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DADDIO'S RED HOT ROAD KING • TRIED & TESTED WESCO BOOTS • BUELL BROS.**





ON THE COVER

Volume 21 • Number 2 • Our 172nd Issue

Walt Siegl Motorcycles, tucked away in the wilds of New Hampshire, builds some of the most sanitary machines this side of the Great Divide. Say hello to this issue's cover bike, Sordillo Salt Flat, a hand-wrought piece of long stroke, functional, V-Twin go-fast machinery that is simply stunning to see in person. Check out more of this great bike at Ironworksmag.com, on the BUMP.

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SPOTLIGHT

Walt Siegl Motorcycles

Taking the time to carefully view the machines built by Walt Siegl, you can't help but appreciate that a lot of effort and focus went into defining his unmistakably clean and classic style. Walt's talented take on the modern urban custom is flavored by time riding the bad streets of NYC, tempered by time spent on the racetrack flogging state-of-the-art Ducatis. Enjoy Walt's work, and get down on one knee with us to take a closer look.



Diagnosis

I was reminded recently about the salient differences between hearing, listening, and of the importance of being able to take a step back and diagnose a situation.

My workshop is a crowded space with two bikes, two workbenches, four sewing machines, two rollaways, machine tools, a spare parts stash taking up one wall, buckets, ladders, rolls of leather... it's basically 10 pounds in a five-pound bag. Where there isn't stuff, there are stickers covering every exposed surface. The inexperienced walking among us might say it is cluttered, but I like to think of it as an efficient, comfortable, and productive workspace, and since it's all I have (and believe you me, I am *not* complaining in the least), I cope.

Bringing a new tool into my shop requires I get rid of something, and this time my object of affection is an important new tool for my leatherworking endeavors—it's a sewing machine. I sold a machine I wasn't using to make room and fund the purchase of this new one.

Setting up a hand-powered sewing machine is similar to setting up a new computer or a new machine tool, in that all the adjustments that you've used in the past on prior equipment is meaningless. You are, for all intents and purposes, starting from scratch, creating new baseline adjustments and settings from feel, experience, and intuition. So you have to pay attention to what is happening based on your inputs and observed changes. In essence, you are calibrating both yourself and the machine to work together harmoniously.

Well, harmony is not always easily achieved and the critical calibrations are not easily identified and implemented unless you are darn good at listening, observing, and diagnosing what is happening. Most of us, myself included, are not so good at this and we fumble and bumble. We read the instructions 50 times and for the life of us can't figure out what the hell is going on, trying to determine if the issue at hand is based on operator error, lame-assedness, or a machine fault. It can get frustrating and after a while you find yourself looping back on the efforts that netted you nothing the first go-round. In a word, ugh.

I've been there a few times—at the crossroads of hair pulling, crying, and getting a can of gas and a book of matches and ending it right there. One of the most memorable of these meltdowns was trying to dial in the then groundbreaking innovation of the S&S Super E. This was around 1993, as I recall. I had my FXR all prepped for what I thought would be an easy morning of wrench twirling and afternoon riding. Well, that was not to be the case and after eight solid hours of losing my mind trying to get the bike to run properly, I threw up my hands and ran to the fridge for an adult beverage to wash down the sour taste of failure. Eventually, I figured it out. Between intake leaks, a stuck float, and improper accelerator pump adjustment, I finally got the carb dialed in. Then I found out the problem was a broken coil wire. Pfah.

Sitting in my shop last week with my spanking new, made in America, hand-powered sewing machine, I commenced to get some hands on experience and feel where the settings needed to be—time to test, to learn, and to listen!

Six hours later, my knees were locked solid; I was up to my arse in thread, leather scraps, and snips. I had tried everything I knew to get a passable result ending with nada, nothing, junk, and plain old, "it ain't gonna happen." About 2:00 a.m. I finally gave in—after a near complete disassembly and then reassembly of the machine—and still nothing. It was clearly time for a Woodford.

Calling the manufacturer helpline or tech desk for a clue is like stopping and asking for directions when you are hopelessly lost on a road trip with your family. It's the last resort; I am not wired to do it naturally. So with tail between legs, I called the manufacturer and asked for help.

Tony picked up the phone with a cheery, "How are ya, Steve? How's the machine working for ya?" I felt like I was confessing; "It's not going so good, Tony. I am not worthy and maybe it wasn't meant to be. I think this thing hates me." (Sniff, sniff.)

"Nonsense," he said, and then he began his virtual diagnosis. I call them the "didyas." Didya check your top tension? Where is it set? Didya check your bobbin tension? How is the machine's timing? Is the needle cocked? Do you have the right



needle? What thread are you using? Is it bonded, left or right twist? What material are you sewing? It went on like this for half an hour. I had checked, adjusted, and done everything perfectly to spec and it still didn't work. We were stumped; my ear was hot from being on the phone for so long. Then he said, "Turn the cone of thread over; what is the thread made of? What's on the label?" I complied and said, "Polyester," like every other cone of thread I have in my cabinet.

"Aha," Tony said, "that's it. Seems this machine—because of the way it pulls the thread through its mechanism—doesn't like polyester, it likes *nylon*. (Because of the inherent elasticity in the material, it pulls back quickly after being stretched.) Well, as it turns out, every other machine in my arsenal *likes* polyester. How was I to know that'd be the culprit? Well, had I had more experience with a wider array of machines and materials, I'd have just "known," as Tony said. My experience was in a very narrow band of the entire picture. I only knew what I knew—and in this case, it simply wasn't enough. (Although I do kill at Jeopardy, so am not a total loser.) I'd have never figured it out on my own; someone needed to hit me with the clue by four.

This is one of the reasons I have come to rely on knowledgeable people to help me get my work done, as they know how to "diagnose." My listening skills and experience, as good as they might be, can't compete with the trained and skilled eye/ear/hand of someone who knows how to listen, observe, diagnose, and fix things for a living. That is an unusual and increasingly rare skill set in the age of "replacement over repair," and one to be held in high regard.

Please, check in with us on Facebook or Ironworksmag.com. We'd like to hear from you.

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