

## The Ups And Downs Of Valves

By John Carollo

It's always good to take a fresh look at some of the many engine components we work with. Rather than being lulled into complacency, the idea is to see what's new, what trends are in play and to get a current reading from others on the inside. In other words, it's good to keep it fresh.

S. B. International cuts a wide swath in the market by offering general automotive, heavy-duty diesel, agricultural and marine valves, as well as a performance line aimed more at the local Saturday night racer.

The majority of SBI's sales are for popular auto, truck, import, and heavy-duty diesels. "When it comes to units sold," says SBI's Brian Bender, "it's the 60-series Detroit Diesel and the second position is the Chevy 350 and then the 71-series Detroit four valve. Other popular engine configurations are the 16-valve 2.4L and 3.0L 24-valve single overhead cam Chryslers."

SBI's biggest effort is aimed at the big diesels, but Bender says it's a tough proposition. "If I compare the diesel market to the automotive market, I see the demand for valves declining." He cites reclaiming or remanufacturing, recycling junkyard parts and the fact that engines are just lasting longer. "We have valves for the Cummins ISX and ISM. Heavy-duty diesel, due to regulations, more people are rebuilding older engines. Newer engines have a high price tag."

Bender says he sees two distinct types of customers. "One will buy for quality and the other buys for price. Or, in some cases, they reclaim parts."

Looking forward, Bender says, "It's still too early to tell about hybrids." But, he points out, "Flex fuel engines use 238N (ultra high stainless steel) and Inconel valves. And there are some new materials being used in valve seat inserts. The old material used to be cobalt-based alloys, but due to the price of cobalt, some companies have designed proprietary iron-based alloys to replace it in the alloy."

Reprinted by permission of *Engine Builder* magazine.