

brings top dollar would be making far better money if they spent their time creating original work for the serious horse art market.

At the same time, no buyer wants to pay more than he has to. Many complain about the price of models...but then, when many of those same buyers decide to resell models, they think nothing of trying to make a profit from the *next* buyer. And upward go the prices.

All in all, there's some serious money changing hands! It's no wonder that there are always new remakers popping up.

I'm not a remaker, although many times, when inspirations for model horses have danced on my noggin and demanded to become Tenite reality, I've desperately wished that I were. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be able to sit down and create a marvelous remake? But I haven't studied equine anatomy or musculature, or learned and practiced sculpting and painting techniques, or practiced on remake after remake to hone my skills to a competent level.

Unfortunately, neither have some remakers.

The Saga of Susie Creamcheese

Look at that going rate, \$100 and up for a remade model! That's for a Breyer plastic horse with the legs moved around and painted a pretty color with some hair put on, right?! Susie Creamcheese, new to the hobby but catching on quick, hops into remaking with a vengeance. Her first work is distinctly stinky, but carries a \$100 price tag since "that's the going rate." It doesn't sell, but finally lowering the price lures a taker—a newcomer to the hobby who thinks that any remake must be wonderful, and who's in for a rude surprise once she tries to show this wondrous beast.

"The next one will bring \$100!" vows Susie. Nope. But there's always the next remake, or the next one, or it had darn well better be the next one, that could be the ticket to all that easy money.

Any of three fates await Susie in the hobby. First, she may realize that something is wrong, and take a closer look at why certain models sell well. If she refocuses her aim, studies horses and practices the necessary skills, she could well become a successful remaker in the near future. Or, second, she could keep on bashing models out, improving marginally if at all, and find that her only customers are green hobbyists who don't yet know any better. Or, third, Susie Creamcheese could discover boys next week, and drop out of the hobby.

There are slews of Susie Creamcheeses out there, naively hawking badly-crafted remakes that help glut the market and discourage newcomers. Some Susies are even encouraged by pushy stage mothers to create these nice horsies to sell. How long they'll choose to stay in the hobby, and whether they'll contribute anything of worth to it, only time will tell.

Of course, there are hobbyists of all ages whose primary interest isn't in creating, learning, or showing—they're here to turn a profit, whether by remaking or reselling. Some people believe that a high price tag is what gives a model worth—if it costs a lot, it's sure to be the very best horse money can buy!—and these folks gladly cater to that crowd. And as soon as one model by Remaker A sells for \$300, that price is pounced upon and promoted by some resellers as the going rate for other models by Remaker A, regardless of vintage or condition. Perhaps as a direct result, there has been an increase in trading—after all, it's much easier to pin a sky-high value on a model and trade it for another model of like extravagant price, than to have to shell out actual cash.

Situations like this help pace the prices of "collectible" artists

work, usually the very top-quality remakes. But a problem with today's remake sales market is that there are really no price levels for varying degrees of workmanship quality. As the prices of the top horses climb, prices of the lesser-quality models also inch upwards. Some remakers and resellers feel justified in basing prices on what the top models bring, scaling back slightly to compensate for their models' "nearly as good" qualities. Is this right? Is this wrong? Can we simply shrug, "Whatever the market will bear"?

However, with the increasing number of remakes, the sales market is certain to become even more crowded and competitive in the years ahead—especially for older models being resold. Even more alarming is the fact that many recent remakes will decrease drastically in value, because they aren't being designed with longevity in mind.

Will Today's Investment Be In Tomorrow's Basement?

Caveat emptor—"let the buyer beware"—has sadly become the motto of the remake market, as a startling number of remakes by budding-but-inexperienced and veteran-but-careless artists alike are self-destructing. The use of incompatible remaking materials is largely to blame, as some fillers separate from plastic, certain kinds of glue turn yellow-green in contact with certain paint, and bad batches of airbrush paint become viscous and eat through fixative. If produced by a remaker that either doesn't know better or doesn't care, your pride and joy could well become unshowable—and unsellable—in as little as one year's time.

Some remakers will repair past mistakes at little or no charge. Some remakers will insist that there's no way such a thing could have happened, and refuse to correct the problem. And some remakers will have already dropped out of the hobby, nowhere to be found.

Remakers that take their craft seriously often have a workmanship guarantee. If you're considering a purchase from someone who doesn't, you can protect yourself from ticklish situations by doing some basic homework—ask other hobbyists who own that remaker's work about the integrity of the workmanship. You'll get a pretty good idea of what to expect, and will not only better your chances of making a safe investment, but will save yourself the heartbreak of seeing a favorite model self-destruct.

Whatever Will Be, Will Be...Or Will It?

What will the long-term effects of this stampede of remakes be? Will our expanding hobby suddenly become less selective about remakes, increase its demand, and buy all of these models? Will climbing prices further lower demand for remakes? Or is it that a larger demand already does exist, but is waiting for the "right" remakes at the "right prices to come along—that there actually aren't enough remakes that fit this demand, making the rest of the supply a largely-disregarded overflow that simply doesn't affect the balance of supply-and-demand?

Ahhh, you're right—it's just a hobby, for gosh sakes. Kinda silly to worry about the economics of plastic ponies. So until next issue, I'll just be hangin' out on the swingset in the warm summer breeze, sipping a cool Dr. Pepper and watching the Great Remake Flood billow by.

I can't help but be concerned, though—where will all of these remakes *be*, ten years from now?