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Custom Woodworking BUSINESS

WoodworkingNetwork.com

How Happy Owl Won Digital Cashbox Sales

CNC Software Connects CJS MILLWORK

From AWFS: Visionary Technology Awards

VANCE

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Cover photo: Happy Owl Studio

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Robohand Helps Carpenter

South African carpenter Richard Van As, who lost four fingers in a saw injury, worked with a Washington state designer and 3D printing to construct the Robohand. It is now also being used by about 100 children who were born with birth defects or suffered injuries.

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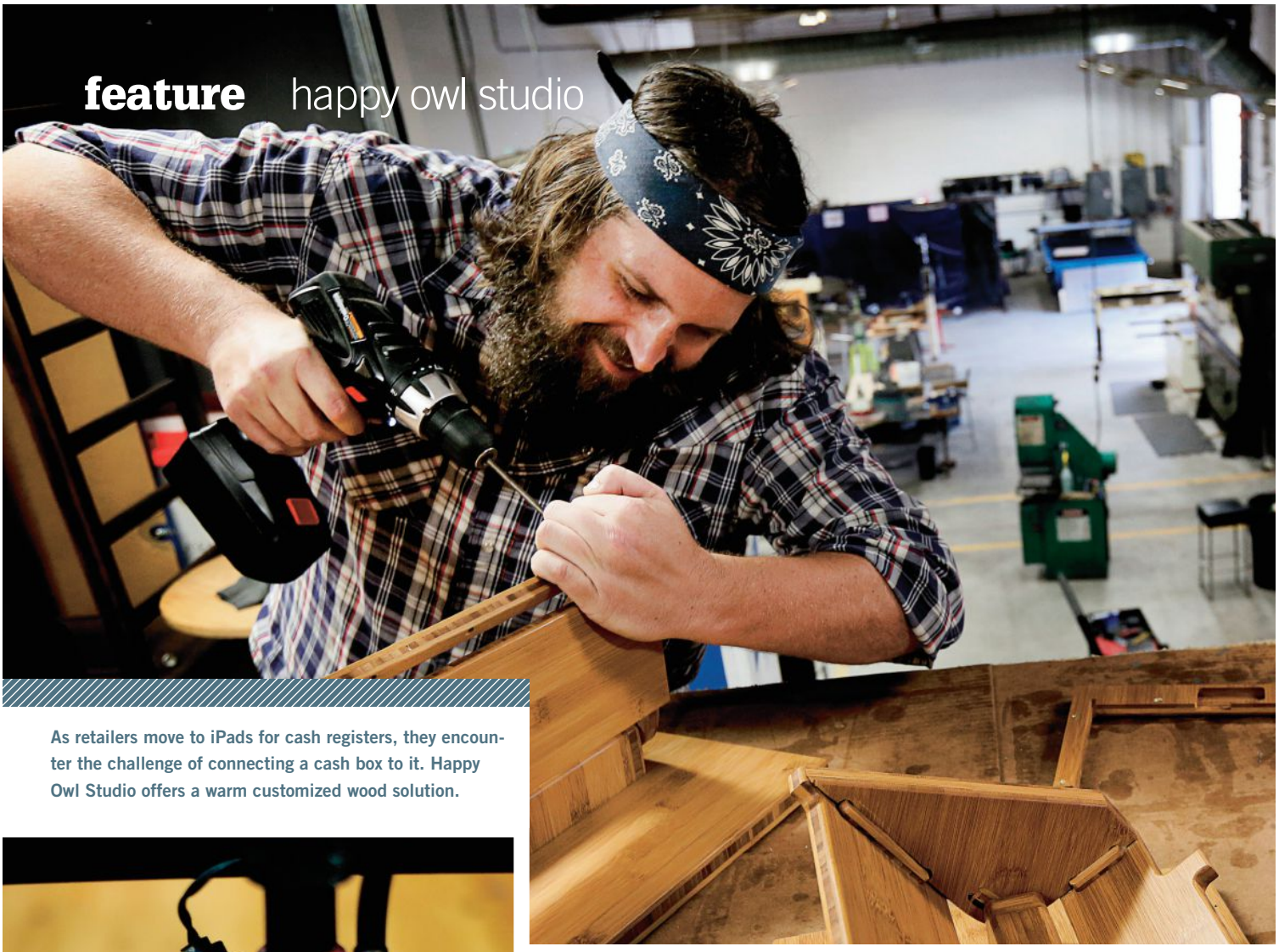


As retailers move to iPads for cash registers, they encounter the challenge of connecting a cash box to it. Happy Owl Studio offers a warm customized wood solution.

Custom Digital Wood Crafters

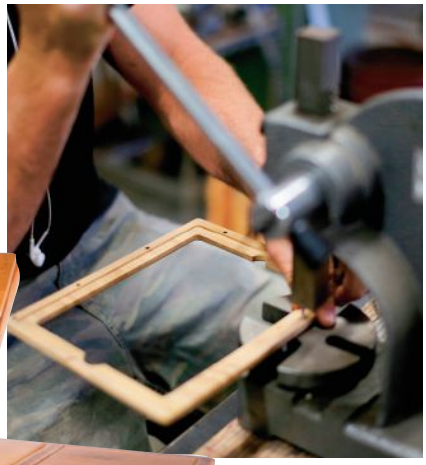
Happy Owl Studio handles batch custom wood manufacturing in leased space.

By Michaelle Bradford & Bill Esler

iPad cash registers are popping up all over, allowing small shop owners to use the latest technology in creative wood frames to ring up sales. Custom wood products firm Happy Owl Studio is cashing in on the developing niche, making next-generation wood registers.

While the iPad can easily handle online sales and credit cards, for printing paper receipts and for customers paying with cash, a traditional register box is needed.

The team at San Diego-based Happy Owl, self-described "Apple devotees," found a way to integrate iPad-controlled electronics with elecro-mechanic hardware, and launched the "cash register of the future" in 2012. The Cashbox, as it is called, is an all-in-one iPad point of sale system featuring a wooden box handcrafted from Cali Bamboo plywood and finished in several



styles: Flat Grain Amber, Natural or Marble Woven.

The innovative design of the Cashbox includes an arch system that gracefully tilts the iPad from the cashier ringing up the sale, to the customer for a digital signature – done with a fingertip. The wood frame that wraps the iPad and connects to the arch stabilizes and extends the credit card reader enhancing the security of the iPad and increasing the reliability of card-swiping. It integrates a cash drawer that opens with a single tap on the iPad, a receipt printer with paperless options, and an Apple keyboard. Chief Design Officer Ryan Jordan takes pride in concealing any wiring through careful craftsmanship and design.

Each box is available with custom laser engraving. The production equipment Happy Owl Studio uses – a CNC, laser engraver, saws, planers, sanders, jointers and the like – are included in a rent-by-the-hour manufacturing space, part of the Makerplace, a 14,000-square-foot public access workshop in San Diego.

Within Makerplace is a full production wood shop, metal shop, flatbed laser engravers, California approved paint booth, 3D printers, CNC router, CNC mills, CNC plasma torch, a wood lathe, a metal lathe, a TIG/MIG welding lab, and electronics lab.

In April, Happy Owl Studio released an updated version of its Cashbox, re-engineered to accommodate a wider range of credit card systems.

"When we first began designing the Cashbox, we were working primarily with Square's card reader in mind," says Jordan, who along with Devon Read and Nathan Havey co-founded the company. "Once we hit the market, we started to quickly realize just how many retailers were looking for more features." These required more access to power, and hiding the cables was a key part of the Cashbox aesthetic. "So we went back to the drawing board and came up with a system that allows us to accommodate any reader." The tilting action is smoother and more reliable, and, "It's even more compact and svelte than our first design," Jordan says.

"We have done a couple different versions in different woods," he says. "We built one for a donut shop in Abu Dabi, all whitewash wood to match their flooring.

"I've done a couple in walnut. We just glue it up and plane it down like a normal project." For a farm with a retail shop, "We built one of redwood." The Cashbox was

given a distressed finish through sandblasting. "Most of our work is custom," Jordan says. "Almost all of it comes out of a conversation with an owner."

Clients customize their Cashbox with logos, emblazoned using a 100 Watt Category 5 Katrina by Hurricane Laser, with a 60" X 48" work table. "It does a fantastic job engraving or cutting everything we throw at it," Jordan says. A 4' X 8' Viccam CNC router does cuts for each project.

Because they rent space, jobs are ganged together, with a minimum two orders initiating production. "We're constantly in production at some stage." The success of the Cashbox has also lead to conventional woodworking jobs.

"The woodshop side of our business has done really well," Jordan notes, with requests coming in for walnut display boxes for high-end headphones, prototypes and concepts, even signage. "We've been getting all these jobs for people." A self-taught woodworker, Jordan has taken naturally to the business. "Since we have been building the Cashbox, my skillset has really expanded," he says, and is developing furniture concepts and other new lines, including an adaptation of the Cashbox for a mall kiosk.

Jordan and his colleagues are quick studies, and all have a technical bent. "With our technical side of being able to pull electricity through a table without a power strip, the customizability of the Cashbox is right on the line between function and art," Jordan says.

At Makerplace

CNC Router/ Laser Cutter
Viccam VS 4x8-ft. flat bed 2-axis
Hurricane 80 Watt, 100 Watt

Application Software
VicEngrave, VcarvePro

Laser Cutter
planer, jointer, sanders (belt, drum, oscillating) router table, mortising machine, pocket hole jig

Made in America

Happy Owl Studio also is riding on the trend to domestic manufacture. Jordan says he and his colleagues began making fabric and leather cases for Apple products, producing those goods in China.

"When the credit card iPad revolution came, we wanted to be out in front of it," Jordan says. "We were initially thinking we would have to make these things in China, and we were burned out on China. 'It's wood,' we thought. 'We could build that.'"

Working with a production cabinet shop to have access to a router, "We were starting to run out of money. Then we found Makerplace. It allows us to have a big shop with virtually no overhead, and a production team in the city we grew up in using our friends."

Video shows Happy Owl Studio in production at **woodworkingnetwork.com/cwb**