roofing nailer. Of particular interest to woodshops is the 2841-20, a 16-gauge angled finish nailer. Powered by an M18 Fuel battery, it uses the company's nitrogen air spring mechanism combined with a Powerstate brushless motor and Redlink Plus intelligence. The sealed nitrogen chamber acts like a shock absorber. The result is a gun with the feel of a pneumatic nailer, but with zero ramp-up time between nails. And it's also designed to fit in tight spaces where the angle provides a good line of sight.

Craftsman (*craftsman.com*) offers nine fastening tools including a 20-volt brushless 23-gauge pin nailer, model CMCN623C1. It fires nails ranging from 5/8" to 1-3/8" in length, and it has a tool-free jam release feature and an LED light.

The new cordless Lamello Zeta P2, available from Colonial Saw.



POWER PACKED

There are eight fastening tools in the new 24-volt lineup from **Flex** (*flexpowertools.com*), including 30- and 21-degree framers, a 23-gauge pinner, a 3/8" stapler, straight and angled finish nailers, a 15-gauge angled finish nailer, and an 18-gauge brad nailer kit (FX4331-1A). This latter comes with the gun, a 2.5 Ah battery, a belt clip, a no-mar tip, and a soft bag for storage. Some of the larger tools have more amperage. For example, the framing nailer comes with a 24-volt 5 Ah battery. Flex tools are available online through Acme Tools, and locally at chains such as Lowes and Grainger. Flex has been owned by its Chinese parent, Chevron Holdings Ltd., since 2013.

Makita (*makitatools.com*) is leaning toward higher voltage batteries, too. The new XGT is a 40V/80V (1 battery or two) system of cordless equipment and tools. One of these tools, the GTP01Z, is a 23-gauge pin nailer that runs on 40 volts. It has a refined firing mechanism that reduces recoil and the amount of force required on the wood surface. The gun can drive six different lengths (5/8", 11/16", 3/4", 1", 1-3/16", and 1-3/8") with a magazine capacity of up to 120 nails. It has a contact trigger and a trigger lock, a narrow nose design, an anti-dry-fire mechanism, and tool-less depth adjustment. The brushless motor uses rare earth magnets and more copper windings for increased power output. And built-in microchips in the battery and the tool work together to monitor heat, load and discharge. That feature can also deliver a lot more sustained power during demanding applications.

Grizzly Industrial's (*grizzly.com*) FasTak H7664 pneu-

matic nailer/stapler that shoots 5/8" to 2" 18-gauge brad nails and 5/8" to 1-5/8" 18-gauge staples with 1/4" crown. It has a view window that indicates when to reload, an adjustable depth stop, a rubberized grip, and an adjustable exhaust port. It has a 100-shot magazine capacity and a standard 1/4" NPT for easy air hook up.

The new PKT-Hybrid pneumatic battery nailers from **Prebena North American Fastener** (*prebena-usa.com*) are ergonomically designed fastening tools that have the shooting power, speed and battery power to impact-drive nails with a length between 2-1/2" and 4", including ring shank.

BeA Fasteners USA (*bea-group.com*) is a German subsidiary that now offers a full catalog of high-end nailers and staplers in its KMR family of fastening tools. The company was founded in 1910 and its U.S. headquarters are in High Point, N.C. Its Autotec brand is a provider of automated fastening solutions for production and robotic systems in the wood processing industry in Europe. Its KMR line includes more than 40 pneumatic fastening tools and half a dozen gas guns.

SPECIALTY TOOLS

In August, **DeWalt** (*dewalt.com*) unveiled a couple of new impact wrenches that have turned a few heads. The 1/2" (DCF964) and 3/4" (DCF961) tools use the company's 20-volt Max XR batteries offer high torque, glass-filled nylon housings, a Precision Wrench mode that prevents overtightening and fastener run-off, and a four-mode push button switch to easily change speeds and LED brightness.



Makita's GTP01Z is a 23-gauge pinner that runs on the new XGT 40-volt system where microchips in the battery and tool can talk to each other.



Among new offerings from Flex Tools is an 18-gauge brad nailer that comes with a 24-volt, 2.5 Ah battery, a belt clip, no-mar tip and storage bag.



The newest version of the Grex P635 pinner has an auto-lockout feature that prevents dry-firing and a clever edge guide.

Images courtesy of manufacturers



Milwaukee's 2841-20 is a 16-gauge angled finish nailer that uses the company's nitrogen air spring mechanism for the feel of a pneumatic nailer.

DeWalt also launched a new 1/4" 20-volt Quiet Hydraulic Impact Driver (DCF870) that was designed for noise-sensitive environments such as cabinet installation. This tool also features nine built-in LEDs and a 20-minute work light mode to help illuminate dark workspaces.

New fasteners from **Screw Products** (*screw-products.com*) include Axis structural wood screws and Aura cabinet screws. The Axis screw comes in lengths from 3/4" to 8", and the Aura in 1" to 3". Both can be ordered in stainless steel for exterior applications. The Aura comes in a No. 10 size for better hold, and No. 8 for joinery.

Castle USA (*castleusa.com*) has been making pocket cutting machines since 1985 and was awarded the very first patent in the industry. The company has recently added a five-pack of line boring bits to its catalog. These solid-carbide 1/4" x 2" tools can be used to automate pocket screw hole drilling for the company's low-angle, 6-degree pockets. The low angle positions the screw closer to the center of the board for a stronger joint.

The Zeta P2 biscuit joiner from **Lamello** (*csaw.com/lamello*) is now available in a cordless model, and this can also be used as a standard biscuit joiner for original biscuits if the woodworker deactivates the profile groove function and then changes to a 4mm blade.

Arrow Fastener (*arrowfastener.com*) has introduced several new fastening tool accessories that include a wide range of oscillating blades.

It's a simple solution that can make life a lot easier. **Rockler** (*rockler.com*) has developed five different silicone glue bottle tips that perfectly fit into pockets made for wooden fasteners, so a woodworker can get full coverage without too much excess. They include tips for Festool's Domino joinery, standard biscuit slots, beadlock joints, dowel holes and box joints. Each comes in a range of sizes for different fasteners, such as the four sizes of Domino floating tenons. **W**

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MAW opens ‘Strange Woodcraft’, a sculpture exhibition

By Jennifer Hicks

The Museum for Art in Wood (MAW) in Philadelphia is showing “Strange Woodcraft: Weird and Eerie Sculpture from the Museum’s Permanent Collection”. The exhibit opened on Oct. 4 and will run through April 20, 2025.

It features work from 16 artists and the theme is meant to embrace a very unique genre of sculptural forms.

“Many artists, collectors and enthusiasts turn to wood for its inviting warmth and its promissory sense of nostalgic familiarity. Departing from these typical associations, Strange Woodcraft presents works which nurture a discomforting curiosity with the unfamiliar. Strange Woodcraft embraces sculptural forms which feel out of place, askew, haunting, or just downright odd,” the museum said in a statement.

Participating artists include Paul Clare, Felicia Francine Dean, Satoshi Fujinuma, Daniel Guilloux, Rebecca Kolodziejczak, Friedrich Kuhn, Alain Mailland, Hugh McKay, Wonjoo Park, Gord Peteran, Michael Peterson, Hilary Pfeifer, Hartmut Rademann, Robin Rice, Neil Scobie, David Sengel, and Gordon Ward.

Learn more at *museumforartinwood.org*.

WESTERN WINNERS

The Western Design Conference Exhibit & Sale recently concluded its 32nd annual event at the Snow King Sports and Events Center in Jackson, Wyo. The event features Western-themed handcrafted furniture, clothing, jewelry and craft items from nearly 100 juried artisans.

Kelly Maxwell Designs in Nashville, Tenn., and Red Tail Forge Works in Fairview, Tenn., collaborated on a table made of wood and steel to win Best of Show.

Other award winners included furniture maker Jerry Van Vleet (Exhibitor’s Choice) of Legendary Heirloom in Poulson, Mont.; Jackson’s Tim Groth (Best Western Artistry) for a sofa upholstered with New Zeeland sheepskin, and Wooden Sound (Best Woodworking Artist) of Preston, Idaho.

Learn more at *westerndesignconference.com*. **W**



Strange Woodcraft features (clockwise, from left) work from Michael Peterson’s Coastal Object Series; Purple Heart by Alain Mailland, and Erosion Forms by Neil Scobie.

Photos: John Carlano

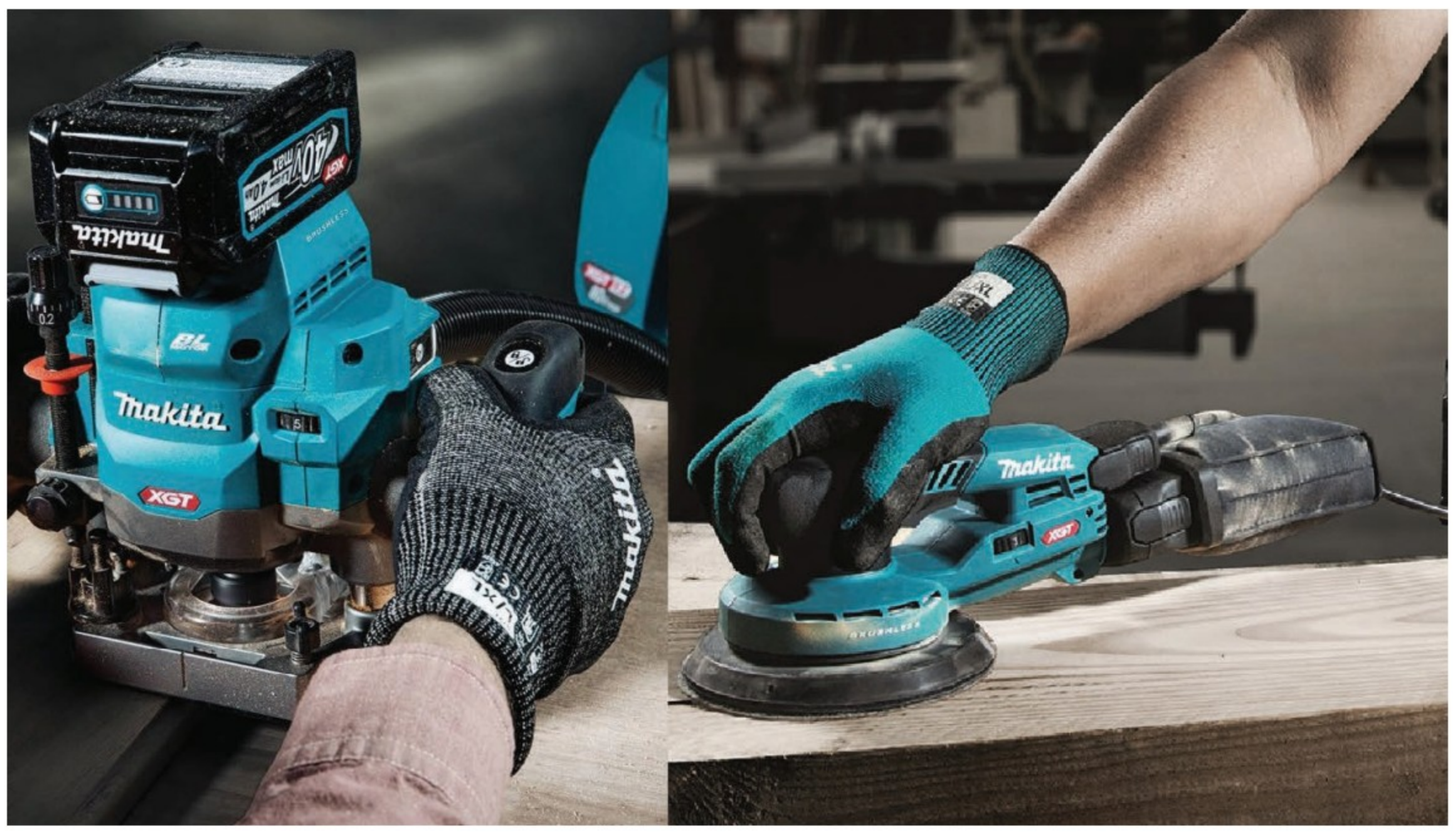
NEW PRODUCTS



MILWAUKEE TOOL has expanded its Packout Modular Storage System with eight new toolbox attachments for storing and organizing power tools and accessories. Learn more at *milwaukeetool.com*.



WOODPECKERS offers new stainless-steel T-squares, available in 12", 24" and 32" models, and sold with a wall-mountable Rack-It. They sell for $79.99 (12"), $109.99 (24"), and $129.99 (32"). Learn more at *woodpeck.com*.



MAKITA U.S.A. has released two new tools on its XGT 40-volt battery platform, a 6" random orbit sander and a plunge router. The sander, model GOB01, features variable speed control and a low profile. The plunge router, model GPR01, features variable speed control, up to 2-3/8" of plunge capacity, and soft start. Learn more at *makitatools.com*.



OSBORNE WOOD PRODUCTS introduces the Square Island End Panel. One side of the panel is flush, while the other is recessed. This allows the panel to be used in a wide variety of applications, depending on the builder's preference, according to the company. The panel is 34 1/2" tall and 34 1/2" wide. It has a thickness of 1 3/4" and features a stylish 'X' in the center of the hollowed square. Learn more at *osbornewood.com*.



MAKITA U.S.A. has launched the new MakTrak Modular Storage System. MakTrak gives users the ability to open storage boxes and get tools and accessories without unstacking. The dual-hinging lids allow access from both sides, and the horizontal design means the handle won't get in the way, according to the company. Learn more at *makitatools.com*.



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3M introduces the WorkTunes Connect + Solar wireless hearing protector. Featuring Powerfoyle solar technology, it charges continuously in indoor and outdoor light, according to the company. Other features include the latest Bluetooth wireless technology and Intelligent Background-Noise Reduction. Learn more at *3m.com*.



CASTALY introduces the BR-9622 CNC-1S, a 96" x 3" CNC machine for boring, drilling, glue injection, and dowel insertion featuring servo motor drives, automatic glue cleaning, and a user-friendly touch screen. Learn more at *castalymachine.com*.

Photos courtesy of manufacturers

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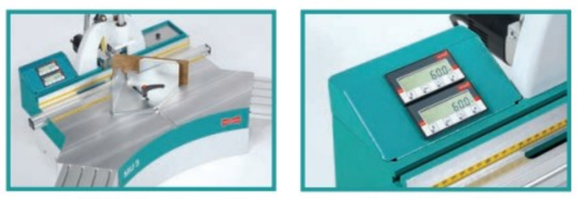

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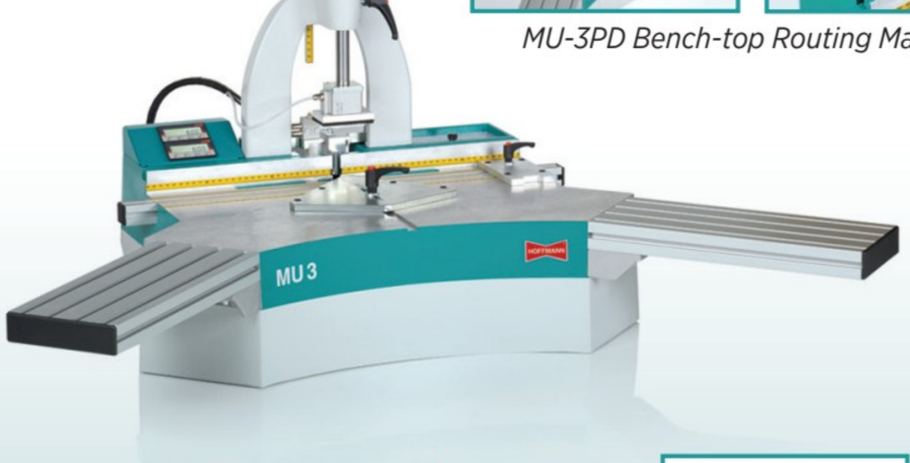

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Organizations sponsoring meetings, classes or shows of interest to professional or hobbyist woodworkers are invited to submit items to *editorial@woodshopnews.com*.

Include name, dates, location, description of event and a contact address or telephone number. Calendar items, which should be typed or printed clearly, must be received at least 60 days before the event.

Please note that fees, as listed, might not include materials or shop fees. Check with a specific class for further details.

— Compiled by Jennifer Hicks

ARIZONA

April 29-May 1, 2025 — Woodworking Industry Conference, presented by the Wood Industry Association. Location: Fairmont Scottsdale Princess. Register at *woodindustry.org*.

CALIFORNIA

Monthly — San Fernando Valley Woodworkers meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Highland Hall Waldorf School's woodshop in Northridge. *sfvw.org*

Monthly — Society of Wood Manufacturing, a chapter of AWFS consisting of educators, manufacturers, hardware and industrial suppliers, and machinery dealers, meets during the second week of each month. For location and dates, visit *awfs.org*.

Monthly — San Joaquin Fine Woodworkers Association meetings are open to all experience levels at members' shops. For locations and dates, visit *sjfwa.com*.

FLORIDA

Ongoing — The Dunedin Fine Art Center is offering six-week woodturning classes at its Cottage Campus taught by AAW professional member Tony Marsh for beginners and intermediate-level participants. Full-day classes are held on Thursdays. Call 727-298-3322 or e-mail *education@dfac.org*.

Monthly — Woodcrafters Club of Tampa meets every third Thursday evening at 3809 W. Broad St. in Tampa. *tampawoodcrafters.org*

MAINE

Ongoing — The Center for Furniture Craftsmanship offers year-round classes in woodworking to the highest degree of craftsmanship. One- and two-week workshops from June through October; 12-week Furniture Intensives; a nine-month Comprehensive; eight-week Turning Intensives, and Fellowships. *woodschool.org*

MARYLAND

Monthly — The Howard County Woodworkers Guild meets the first Saturdays of the month at the Bain Senior Center at 5470 Ruth Keeton Way in

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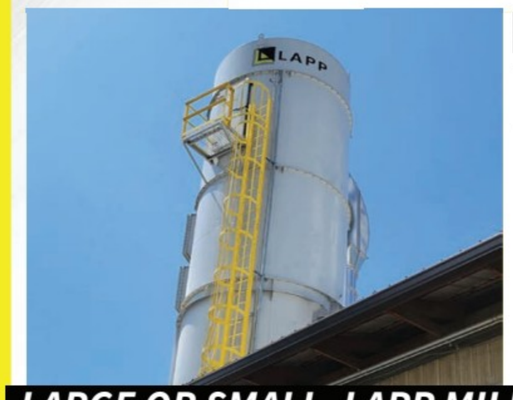

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MINNESOTA

Monthly — The Minnesota Woodworkers Guild meets on the second Tuesday of each month at various locations. Learn more at *mnwwg.org.*

NEVADA

Feb. 25-27, 2025 — Kitchen & Bath Industry Show and International Builders' Show as part of Design and Construction Week. Annual gathering of residential construction and design industry professionals spotlighting new products, industry experts and networking opportunities. Location: Las Vegas Convention Center. Learn more at *designandconstructionweek.com*.

NEW JERSEY

Monthly — The North Jersey Woodworkers Association meets the third Monday of every month. Learn more at *njwawoodworkers.org.*

Monthly — The Professional Woodworkers Guild of Upper New Jersey meets the third Wednesday of every month. Leartn more at *njwoodguild.com.*

NEW YORK

Monthly — The Woodworkers of Central New York holds meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Belgium Cold Springs Fire Department in Baldwinsville. *woodcny.org*

Monthly — Northeast Woodworkers Association meetings held on the second Thursday of the month at various locations in the Albany area. Learn more at *woodworker.org.*

Monthly — The Long Island Woodworkers meet on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Frank Brush Barn of the Smithtown Historical Society in Smithtown. Learn more at *liwoodworkers.org.*

NORTH CAROLINA

Monthly — Triangle Woodworkers Association meetings held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Klingspor's Woodworking Shop in MacGregor Village in Cary. Learn more at *trianglewoodworkers.com*

Monthly — Charlotte Woodworkers Association meets the third Tuesday of each month, except December, at 6:15 p.m. Location: 8801 Park Road in Charlotte. Learn more at *charlottewoodworkers.org.*

Feb. 21-23, 2025 — The 38th annual Arts & Crafts Conference and Shows. Location: Onmi Grove Park Inn, Asheville. In wake of Hurricane Helene, event organizers ask those interested to visit their website regarding lodging and transportation at *arts-craftsconference.com*.

OHIO

Ongoing — Cincinnati Woodworking Club meets the second Saturday in the months of Jan., March, May, Sept. and Nov. from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the E.B. Mueller in Reading. Learn more at *cincinnatiwoodworkingclub.org*.

PENNSYLVANIA

Monthly — Lehigh Valley Woodworkers Guild meets at 6:30 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month at the Woodcraft in Allentown. Various craftspeople provide presentations on their woodworking techniques. *lvwwg.com*

SOUTH DAKOTA

Monthly — The South Dakota Woodworkers Guild meets the last Thursday of every month, except August, at various members' shops. The club has hand tool and woodturning groups. Learn more at *sdwoodworker.org*.

UTAH

Feb. 5-7, 2025 — Wood Industry Association Networking & Snowsports, a blend of industry networking and mountain adventures. Location: Little America Hotel in Salt Lake City. *woodindustry.org*

VERMONT

Jan. 28 - Feb. 2, 2025 — Laser Cutting: The Layered Laser Cut with Sarah Pike, presented by the North Country Studio Workshops. Location: Bennington College in Bennington. *ncsw.org*

VIRGINIA

Jan. 23-26, 2025 - 27th annual Working Wood in the 18th Century: To Furnish a Town: High, Low, and In-Between, featuring craftspeople and scholars from throughout Colonial Williamsburg, along with special guest presenters. Location: Colonial Williamsburg. *colonialwilliamsburg.org* W



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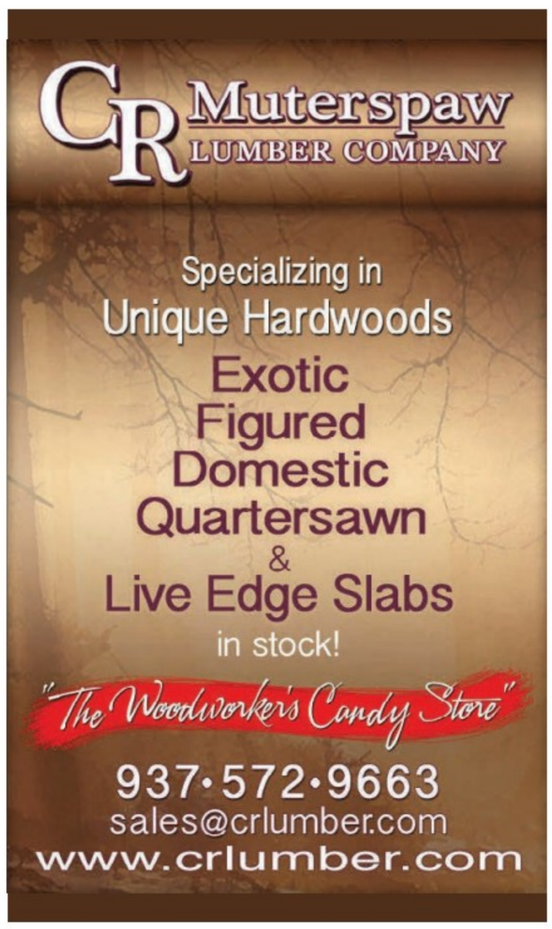

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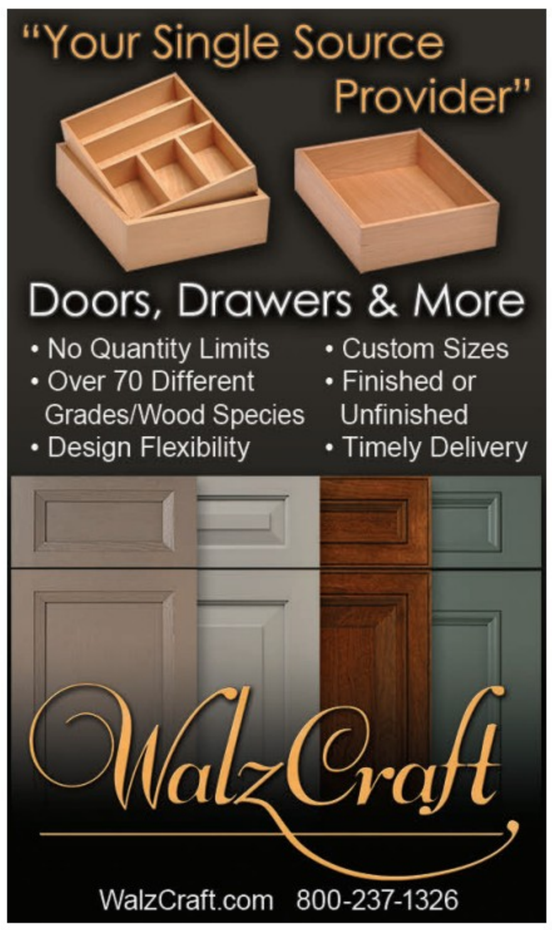

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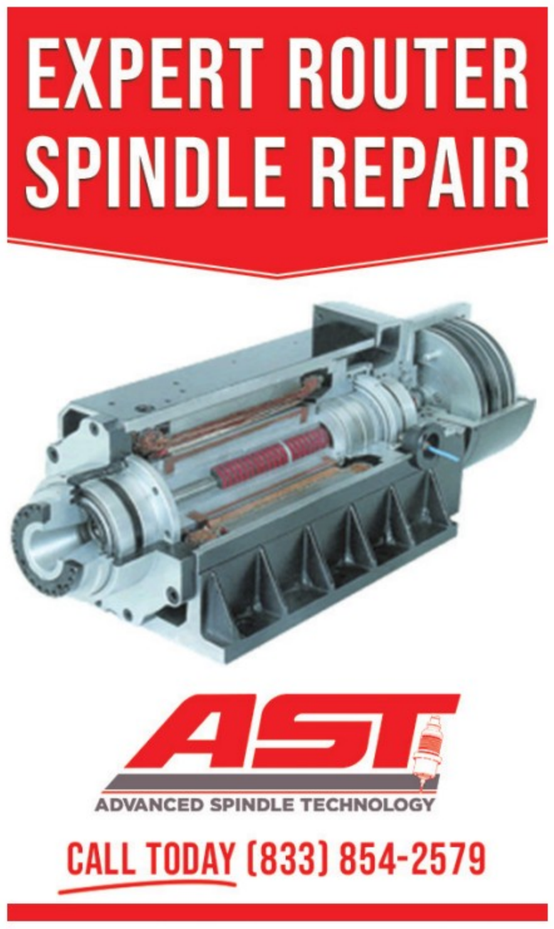



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Christie's shop, during (right) and after Huriicane Helene.



Recovering in Asheville

In this issue's Taking Stock column (Page 6), Matt Christie of Green River Woods in Asheville, N.C., shares his experience with Hurricane Helene, which brought water up to the roof ridge of his shop. Here, he shares more about the aftermath of the storm and how the woodworking community has helped him in his time of need to help salvage what's left of his inventory and put him on the right track to restart.

"The hurricane made landfall on the night of Sept. 26 and continued for the next 12 hours or so. My employees and I took care of our homes on Friday, and the next time we looked, the river had surged quite a bit and was up to the loading dock, and the next time I looked, it was totally underwater," says Christie.

"Then we just waited for waters to recede. I was busying myself with tree work. I had my chainsaws, and I had a number of friends in the tree service industry that I worked with regularly salvaging logs that are better used for furniture than going to mulch, and so I was helping them.

"It was like we were driving around a war zone. Even outside the flood zone, places like Biltmore Forest in north Asheville were like nothing we'd ever seen before. We were taking trees off cars and houses for a while, until the waters receded. People were basically paying us with produce and eggs because we didn't have power."

Christie set up a crowdsourcing fundraiser with the GoFundMe platform – through a neighbor's Starlink internet setup – with the goal of raising $60,000 to help restart his business. As of late October, he had raised just over $56,000 through 334 donations. He was touched at how many donations came from his clients.

"Our personal story is on GoFundMe and I think the community there largely speaks for itself. There are clients of mine on that donor list that I still owe tens of thousands of dollars to, and they're donating to me, and it just makes me cry."

Among the many people he credits for helping to dig out and salvage what was left of his inventory include Andy Rae of Andy Rae Woodworking & Writing Studios and Rae's shop mate, Jeremy French, who runs Making Whole in Asheville, a nontraditional addiction treatment program that teaches fine furniture making.

Christie, who founded his business in 2008, has between two and five employees and wants to rebuild on higher ground in Asheville. A proponent of the urban lumber movement, he wants to expand his log salvage business and be a staple in the community.

"I'm sticking around. I have a lumberyard full of hundreds of thousands of board feet of salvaged lumber that's dry. So, my personal story is one of looking for a space now, hopefully to purchase, so I can continue to serve this area," he says.

Learn more at *greenriverwoods.com*.

-Jennifer Hicks

60 Grit

Rough humor by Steve Spiro



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