

Great Scott!

By Scott Goodman



Scott Goodman, owner of Sewing Machine Warehouse & Needle.com has been servicing the sewing public since 1976.

Eleven Questions with Steve Wilson

Steve Wilson is the founder of Anita Goodesign, an embroidery design company that has grown to over 65 employees, creating projects and sharing their creativity throughout the U.S., at more than 300 special events, hosting over 25,000 participants annually. Anita Goodesign was recognized by Inc. Magazine as one of the fastest-growing private companies in America. Their mission: "To bring fun and creativity back to home embroidery with gorgeous designs and affordable prices".

Great Scott!: What led you into machine embroidery?

Steve Wilson: I started as a graphic artist, creating designs for silkscreened t-shirts. In 1993 at age 23 I started a custom monogram business with my mother, Linda. The monogram business turned into a clip-art oriented, shirt embroidery business. With the demand for custom logos and designs, we made a \$50,000 investment in DOS-based digitizing software. The software was complicated, not user-friendly at all. I used that original software to build skills while creating custom logos and designs for businesses and individuals.

Great Scott!: Tell me how your designs and digitizing evolved?

Steve Wilson: In the mid 90s, I created licensed designs for Disney, Looney Tunes and sports logos. Larger scale original designs for home dec and high-end textiles came later. I didn't want to do clip art, or smaller 4" x 4" and 5" x 7" designs.

Great Scott!: With your start in silkscreening what differences did you notice when you changed medium?

Steve Wilson: In physical painting, brush strokes are dimensional, thread is the same. Stitches flow. Stitch direction and lines give life to designs. You don't get that by converting clip art.

Great Scott!: Where do you get your artistic inspiration?

Steve Wilson: All of my inspiration comes from outside our industry. Interior design influences, *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Decor*, post modernism, baroque, shabby chic, couture fashion, *Vogue* magazine.

Great Scott!: So how does the creative process work at Anita Goodesign?

Steve Wilson: Twice each year, 40 of our in-house employees collaborate during a 2-day retreat. Each person has 10 minutes to pitch their ideas. Then, we break into groups that develop the ideas into designs and themes. We are continually working 12 months in advance.

Great Scott!: Many of our readers will want to know what kind of software you drive?

Steve Wilson: We use software brands that many home embroiderers are using. Today, off-the-shelf programs are much better than professional software was even 5 years ago.

Great Scott!: What makes Anita Goodesign staff unique?

Steve Wilson: Our staff is young, 24-40 years old, and hip; with new perspective, new energy and fresh ideas. If you came by our headquarters, you would



hear loud music and see staff members unwinding in our beverage center while playing Xbox games. Our events are curriculum-based. Our 20 educators conduct 350 hosted events across the country. This year, we shared Anita's Playhouse; featuring baby designs based on established characters that will become old friends in upcoming events, like Anita's Christmas Train.

Great Scott!: And your product?

Steve Wilson: I looked at retail experiences like Apple and Anthropologie. Why shouldn't packaging and materials be fresh and bright, compelling and emotional?

Great Scott!: With technology in a constant state of change, companies like Apple and Microsoft no longer include CD/DVD drives in their new computers. How are you adapting?

Steve Wilson: People still need to see and touch our product. Our projects are book-based. While we will still include physical media, we are moving to a cloud-based system and are adapting by remastering 700 of our original designs; tweaking older designs and updating design files for modern machines. These designs will be available to users that purchased the original disks. Our new website will maintain virtual purchases and manages your design

wish list. Of course, you will be able to access your virtual library on tablets and mobile devices.

Great Scott!: What else is in Anita's pipeline?

Steve Wilson: Watch for Anita's Perfect Sewing Room. This will be a really cool way to decorate your sewing room, with projects like: pin cushion, organizer, and USB stick organizer. This set will combine warm and cozy shabby-chic with modern elements. Anita's Decorated Table will include: Napkin corners, table-cloth edges, bread basket, and linking borders. These projects can be completed in a class segment. All of these projects will have functionality.

Great Scott!: When we started, you told us about your mother, Linda. What is Linda up to, today?

Steve Wilson: Retired, making stuff for grandchildren. Her 5 and 6-year-old grandchildren are already having fun, using their first 5" x 7" embroidery machine.

Did I forget a question that you would have asked? Let me know. GreatScott@kneedle.com and don't forget to "like" me, I share real-time info, as it breaks, on your favorite new products: [Facebook.com/GreatScottSews](https://www.facebook.com/GreatScottSews)