

The Remaking Industry: Yankee Ingenuity, or "I want some too!"-ity?

As I sit down to pen some pithy commentary on the state of our hobby today, my mind can't help but wander back to the tender days of my tadhood. Every kid in the neighborhood loved to play "Cap'n Crunch and the Great Tomato Paste Flood"—a rousing game where a random swingset was designated as our hero Cap'n Crunch's ship. The rules were simple: you just ran around the yard with the rest of the rambunctious bunch until someone shrieked, "Here comes the tomato paste flood!!" Then everybody would scream at the top of their lungs, and stampede up onto the swingset. Repeat until supptime, or until spanked.

Today, thinking about it, it's hard to imagine something less likely than tomato paste to flood. But there *is* something surging to flood level that's even more mind-boggling than a tidal wave of tomato paste: a maelstrom of remade model horses.

And You Thought They Were Just Plastic Horses!

In the two decades-and-change since toddling its first innocent steps, our model horse hobby has found its legs in a big, bold way. A variety of companies has nurtured us from the very beginning with an essential, dependable diet of model horses. And from this mother's milk of original finish models, we've gone eagerly slurping after the heady harder stuff like repainting and remaking models. Through trial and error, epoxy and moxie, plaster and disaster, technologies and techniques in model customizing have evolved. Time and experience have brought a measure of knowledge and sophistication, and the circle of hobbyists keeps on growing, almost exponentially. And all this combines to spin the wheels of our hobby's own "industry" as it barrels along, churning out remade model horses.

"Industry"? We *have* created an industry, far removed from the operating methods of Breyer, Hartland/Stevens, or Hagen-Renaker (those companies have a viable supply-and-demand to guide their production of OF model horses, and thank goodness they don't mind keeping our hobby healthy and well-fed along the way). In the general field of collectibles, our hobby's own industry is unique. In other areas of collecting, an item's value would plummet if you were to, say, give an 11" G.I. Joe doll a Mohawk, pen some hip new dialogue into the word balloons of *Amazing Spiderman* #1, add a shiny red enamel paint job to a Lionel "O"-scale train engine, reshape the nose of a Barbie doll, or paint your own acrylic color over the boring ol' black-and-white of a \$10,000 original *Peanuts* daily strip. Yet we can take a collectible model horse and create a remake that is usually worth substantially more money than the original.

That's the intrinsic industry of our hobby: producing a form of American folk art, one that has a ready-made forum that lets it "perform." Remakes can carry hobbyists' visions and hopes into the neverland of the model world, and return heaped with honors. Beautiful, lifelike model horses, able to grant vicarious thrills, remakes power our hobby's own industry. And they are created by an ever-expanding array of remakers—dozens upon dozens of artists at all levels of ability, agility, civility, and availability.

As our hobby balloons, the number of remakers is also swelling, and a rapidly escalating number of remade models are being produced. More and more individual tides of talent, inspiration, and even greed have been triggering a torrent of tiny horses. And everywhere you look, they're for sale, for sale, for sale...remakes.

Surf's Up!

A conservative guess is that last year's crop of remakes—models created in 1989, that could at any time be offered for sale—numbers around 1,500. This estimate was reached by first counting the number of professional remakers that came to mind in the course of two minutes, and my brain rattled out 25 of them. That number was then multiplied by 3, on the premise that the majors that leaped to mind are about one-third of all remakers, with another third covering the rest of the remakers who sell their work, and the final third the remakers that chiefly produce models for themselves for the fun of it. 25 x 3 is 75 remakers, which was then multiplied by a likely average of 20 models remade in a year. The result is 1,500 remakes.

Another conservative estimate is that, tempered by the constant ebb and flow of attrition in the ranks and the influx of new people, our hobby grows by about 15 percent a year (this is based purely on personal observation). Using that figure and the calculated 1989 crop of 1,500 remakes, I estimate that in 1988 there were 15 percent fewer remakes created than in 1989—approximately 1,275 remakes. By the same figuring, 1987's crop of remakes would be 15 percent less than 1988's, which would be about 1,084 remakes. Continuing the trend, I expect 1990 will see at least 15 percent more remakes created than last year, which will be 1,725 remakes.

Add these estimates for 1987 through 1990 together, and the theoretical total is approximately 5,584 remakes. Extend the 15-percent increase through the 1992 crop (1,984 in 1991, and 2,282 in 1992), and you've got approximately 9,850 remakes being created in a six-year span.

That's scary—and I don't just mean the thought of dusting 'em all.

Supply-and-Demand, or Supply, Out of Hand?

The situation does make for a spectacular smorgasbord of remakes—by sheer numbers alone, there's something for everyone out there! With so much to choose from, it's almost a buyer's paradise, save for two teeny details—first, with the wide disparity in the quality of workmanship, there are myriad models that most buyers wouldn't want. And second, even though the supply is swamping demand, prices aren't decreasing. Could it be that our industry is unique in another way, immune to the laws of economics?

What's a fair price for a model? In truth, whatever the market will bear. No artist wants to give his work away, but until an artist is in hot demand, most are lucky to make back the cost of materials and their time on a remake. Even those remakers whose work