

By Hand from the Heart, Matt and his family business produce beautiful and functional works of art.



Born and raised in Chapel Hill, Tennessee, 29 year old Matt Akin (sitting on the left) grew up in a family of entrepreneurs and small business owners. Matt's parents ran a gas station and convenience store and over the years, demonstrated the value of a strong work ethic to their children.

Inspired by his parents dedication to providing for their family, Matt studied entrepreneurship in college and after graduating, worked in a corporate role with a rental car company.

This was followed by Matt starting his own business renting canoes and kayaks, and woodworking in his spare time.

Together with his father and brother, in 2014 Matt started Rustic River Creations, a full-time woodworking business producing artistic pieces of furniture, custom exterior shutters and decorative brackets for houses. Rustic River Creations pride themselves on incorporating discarded materials found at scrapyards, into their functional works of art.

MILLER FEATURE

Originally Rustic River Creations used a Woodmizer bandsaw to mill their lumber, but upon discovering the benefits of a swingblade mill, they decided to sell their old unit and invest in a Peterson.

“As our Woodmizer aged, we started to realise that the downtime for maintenance and repairs was higher than the uptime. We were running in to problems that just don’t occur with a swingblade mill,” said Matt. “One of the biggest issues were the bandsaw blades, which required a lot of sharpening and would become damaged.”

“I love the straight boards that come off my Peterson Sawmill”

Peterson’s swingblade design utilises a pivoting circular blade which cuts in the horizontal position down the log, and is returned in the vertical position, immediately producing one board or slab. The blade only has up to eight teeth which can be sharpened directly on the sawmill without removing any guard to do so.

A craftsman that prides himself on his work, Matt had also been unhappy with the quality of lumber that was cut with his bandsaw mill.

“I love the straight boards that come off my Peterson Sawmill, it gives me a higher quality cut with less work and in turn, more production!”



As somewhat of a salvage revivalist, Matt often comes upon odd-shaped or extra-large logs which can’t be cut with most bandsaw mills. With a bandsaw’s style of cutting, large logs require turning until the end is in the shape of a ‘stop sign’, whereas Peterson’s design allow the sawyer to tackle large logs head-on.

During extensive sawmill research, Rustic River Creations investigated the Lucas Mill brand as well, comparing it with the original Peterson Sawmill. But Matt and his family were sold on Peterson as a fellow family business and producer of high-quality products which are “superior to other brands.”

MILLER FEATURE

While Peterson have a range of sawmill options to suit different applications, in August 2018 Matt chose the 10" Winch Production Frame (WPF) model which he felt best suited Rustic River Creations' needs.

The WPF has been designed for productive sawmilling, cutting high quality, extremely accurate timber with portable or fixed-site milling. As its name suggests, the WPF enables high production with Matt cutting around 4,000 to 5,000 board feet with the mill so far. The wood is now drying for later use in custom furniture manufacture; a specialty service of Rustic River Creations.

"I'm very happy with the service that Peterson's United States Agent has provided to us"

There are many features and optional extras available for the WPF, one of which is the Hi/Lo track setup which has enabled Matt to work at a much quicker pace. With Hi/Lo tracks, the operator can either load logs over the track on the low side, or roll logs under the high track depending on their application.

"The WPF is noticeably faster and much more accurate than our old bandsaw mill and is a better unit overall," said Matt.

"I can sharpen the blade in 10 minutes, whereas with the bandsaw I would easily spend a day sharpening several bandsaws."

To decrease downtime, the Peterson blade can be sharpened while it is still on the mill, and without having to remove any guards.

So far Matt hasn't run in to any metal with his Peterson, but if he were to lose a blade tooth, it could be replaced using a Peterson re-tipping jig or taking it to a sawdoctor.

As for maintenance, Matt keeps the unit under cover when not in use and uses silicon spray on the winch and other moving parts. Matt is very impressed with the simplicity of the design of the mill, for example the ease with which the fuel tank can be disconnected for refuelling.



Until now, Matt has used an Alaskan chainsaw mill to cut natural and straight edge slabs. With slabs being more popular than ever and worth up to double the value of dimensional lumber, Matt has recently purchased a Peterson Clip-on Slabber.

MILLER FEATURE

Wood slabs make eye-catching features as dining and board room tables, benches, bar tops and shelving.

Due for arrival any day now, Matt is looking forward to cutting slabs from within the solid frame of his WPF. Attaching the Clip-On Slabber to the WPF will initially take approximately 60 minutes, with future changeovers being around 15-20 minutes.

Additional accessories available include an electric winch and finishing attachments. In fact, the WPF can be five-mills-in-one: a dimensional lumber mill, a slab mill, an edger, a planer, and a finishing sander.

Thanks to the Peterson mill, Rustic River Creations is able to turn grade-A, primary cuts of wood into unique furniture creations. The company's passion is to seek out and reclaim materials that are rugged and weathered, and that have simply been forgotten. They prefer to work with specialty types of wood like walnut, white oak and maple in order to provide their customers with beautiful legacy pieces. Matt says that slabs with cross grain are in especially high demand in Tennessee.

The most challenging thing for Matt and his business has been to build his customer base and create a brand from scratch. It takes time to prove your value to your clientele and to get established. Rustic River Creations have very active accounts on Facebook and Instagram and are steadily growing a large fan base with images of their outstanding and creative pieces of custom-made furniture.



"I'm very happy with the service that Peterson's United States agent has provided to us," said Matt. "The fact that the manufacturer is based in New Zealand doesn't make a difference at all with the support from California-based Sawyer's Choice."

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