



## Issue 52, October 2024

Hello Steve r,

Happy Autumn. “Autumn” is a much more evocative and poetic word than “fall”. Pretty sure it needs two words because it’s the most vibey season. According to a number of surveys, fall is by far, the most popular season in the United States. Like, by a crazy margin: over [40% of Americans rank it as their favorite](#), myself included. (Summer comes in second at 24%) It’s a comforting time of year. Plus, Halloween!

Hot take regarding pumpkin spice latte: It’s an uncomfortable beverage. Basically, I adore the flavor of the first few sips, then it just goes radically and grotesquely wrong to the point where I can’t stand to taste another sip. It’s like it’s an assault on my palate. Okay, probably just me. 😊

I just returned from the Toronto International Film Festival. In case you don’t know, I write [movie reviews and essays](#) about (mostly) horror flicks for Shade Studios. In an utterly bizarre tributary of life’s river, I ended up with a press pass interviewing people at red carpet events. Unfortunately, being a relative nobody placed me toward the end of these press lines, which meant I didn’t always get to talk to the filmmakers I most wanted to. Most notably, [David Cronenberg](#), a director whose movies have had an enormous impact on my life ever since I was a kid, and who cemented my passion for genre

films. With camera rolling and mic in hand, I just wanted to thank him for inspiring me with a lifetime of creative energy, but by the time he got near the end, he was whisked away to attend the premiere of his latest film, and I didn't meet him. I wasn't disappointed. Instead, the experience caused me to reflect on the tiny life choices that led me to that moment and all the other experiences TIFF had to offer.



*With the crew, brazenly breaking the all-black dress code.*

## Just say yes

There are entire books written on how to assert yourself and “just say no” more often, but so much in life is predicated upon simply saying “yes”. Sure, there are times when we need to prioritize time and must say no, but the magic really happens when “yes” becomes our default. As we get older, it becomes easier and easier to settle into the familiar. We become less likely to stray into unknown territory, especially when it comes to matters of art and creative pursuits. We want to play it safe.

When I arrived in Toronto, I created a list of movies I wanted to see and concluded that I would have *a lot* of downtime. Perhaps I could visit the CN Tower. Maybe I should sign up for one of those dorky walking tours of the city. This could be a very long and boring ten days.

Oh, such naivety. What I didn't factor in was the fact that I don't exist in a bubble. The most important and meaningful part of my experience was the people. Aside from buzzing about with the four other people on my Shade team, there were afterparties, networking events, and endless socializing about films, life, business, and art. I met people in various stages of writing screenplays, people pitching stories, filmmakers searching for producers and distributors, and actors trying to break into the business. It was an explosion of creative energy and expression.

Every minute of every day was occupied with things to do and places to be, all of which I said yes to unless I had a conflicting commitment. It was exhausting and exhilarating, especially for a person who normally spends a lot of time alone.

All of this reminded me of the value of human connections. Woodworking (like many hobbies) is a very solitary craft but it's important to build relationships, stay connected to others, and be part of a community, ideally in the real world. **Your work needs to be seen and shared.**

## The value of storytelling

All arts and crafts involve storytelling and every project you make tells a story. Even if you made the most mundane garden bench out of 2x4s, you wrote that screenplay. First, you desired to have a cozy place where you

could sit for a few minutes to observe butterflies and enjoy the changing seasons. Then you planned the size, shape, and dimensions. You selected the wood and the techniques you would employ to build it. You faced challenges building it when boards didn't join together the way you expected. You recut certain pieces. You swore at it. Eventually, it all came together, you applied a finish and set it in your garden. Complete story arc. But is that all?

All stories need an audience. You want other people to see that bench and to sit in it: it's a multi-butt experience. It's simply not as satisfying to build something that exists in a vacuum. (Although a case could be made for the satisfaction gained from making a good shop project that nobody but you will see. But you still kinda sorta want to share it with someone, don't you? I mean, you could send me pics to marvel at and possibly post in this newsletter. So there.)



*Blue bench to replace purple bench. Yeah, it has a story.  
(BTW you can [download free plans](#) for this if you want.)*

Back to our hypothetical bench. What reaction can you expect from people who see it? To be sure, the most predictable reactions will be, “Ooh, that’s nice” or, “That’s so cool” or, “Wow, you made that?” All of these are nice to hear but don’t tell them the Story of the Bench. Your audience isn’t engaged. They’ve seen the poster but don’t know anything about the movie. Or they walked into the movie really late and are only watching the credits.

It’s not your job to show or tell them every behind-the-scenes detail, although some of the time you spent in the workshop is part of the story.

Become an editor of your presentation. Tell the origin story of the butterflies, why this particular wood appealed to you, and the feeling you hope they experience as they sit in this particular spot. The best stories are emotional. You can add a subplot about something interesting during the building process, maybe something wonderful you learned, but keep it general...you don't want to bore them with a PBS documentary.

Don't feel weird or awkward. People love stories, especially personal ones. Storytelling strengthens human connections and builds relationships. You're going to be spending a lot of time in the shop building any project. While you're doing some mundane task such as sanding, start piecing together your story and presentation. The thing you make is a supporting actor: you're the main character.

—Steve

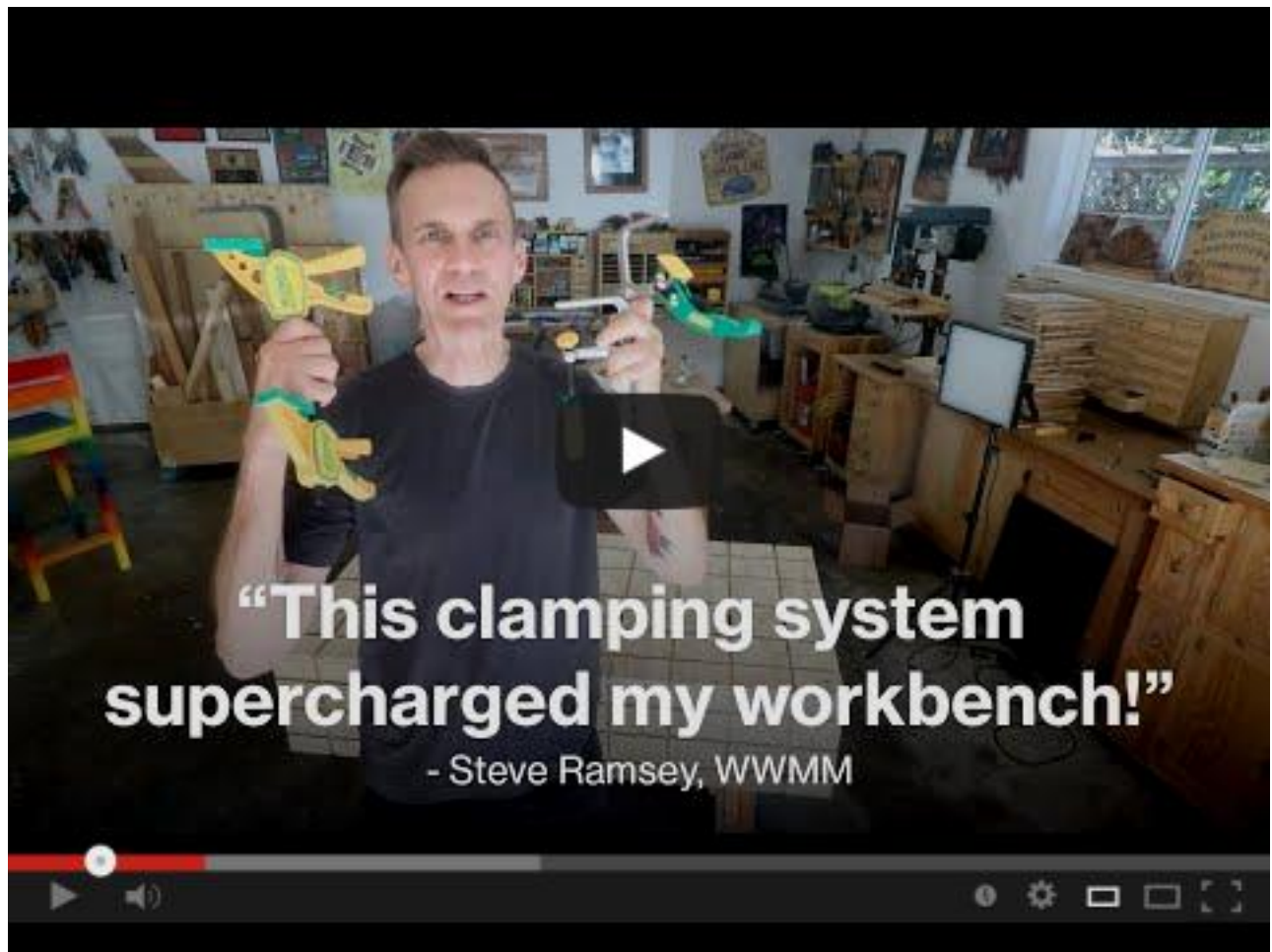
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## Supercharge your workbench!

It's crazy to imagine that my partnership with **Microjig** goes back 13 years. I remember making my first video for them back in 2011, introducing the Grr-ripper, a tool that completely changed the way I look at shop safety and efficiency. If you've watched my show for any length of time, you know that I never make table saw cuts without using a Grr-ripper push block. It's not one of those only-use-it-for-a-sponsored-video things, but rather something that is a required part of my workflow.

So it was a no-brainer when Microjig asked me to talk about their new product, the **Matchfit Grr-rip Clamp**. If you're not familiar with the Matchfit system, it's a method of creating dovetail grooves and then using a variety of dovetail clamps for all kinds of purposes. In this video, I wanted to show off how this works by building a topper for my Basic Mobile Workbench. This is sooo handy! **[Check out the video on YouTube](#)**.

**[Learn more about Matchfit here!](#)**



Also, if you haven't made one yet, [free plans for the BMW are available here!](#)

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## Halloween is near! 50% off!

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This candy dispenser is one of my favorite Halloween projects! It's not too difficult to make and everyone seems to love playing with it. I want you to make it too, so [all this month I'm offering it for just \\$13](#) over at ShopWWMM. That's a little more than half price because the number 13 seems appropriate for Halloween lol. Just use **promo code SPOOKY13** at checkout. Send me pics if you make one! This sale is good for the entire month of October.



[You can watch the video here.](#)



## Reader Mail

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“Always such a pleasure to read. Thank you Steve. I stumbled on to your YouTube channel when trying to build my first workbench. Turns out, 2-year-olds also love it. Since then I’ve taken apart said bench to rebuild it BMW style with some extras (three years on and it’s not finished but it is fully functional) and my now 6-year-old loves to be out in the garage with Mom.

The real value though lies in the storytelling this work gives me an opportunity to do. I inherited most of my tools when my dad passed away suddenly and my youngest never knew him. By taking out tools and ‘puttering and diddle-farting around the garage’ just like my dad did, I share the small stories about what poppa called this or that took or what he built or never finished and when we’re in the garage creating or just guessing and testing I see that little brain starting to approach problems in new ways.

Weirdly you once were wearing the same color/design flannel shirt in a video that was my dad’s favorite (missing elbows and all) and so the boy and I have our garage flannels to pay homage to all the great putterers who inspire us.

Thanks again for always teaching, entertaining and engaging.” —Jennifer S.

*Thank you, Jennifer. How timely that you should mention storytelling!  
Woodworking is totally about the stories! —Steve*

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“A thought on joinery today....

Glue and adhesives in the old days seem to dry and fail after a couple of years. That may be why dovetail joints were so important years ago.

Today, adhesives are soooo much better and last a very long time, allowing less complex joints to last close to forever.

I always look forward to your first Friday of the month newsletters and constantly looking for new videos made by you. I’ve joined all of your courses and have learned so much. I’ve built many things over the years (pre-Steve Ramsey), mostly larger, carpentry jobs. You brought me into the shop and showed me the pure joy of smaller projects. I now love the finesse and attention to details that I was too impatient to attempt before.

Thank you for being such a great teacher and mentor!” —Balad T.

*Thanks, Balad. A lot of new woodworkers are surprised to discover how powerful wood glue is. It has made woodworking so accessible! —Steve*

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“Your newsletter actually brought back a lot of childhood memories for me.

My mom was the handy one around the house back in the early 60s, at least as far as I could see, as my dad left for the office around 6 am and returned close to 6 pm. (He did a lot that I was unaware of at the age of 6 or 7).

We had a rustic workshop in the basement next to what used to be the coal bin. The workbench drawers had no slides that I can recall and just slid in

and out of shelf spaces.

Our electric drill was fully metal, I'd be shocked if I found one of those in use today (literally).



Scrap wood was all over in our garage. It seemed my mom could put anything together in a matter of minutes.

That inspired me to think that anything is possible. Although it was quite a long time before I learned how much hard work is needed to really make these things happen!

A grade school friend and I started plans for building a helicopter using a washing machine motor and other parts we had lying about. We realized, of course, that we would need a really long extension cord... but that shouldn't stop us (or maybe it did).

That same tiny workshop later became my ham radio 'shack' at the age of 12.



Making, building, and fixing things for me has almost always been about functionality – there was a purpose to it. Then as my skills developed I got to see there were better and better ways to get things done.

I never thought seriously about woodworking until 2020 came and my son turned me on to your channel. Our one-car garage started its transformation into a woodshop, well... part woodshop – part storage room (but everything on wheels to be able to move them around).

I never even knew joinery was a thing, never heard of a jointer, planer, or other more ‘pro’ woodworking tools until recent years.

The more I learn, though, the more I also appreciate the workmanship I see in all the things all around me. It’s great to be able to recognize and appreciate good craftsmanship.

Thanks for your inspirations, and keeping things real.” —Charles P.

*OMG my dad had that exact same drill which he bequeathed upon me at some point. In fact, I kept it for many years until I finally got rid of it about 10 years ago! I can still remember the whirring sound it made and having to use a chuck key to install drill bits. —Steve*

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*Thoughts on this month's newsletter? Got a story to tell? Just want to say hi?  
Drop me a line by simply replying to this email.*

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## **Member Projects**

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“And done!!! [...] Next up a boom arm for dust, power and air.” —Steven B.



*Great job, Steven! The drop-down workcenter is one of my favorite projects ever. Although to be honest, mine is hardly ever in its closed position! 😄*  
—Steve

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“Finally finished my BMW 🤓

Big thanks to Daniel Vassallo on X for letting me know about The Weekend Woodworker course, and inspiring me along the way.

It took me a whole month to finish it, but I think it’s OK to start slow and take my time to practice skills that will be useful in all future projects.

1 project down, 6 more to go!

How it started -> How it turned out —Denis L.



*Love it! The BMW is the cornerstone of every successful woodworking hobby! —Steve*

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“I took Steve’s course during the lockdown and have since made many, many projects, some I would even call ‘fine furniture.’ Here I show a simple floating ‘nightstand’ I recently cobbled together for the guest bedroom in a couple of hours out of scrap plywood and walnut offcuts (I intend to add a drawer when the slides arrive). It’s hanging on a French cleat. What I think I’m most proud of are the skills and confidence I gained from that first course and this group!” —Patricia A.



*I absolutely LOVE this floating nightstand. Brilliant, simple design. —Steve*

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***Have you made something you want over a quarter million people to see in next month's newsletter? Just hit reply and send me a pic.***

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