

Refurbishing a Singer 127 Treadle

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When I acquired this Singer 127 treadle, the machine head was completely frozen, and the cabinet was badly in need of refinishing.

It was a good candidate for a re-do, because the Memphis decals were in very good shape, and the veneer on the cabinet was for the most part undamaged unlike many treadles, which have been used for plant stands and suffered water damage.



The model 127 is a vibrating-shuttle machine that takes long bobbins. This one is almost 100 years old; according to Singer's records, it was manufactured in St. Jean sur Richelieu, Quebec, way back in 1924.



I started by working on getting the machine head unfrozen, then shined up the decals.

It deserves a refurbished cabinet.

This is the Memphis decal set, which is a fairly common pattern, but these are in the best condition I've ever seen on a vintage treadle -- no scratches, no silvering, no wear. What a gorgeous machine.



Although it's in need of refinishing, the cabinet is in good physical condition, with no damage or disrepair.

I removed the machine head and used a chemical stripper to remove the old finish. Then I rubbed the wood veneer surface with an orange oil furniture finish.

If you're choosing a machine for refurbishing, try to pick one with intact decals and a solid cabinet. It will reward your efforts with both beauty and functionality.

Here is the result: the machine head is turning freely and sewing well, the finish has been polished to a beautiful shine, and the cabinet has been completely refinished. It's a gorgeous display piece that can actually sew just as well as it did when it was fresh from the factory a century ago.



I never knew my grandmother, who died a couple months after I was born, but her Singer 127 remained in my uncle's house when I was a little kid.



I don't know how much sewing my Nana did in her life, or even what became of her actual machine, but still I feel a little more connected to her through this beautiful machine, which I am so grateful to have been able to restore.

