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# MASTER WEAVER

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BI-MONTHLY BULLETIN FOR HANDWEAVERS

Z-HANDICRAFTS - FULFORD - P.Q. - CANADA

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July, 1958

No. 40

## FROM THE EDITOR

The two articles which we have published in the last issue of the "Master Weaver" have created much more interest than we expected. One of them was "Shortcuts", the other "Exhibitions".

It would be unfair to recapitulate the discussion at this time. All letters we have received so far are agreeing with us, in some cases violently so. We are waiting for those who would defend the opposite point of view. Therefore we shall resume the discussion in September.

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## SHORTCUTS



The word "Loom" comes from Anglo-Saxon "geloma" and means a tool. And very rightly so. It is a "tool", the most important tool the weaver owns. The second in importance is his warping equipment. The rest hardly counts.

Nobody can do decent work without a good loom. Yet many... no: most of our weavers do not seem to realise its importance.

A real loom is made to perform a certain task. To be a good one it must fulfil certain requi/rements. For instance a loom cannot be absolutely noiseless - not more than a HiFi set can be silent. It cannot be portable - not more than a piano. Either one owns a piano, or one does not but one cannot carry it in his shopping bag... It cannot be universal, that is good for every possible kind of weaving. There is no such loom, and there cannot be. One might as well ask for a typewriter which would play music and fry pancakes.

Weaving is an occupation which makes noise and requires space. If we cannot make noise and have no space, we cannot weave anything except tapestry, knotted pile rugs, inkle belts and small samples on a table loom.

Then first the Noise. If we live in an apartment house we can get to some sort of understanding with the neighbours (really only the ones living below are affected). If they object to our weaving, we may object to their radio, or TV, or parties, until we reach a compromise.

Space. Since weaving is an important part of our life, we can easily sacrifice the less important factors. The room where we should keep our weaving equipment is obviously the living room, unless of course we can afford a studio, a hobby room, or a workshop in the basement. A living room is wasted space most of the time, and a weaving loom will make it more interesting for your visitors, and children.

Thus we have solved the problem of where to keep the loom, and how to get away with it. Now we come to the important moment of buying one. If you are a beginner, never buy a loom before learning how to use it, and before getting acquainted with different types of the "shedding motion", and different weaving techniques. The selection of the type of loom depends on what we are going to weave, and for what purpose.

We should try to be satisfied with the lowest possible number of shafts. In most cases there is no reason to buy a loom with more than four shafts. One should not be afraid that he will soon exhaust all possibilities of such a loom. The possibilities are limitless. However the loom should have at least 6 treadles hinged to the frame at the front and not at the back. Eight treadles would be much better.

The frame of the loom must be strong, bulky, and heavy. The heavier the frame - the less noise because the vibrations are absorbed by the frame instead of being communicated to the floor, and... the neighbours.

Folding or even partly folding looms are inferior to the rigid ones. Folding and portable looms are nonsense. They may serve to demonstrate the theory of weaving but never the practice.

If we decide on a 4-shaft loom, the obvious selection is a counterbalanced loom with a shed regulator. To check the shed regulator try to open just two sheds: 1, and 234. If both open at the same level (but not with the same effort) it works well. If not - it may

be the fault of the operator.

Any counterbalanced loom can be turned at a moment's notice into a reversed jack-type. We stretch the springs of the shed regulator until all shafts will hang in the upper position when at rest. Then no additional tie-up between the regulator and the treadles is necessary. The superiority of this arrangement over a plain counterbalanced-loom-plus-a-shed-regulator is, that we can use any tie-up, and that we can press any number of treadles at the same time, and still the shed will open in the same place. But it will open much faster than in case of a jack-type loom, and there is less effort in opening the sheds. On the other hand it will be not so good with closely set warps, sticky yarns, etc.

Thus a 4-shaft counterbalanced loom can be used in 3 different ways:

1. As plain counterbalanced - for very fast weaving of fabrics which require balanced tie-ups.

2. Counterbalanced with shed regulator - for unbalanced tie-ups. Works as fast as the former but the treadling requires more pressure.

3. Reversed jack-type - for all sorts of tie-ups, particularly for compound treadling (more than one treadle used at the same time). Slightly slower than the former, but faster and lighter in operation than a jack-type.

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We repeat once more, and this is the most important advice: if you want a 4-shaft loom, the best answer is a counterbalanced loom with a shed regulator, or at least built so that a shed regulator can be added. Looms of this type which cannot be converted are useless at least for general purposes (no huckaback, no Bronson, no swivel, no spot, no waffle, no double weaves, no leno, etc.)

Four-shaft jack-type looms have no justification whatsoever. They are inferior in every respect, regardless of how they are built.

But even a loom good in theory may be poor in practice. Therefore when buying one ask the agent for a demnstration, or if you are an experienced weaver you can make the test yourself. Do not listen to any excuses. Wait until the agent is ready to show you how the loom works. He must be able to weave on a narrow warp (12 to 20") plain tabby at a speed of 60 picks per minute. Check it with your watch. If the loom refuses to work that fast, don't buy it. But if you suspect that it is

rather the operator than the loom who is at fault, ask a friend who is a good weaver to try it for you, or do it yourself. Beat as hard as you can - no loom can be upset in any way by the hardest beating.

We realise that the advice we are giving here is hard to accept. There are very few good counterbalanced looms on the market, and as far as we know only one is equipped with a shed-regulator. But this should not worry us - if the loom is good we can make a shed regulator to fit, or buy one later on.

To be charitable we may make one exception: if the weaver does not take his hobby too seriously, if he is not concerned with the efficiency of his work, and can limit his weaving activities to experiments rather than production - the second best choice will be a jack-type.

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Our readers may have two objections here:

First - I am not going to weave with a speed of 60 picks per minute anyhow. - Yes, but a loom which can give 60 will work much easier at let's say 40 than one whose top speed is 40! If you drive a car, and your cruising speed is 50 you would not buy a car with a top speed of 50.

Second - No counterbalanced looms with a shed regulator were known in the 18-th century and yet... - Yes, but then the weaving has been specialised. Nobody would dream about using the same loom to make different kinds of cloth, of different yarns and in different techniques. A counterbalanced loom with a shed regulator can be easily replaced by three looms: a plain counterbalanced, a double-tie-up, and a jack-type.

Thus this is the first shortcut to good weaving: in the four-shaft class use only a counterbalanced loom of good design. The best models have rollers - they keep the shafts reasonably level, but "horses" or even pulleys are quite acceptable. Treadles hinged in the front - not less than 6 of them. Friction brake on the warp beam - ratchet on the cloth beam. If possible two battens - the overhead model for fast weaving with one shuttle. Enough room for a second warp beam.

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In the next issue we shall discuss looms with more than four shafts.

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