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**FLEXDRAPER[®]
REVOLUTION.**
FLEXDRAPERS ARE
TAKING OVER IN
NORTH CAROLINA.

**NEW WORLD
FARMER.**
MAKING A GO OF IT
IN NORTH AMERICA.

**LISTEN
AND LEARN.**
MACDON SEEKS INPUT
FROM THE FRONT LINE
OF DEALER SERVICE.

**SUSTAINABLE
CONSERVATION.**
FOR ALABAMA FARMER ANNIE DEE, CONSERVATION AND
PROFITABILITY ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.

ANNIE DEE

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MacDon[®] PERFORMANCE

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MACDON INDUSTRIES LTD.

680 Moray Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3J 3S3
t. (204) 885-5590 f. (204) 832-7749

MACDON, INC.

10708 N. Pomona Avenue
Kansas City, Missouri
United States 64153-1924
t. (816) 891-7313 f. (816) 891-7323

MACDON AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.

A.C.N. 079 393 721
P.O. Box 243, Suite 3, 143 Main Street
Greensborough, Victoria, Australia 3088
t. 03 9432 9982 f. 03 9432 9972

LLC MACDON RUSSIA LTD.

123317 Moscow, Russia
10 Presnenskaya nab, Block C
Floor 5, Office No. 534, Regus Business Centre
t. +7 495 775 6971 f. +7 495 967 7600

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FLEXDRAPER® REVOLUTION.

**BILLY TANKARD SAYS
FLEXDRAPERS ARE
TAKING OVER IN
NORTH CAROLINA.**



The Tankard's have been farming near the town of Bath at the historic junction of North Carolina's Pamlico and Pungo Rivers for at least five generations. This coastal land was the first in the state to be settled by Europeans back in the late 1600s, and Bath itself can lay claim to not only being North Carolina's first town but also the home of the notorious pirate Blackbeard.

"I think the farm was my great great granddad's, I really don't know," says Billy Tankard who now runs their 2,000 acre (809.4 hectare) farm with his father William. "My great granddad and granddad were horse traders, and they bought and sold land in the area."

Today, the Tankards farm corn, wheat, seed soybeans, sorghum and flue-cured tobacco scattered about in a number of small farms in the area. Like most farmers today, they are under pressure to continually expand their operation.

Continued



"We went from 800 acres to 1,600 acres (323.7 hectares to 647.5 hectares) a while back, and then up to 2,000 acres (809.4 hectares) when my cousin quit farming and we took over his farm. We just keep trying to pick up land and grow and grow and grow. We're always trying to get bigger."

Of their 2,000 acres (809.4 hectares), the Tankards usually allocate a little more than half to soybeans and wheat. To harvest this they have traditionally relied on the standard flex auger platforms, just like other farmers in the area have for decades. But two years ago,

Tankard was also less than satisfied with the performance of regular platforms in shorter beans, such as he typically finds in hard areas or at the edges of his fields where they tend to grow slower because of the trees. For these reasons he was eager to try the FlexDraper®.

"WE'VE GOT FIELDS WHERE THE SLOPE CHANGES FOUR TIMES IN ONE CUT AND FIELDS WHERE YOU'RE STIRRING UP DUST ON ONE END AND DRIVING THROUGH MUD ON THE OTHER. YOU NAME IT, WE'VE GOT IT."

"We wanted to keep our combine a little longer, but I really wanted to trade my platform for a FlexDraper®. We eventually decided to trade the combine as well and got a 9060 New Holland with a 35' (10.6 m) FD75 FlexDraper®."

Now after two bean crops and two wheat crops Tankard reports that he is more than happy with his decision.

"From my home base I can probably draw a six mile (9.7 km) circle around our land. A lot of our farms only have three or four acre (one or two hectare) fields on them. We have lots of trees around our farms, a lot of small cut up fields. We've clay land, sandy land and land that floods partially at high tide."

Tankard saw a MacDon FlexDraper® at the farm show in Louisville, Kentucky, and knew that it was something he wanted to try given the difficulties he had always experienced with his standard platforms.

"I'm tickled to death with my FlexDraper®. It's a night and day difference to the normal standard platform. I mean, I can now shave the ground and get those short beans. I could never get them to feed before, but with this FlexDraper® I can get every one of them."

Tankard says that a particularly notable feature of the land in the area is the number of "v-ditches" present in most fields which are necessary for proper drainage. One of their larger plots, a 30 acre (12.1 hectare) field, has no less than 13 cuts which demands a lot of nimble driving with the combine and other machinery.

"The hold back on the regular platforms was that they would drag in downed wheat, which we get a lot of around the woods and headlands. We also had trouble in beans in the afternoons when the platforms didn't want to feed real good, they'd be putting wads through and the combine would be choking. We were constantly speeding up and slowing down just to keep the machine from jamming."

The FlexDraper® has also proven itself to easily cut beans with higher moisture, which Tankard says is a mixed blessing for them.

"We grow seed beans so we don't want to be picking if they are higher than 14.5% moisture. With our old platform by the time the sun was

“IT’S SAFE TO SAY I’M PICKING UP TO FOUR BUSHELS MORE AN ACRE IN THOSE AREAS AROUND THE WOODS WHERE THE BEANS NEVER GET VERY TALL.”

going down and hitting the trees, the beans would be getting tough to cut as the moisture crept up. It was easy to know when to stop. But with this FlexDraper® I can keep on getting them. If I’m not careful I’ll start picking wet beans so I’ve really got to keep my eye on the monitor the whole time.”

Tankard says that his issues harvesting wheat have also disappeared since buying the FlexDraper®.

“In wheat this header is phenomenal – it just sails right through it. In downed wheat it just rockets forward and scoops it right up. You can even be picking green stuff and as long as you can get your travel speed set you have no trouble. It never loses a step.”

He says he is even going faster, despite the fact that he increased his header width by five feet (1.5 m) with the FlexDraper®.

“Granted it’s different combines, but I was running a 30’ (9.1 m) conventional platform on our old combine and I was picking at 4 MPH (6.4 km/h). Now I’m running with a 35’ (10.6 m) FlexDraper® and I’m cutting at 4.5 to 5 MPH (7.2 to 8 km/h).”

Another big difference Tankard has noticed is in the increased reliability of the MacDon product.

“With my previous header, my first day in the field with it, it messed up and I had to wait for them to come and work on it under warranty. But I’ve never lost any downtime to that draper, other than stuff that was my fault like getting a piece of wood jammed in the belt. That would happen with any machine.”

According to Tankard, his decision to switch to a FlexDraper® has been shared by a number of other farmers in the area. “The year I got mine, three or four people in the area got them the same time I did, but since then there has been a lot more who have come over to the FlexDraper® concept.” Tankard says he expects the trend to continue.

“All my buddies that have regular platforms have come and watch mine run. One of them last year asked me ‘is it worth it?’ I said ‘it’s worth every dime.’ Well he hemmed and hawed, and hemmed and hawed and finally went out and bought a thirty-footer. Now he says he can do more in a day with his 30’ (9.1 m) FlexDraper® than he could with a 35’ (10.6 m) regular platform. Everyone wants a MacDon FlexDraper® now.”



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A woman with blonde hair, wearing a red short-sleeved shirt and light grey pants, stands in a field of green plants. She is smiling and looking down at a bunch of harvested produce she is holding in her hands. The background is a dense field of green foliage.

SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION.

FOR ALABAMA
FARMER ANNIE DEE,
CONSERVATION
AND PROFITABILITY
ARE TWO SIDES OF
THE SAME COIN.



Most farmers employ conservation practices in their operations, but few have taken up the conservationist flag as passionately and completely as Alabama's 2013 Farmer of the Year, Annie Dee. Working with her brother Mike Dee and twin sons Seth and Jesse More, Dee manages a row crop and beef cattle operation in Aliceville, Pickens County, Alabama. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that she "stewards" their Dee River Ranch for there is hardly an element of their operation that has escaped her conservationist eye.

"It is crucial that we leave our land and water better than we found it," says Dee from her ranch which straddles the Alabama Mississippi border. "My concern is not just for my children and my grandchildren, but also for how we are going to feed the ever growing world. They predict we will have nine billion people by 2050, and we won't be able to feed them all unless we become serious about conservation and sustainability."

"MY CONCERN IS NOT JUST FOR MY CHILDREN AND MY GRANDCHILDREN, BUT ALSO FOR HOW WE ARE GOING TO FEED THE EVER GROWING WORLD."

To that end Dee says that they work to achieve three basic conservation goals in the farming of their 10,500 acres (4249.2 hectares). First, they strive to protect the 2,500 acres (1011.7 hectares) of pasture land in their care by only growing native, existing or approved grass varieties. This, and other practices with their 1,000 head cattle operation, has made the Dee River Ranch a regional winner in the Environmental Stewardship Awards Program.

Their second goal is to take their highly erodible and marginal land out of production and return it to a more natural state by planting trees and native grasses. This has resulted in delivering 4,000 acres (1618.7 hectares) of their land to the Conservation Reserve Program, with the double benefit of creating more habitat to protect local wildlife species.

Finally, of the roughly 4,000 acres (1618.7 hectares) they have devoted to row crop production (corn, wheat, and soybeans), they work hard to build up its soil quality as well as control soil moisture loss and erosion. They do this through a combination of many practices including the use of riparian buffers, natural fertilizers (chicken litter), no-till planting and winter cover crops such as clover, rye, oats and even radishes or sunn hemp.

Continued



Annie Dee with the family's John Deere Combine, mounted with a MacDon FD75 FlexDraper.®

"I HAVE JUST LOVED MY FLEXDRAPERS. WHEN WE FIRST GOT ONE OUR NEIGHBORS WOULD KEEP COMING OVER TO SEE IT AND THEY COULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH BETTER IT WAS AT FEEDING EVENLY."

"Our soil is our bank account," says Dee. "We need to build it up if we are going to produce more crops and healthier crops."

Dee says that she comes by her conservation inclinations honestly.

"My dad was just a great steward of the land. He was just passionate about studying and

learning about the best ways to do things. He had an idea, maybe 25 years ago, to plant clover to put nitrogen in the soil for the wheat crop. Unfortunately that didn't work for him."

She says that both she and her dad have had to learn much of their conservation practices through trial and error, and as a result they made more than a few mistakes through the

years such as the time she grew daikon radishes as a cover crop and to break up the hardpan. Unfortunately, they didn't die off in time and she was late planting her corn.

"You need a frost to kill them, or use other means, and no one told me about that. It took a long time to kill them that year and I learned that you have to start thinking four to six weeks ahead of time about killing them if you can't count on a frost. They tell you what works, but no one tells you what doesn't work."

Because of experiences like this she says it is important that farmers share their knowledge and learn from each other. She says it is also important to embrace new technologies when they come along.

"Technology is crucial in today's agriculture. We're always looking for ways to become more efficient. For example, our MacDon 40' (12.2 m) FlexDraper® is essential to our operation, not only because it allows us to follow the same path that our sprayer and other equipment take, but because it is a much more efficient piece of equipment compared to the auger flex heads we used to use."

Dee says that their current FD75 is actually the second FlexDraper® that they have owned.

"I have just loved my FlexDrapers. When we first got one our neighbors would keep coming over to see it and they couldn't believe how much better it was at feeding evenly. It has such a good constant feed that our combine no longer slugs. The combine thrashes better and you get a better result from your harvest, especially in soybeans."

While she says that she has not taken time to measure exactly how much she is gaining, she is confident that she is recovering more.

"With our previous header, some of our beans would fly over the top because the cylinder would just throw them out. That's not a problem with the FlexDraper®. I have not put



A no-till soybean field on the Dee River Ranch

a dollar figure to it but I would say that we are getting at least a 10% increase in harvestable crop with the FlexDraper®, and maybe more.”

Another thing that Dee likes about the FlexDraper® is its simple design, which translates into robust performance in the field.

“I’m a good operator but I am not a mechanic. With our previous auger platforms if I broke the cutterbar I would have to wait several hours because I would have to call someone and wait for them to fix it. The FlexDraper® is different. Because it is hydraulically driven, the cutterbar is more likely to stop if I get something in the header. That not only saves

“EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AFFECTS THE BOTTOM LINE AND THAT AFFECTS SUSTAINABILITY.”

the cutterbar, it means that once I get the stuff out it is easy to get going again. What was once a several hour breakdown for me, is now a pause in work of just a few minutes.”

That kind of improved efficiency is exactly what Dee looks for in all of her operation.

“Every opportunity to improve efficiency affects the bottom line and that affects sustainability. As farmers, if we are not sustainable we won’t be in business to feed our neighbors or anybody else. The more we improve, the more able we are to increase our production and become profitable. You first have to be able to make a profit before you can focus on protecting the environment and feeding the world.”

Photos in this article provided by Jodie More.



NEW WORLD FARMER.

CHRISTIAN KIRCHNER IS ONE OF MANY FARMERS FROM EUROPE MAKING A GO OF IT IN NORTH AMERICA.

It's a common theme across North America; as older generation farmers retire they often find no one in the family willing to take on the farm. Their land is then often bought up by larger operations, thus reducing the number of farmers, and rural population overall.

But in some regions that trend is being checked – at least in part – thanks to the immigration of a new generation of farmer from places like Europe. Enter Christian Kirchner, a member of this new breed who came to Canada from his native Germany in 2006. Kirchner grew up on a small farm in Bavaria but now operates a 2,700 acre (1092.7 hectare) operation near the small town of La Salle on the outskirts of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

“ONE OF THE BIG ADVANTAGES TO CANADA IS THE SIZE OF FARM YOU CAN BUY. YOU CAN GROW EASIER HERE.”

Kirchner says he first got a taste for Canadian farming when he came over to work a few summers when he was a student back around 2000 and 2001.

“I did it during my holidays,” recalls Kirchner. “I knew some Germans here, so I came over to work.”

The experience opened Kirchner's eyes to the possibilities that Canada offers young, enterprising farmers. So when he was looking for a farm with his family, Canada came quickly to mind.

“One of the big advantages to Canada is the size of farm you can buy. You can grow easier here. Back home there is not much land available, and if there was any available the acres were few, at least in our area.”

Kirchner says that when he first arrived eight years ago there was much to learn, including practices such as swathing which they don't do in Bavaria.

“It's a little bit different farming here than in Germany. The first year you have to learn a lot, especially with the different machinery. But you learn it pretty fast.”

Kirchner plants grain and oilseeds on his land, rotating between staples like wheat, soybeans, oats and canola.

"This year we had 1,000 acres (404.7 hectares) of soybeans, 500 acres (202.3 hectares) of winter wheat, 300 acres (121.4 hectares) of spring wheat, 450 acres (182.1 hectares) of oats and then a small piece of corn. We also usually do about 500 acres (202.3 hectares) of canola."

To harvest his crops, Kirchner relies on three pieces of MacDon machinery; a MacDon M155 windrower mounted with a 35' (10.6 m) D65 Draper Header and a 40' (12.2 m) FD75 FlexDraper® mounted on a New Holland CR9080 combine. He says he first learned about MacDon during his summer work as a student and has always appreciated the simplicity of MacDon's equipment.

"If you have a swather like the MacDon, it's not hard to learn. You just go out there and swath."

Kirchner said that he started with MacDon, or MacDon built, machines in 2006, and bought his current equipment three years ago when his previous equipment became too small or too old for his needs.

So has he noticed a difference with this new generation of MacDon product? You bet he has.

"The M155 has more than enough power for that header. It performs really well in hard or really bad crop conditions. There is also no problem ever getting stuck; you can even go through water holes. It just has lots of power."

He also appreciates the increased clearance of the M155, especially in big bushy crops like canola.

"On the old one I always had trouble going through it because the canola swath would

"IF YOU HAVE A SWATHER LIKE THE MACDON, IT'S NOT HARD TO LEARN. YOU JUST GO OUT THERE AND SWATH."

actually touch the bottom of the swather. But that's not a problem any more. In heavy canola the wider opening means that there is a lot more room for the canola to go through."

Some of Kirchner's land is actually within Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway, a ring road that circles the city. This not only means that he has to travel a little farther when he is swathing, but he must also cross a couple of major highways. Here Kirchner says the M155's DualDirection® feature, which allows the operator to reverse the driver's seat in the cab and drive with engine forward, is something he values.

but what confirmed the decision was some neighborly advice.

"I already knew that I wanted to give the FD75 a try, but it was hard to make any other decision because my neighbours just kept telling me how happy they were with it."

Now that he has had one harvest with the header, he says that he agrees with their assessment.

"I'm really happy with the product. It's a great header. In my winter wheat, it was super easy

to combine. But in soybeans it's unbelievable how close to the ground you can cut. I'm able to follow the ground no matter what because of that floating adapter. I'm really impressed with that."

"I also like how it feeds the combine more evenly than an auger header. It's easier for the combine. You get more capacity out of it."

Like other FD75 users, Kirchner says he has noticed that he is also recovering more crop.

Kirchner says that perhaps the biggest thing that he appreciates about his FD75 is its reliability. It seems that with his previous combine header by another manufacturer, it was always a question of whether or not he would be able to combine when the crop was ready.

"My other header cost me a few nerves, because I never knew when it might break down. But with my MacDon I haven't had any breakdowns, it's really reliable. Like I said before, it's just a great product."



Christian Kirchner

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LISTEN AND LEARN.

TO MAKE BETTER MACHINES,
MACDON SEEKS INPUT FROM THE
FRONT LINE OF DEALER SERVICE.

If you've been a regular reader of Performance Magazine you know how much MacDon depends on feedback from its customers to improve its products. But there is another source of feedback equally important to MacDon, and that is the service people who work with their products everyday. These people represent MacDon's frontline contact with their machines, and few know better than them what's working well on their machines and what needs improvement.

It is for that reason that MacDon recently invited service representatives from five of its larger dealerships in the United States and Canada to its

head office in Winnipeg for a special "listen and learn" session with key people from across the company. The dealerships selected represented a cross-section of mainline and independent operations, so that MacDon could receive input from a number of different points of view.

"We created this forum so that we can hear from some of our top dealers what they are seeing out there regarding our equipment," said Darren Fisher, Product Support Manager with MacDon.

Fisher said that the session was quite a bit different from the service technician training that MacDon conducts with its dealerships (last year

alone more than 900 technicians from 269 North American dealerships took this training). While those training sessions do provide opportunity for feedback, they are not as focused on generating constructive feedback as this most recent listen and learn session was.

"This time we really wanted them to tell us what's working for them, so that we maintain it, and what's bothering them, so that we can fix it."

To help accomplish this goal, the five attendees were provided with a number of formal and informal opportunities to have candid conversations with MacDon staff over their two day visit, including



“THIS TIME WE REALLY WANTED THEM TO TELL US WHAT’S WORKING FOR THEM, SO THAT WE MAINTAIN IT, AND WHAT’S BOTHERING THEM, SO THAT WE CAN FIX IT.”

classroom sessions where some of MacDon’s senior leadership group were in attendance.

One of the dealer representatives that attended the listen and learn was Lane Forbes, a Shop Foreman with Redhead Equipment in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. He says that he was impressed by both the quality of the discussion and by who was

in the room to hear what he had to say.

“They opened up the floor for us to voice any or all concerns, everything from parts and warranty to service issues,” said Forbes. “Everybody from top to bottom of that organization, including VPs, were very easy and open to discuss anything with. They all seemed very in tune to what was going on and

wanted to hear what we had to say. I found that quite impressive, you don’t often see that.”

Forbes says he was particularly impressed with MacDon’s approach to making a better product.

“It is nice to see the company trying to improve themselves. They’re asking the right questions and they’re talking to the right people to understand what the issues are so they can fix them. That in turn makes a better product for the customer. If the customers are happy, it makes my job a lot easier. It’s a win for everybody.”

Continued



Eric Bartchy (Left) and Lane Forbes (Right) observe on the assembly line.

“I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT THEY HAD REALLY GOOD PRODUCT AND PRIDE IN WHAT THEY DID, AND THIS TRIP JUST CONFIRMED ALL THAT.”

In addition to the candid discussions, the listen and learn participants were also given a tour of MacDon’s operations including its manufacturing facilities. The tour gave them an opportunity to speak directly with many of the people who are building the equipment they service everyday, and see some of the quality control measures that MacDon employs on the line.

“I thought that the amount of run time they do on some of the components on the assembly line was pretty cool,” said Forbes. “For example they’ve got a fairly impressive machine that they

hook on to the whole center draper and adapter to test all the pressure settings. I had no idea they did that much with the machines.”

Eric Bartchy, a Field Service Technician with Baxla Tractor in Washington Courthouse, Ohio, who also participated in the listen and learn said that the whole experience was valuable for growing his understanding of MacDon and its products.

“I always thought that they had really good product and pride in what they did, and this trip just confirmed all that,” said Bartchy. “It’s easy to see that they care about doing things right.”

And doing things the right way, is something that Bartchy believes strongly in.

“That’s very important for me on the service end of things because it increases your faith in the product. If you don’t have faith in the product, it’s difficult to go out and sell it to one of your customers. And that customer is hopefully going to be your customer for a long time, so it’s a trust thing. So when you’re confident that what you’re selling him is going to work, it’s a whole lot easier.”

Bartchy says that he had one more important take away from his visit, and that was just how approachable everyone was at MacDon.

“If I need help in the future I certainly won’t hesitate about calling somebody if I have an issue. I know they’ll be glad to help.”



At the premiere of *The Great American Wheat Harvest*, (from left to right) Jim Deibert – JKD Harvesting, Tracy Zeorian – Zeorian Harvesting, Kent Braathen – President of the US Custom Harvesters, Nathan Mitchell – MacDon Industries Ltd.



DIRECTORS CUT.

THE GREAT AMERICAN WHEAT HARVEST TELLS THE STORY OF HARD-WORKING CUSTOM HARVESTERS.

On March 25th 2014, *The Great American Wheat Harvest* documentary film made its national debut in Washington, D.C. A crowd of about 250 people gathered at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian on a snowy morning for a celebration of this film on National Ag Day; the film screening was an official part of the National Ag Day festivities.

The *Great American Wheat Harvest* tells the story of custom harvesters who travel from the heart of Texas to the Canadian Border, harvesting the wheat that feeds the world. The film was produced by award-winning Director and Producer, Conrad Weaver, President of Conjostudios, LLC.

All of the harvesting crews featured in the film were in attendance at the premiere, including two former *Performance Magazine* Cover stories, Jim Deibert (Spring 2011) and Jim & Tracy Zeorian (Fall 2013). Also on hand for the inaugural showing were many of the film's sponsors, including representatives from the USCHI (U.S. Custom Harvesters Inc.), John Deere and MacDon Industries Ltd.

After working on this project for nearly four years, Producer and Director, Conrad Weaver was relieved and excited to begin sharing his film with the world. "It's thrilling to see so many people come out to view this film. It's been such a huge project, and I've invested so much time, energy, and resources into it, so I'm excited that people want to see the finished product," says Weaver.

Following the national premiere in Washington, DC, the film has been showing across the Midwest United States. The first public showing took place at the Midwest Theater in Scottsbluff, NE. The film also screened in

Gettysburg, SD, Stillwater, OK, Colby, KS and to a sold-out theater in Lincoln, NE. Plans are being made to bring the film to Canada, and to many independent theaters and film festivals across North America.

Weaver comments, "The general public needs to see this film. Harvesters and farmers already know what goes on during harvest, and they are excited to see it, and we're glad they came! But it's the public who doesn't know or understand agriculture who's the target audience we're hoping to reach. We've already submitted it to several film festivals and theaters, and are looking for other venues to show it as well."

After the film shows in theaters and makes its rounds at festivals, it will be released on DVD and Blu-ray which will contain footage, interviews, and extra content that does not appear in the film. Anyone wanting to pre-order a copy on DVD or Blu-ray can do that from the film's web site: www.GreatAmericanWheatHarvest.com.



Jim Deibert was featured in the Spring 2011 Issue of *Performance* (Left), *Jim & Tracy Zeorian's* story is in the Fall 2013 Issue (Right).

Both issues of *Performance* can be viewed at MacDon.com/performance

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