

A BAMBOO REVIEW?

In July/August you had the chance to give good, detailed reviews on two cane rods. Forget for a minute that they were imports. Buzz Bryson did a good job on the Winston XTR (they also make kick-butt bamboo rods, including a new quad I'm dying to try) and Sage XP graphite rods, but I feel that he treated the cane rods as expensive curiosities that happen to smell good.

As a part-time bamboo rod builder I hear that sort of thing a lot. It's just a shame to see one of my favorite magazines perpetuating the myths about split-bamboo rods rather than explaining what technically precise tools they can be. Taper design, material and component selection, craftsmanship and everything else that goes into making a synthetic rod goes into making a split-bamboo rod. In fact, more effort is invested in the construction of a good cane rod than a plastic rod. It's the difference between buying your suits off the rack or going to a tailor. Of course, not all cane rods are of that quality. There certainly have been thousands of production rods churned out in the last 100 years that are fair to middlin' or worse. But the vast majority of the rods being made by today's very talented craftsmen are among the best cane rods that have ever been built, and they are getting better. The best of today's craftsmen operate in what I've described as "boutique" rod-making enterprises combining very limited production with very high quality. These men and women are able to stand on the shoulders of the best rod-makers of the last century and improve on their work.

Getting back to import rods: There are probably 50 exceptional makers in the US working for themselves or one of the companies that still make cane rods. Why don't you have someone who understands and appreciates cane rods as the outstanding fishing tools they are review the state of the art today, just as you do ad nauseam with plastic rods? Until that type of critical review of split-bamboo fly rods starts showing up in magazines like *FR&R*, the vast majority of anglers are never going to understand how to make an informed buying decision or be able to separate fact from fable concerning bamboo fly rods. And there is certainly more fable than fact circulating now.

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