Q: One of the micron bags I bought from you appears to be defective. When sunlight comes in through the shop window across the dust collector, I see dust like smoke coming from the bag. I thought these bags were supposed to filter everything!

A: Brand new Shaker Felt bags are rated to capture particles down to around 3 microns in diameter (a micron is a millionth of a meter, quite microscopic). The particles in cigarette smoke, for comparison, are around 5 microns in diameter—so it shouldn't be surprising to see a thin, smoky haze of extremely fine dust making its way through the felted polyester material in a new bag. As a layer of dust builds up on the inner surface of the bag, it acts like a filter itself, ultimately capturing particles as fine as .1 microns. The more you use the bag, the better it works, up to a point. As the dust cake builds up inside the bag, back pressure increases steadily until your dust collector's efficiency begins to suffer. When your filter bags are very firm to the touch while the collector's running, it's time to turn off the machine and give them a shake to knock loose most of the cake. When you restart, you'll see a brief burst of dust coming through the fabric, but it will only last a moment or two. Experimentation will lead you toward a happy medium between cleaning too frequently or allowing too much back pressure to build up.