

# TEST AREA

# THE FULL MONTY

## TREND CRAFTSMAN ROUTER TABLE Mk2, T30 VACUUM EXTRACTOR AND ACCESSORIES

I am not overly fond of hand-held router use. Like many people, I much prefer using one in conjunction with some form of table that enables it to be used as a mini spindle moulder. Trend's Mk2 router table, which came on to the market this summer, is among a variety of new products recently launched by the company.

The kit was well packaged, and I found it straightforward to assemble with help from the excellent instruction manual. Satisfyingly, the surface of the cast aluminium table has been machined acceptably flat (having once used a table that was far from flat, I know of how frustrating this can prove). The four legs are constructed from pressed steel and are bolted to the table, two pressed steel extensions are bolted to the table/leg assembly and each has two steel supports.

A small amount of lateral 'play' was evident with each extension table, which resulted in the channels for the mitre fence being slightly misaligned if the extensions were knocked. However, fitting a couple of extra steel straps (similar to steel repair straps) to each table/extension's sides should remedy this.

The back fence is plastic, fitted with a perspex guard, and has a 58mm diameter dust extraction port. To this port a large capacity hose (Trend T30/22) or a regular vacuum hose (such as Trend CRT/4) can be attached, using Trend's CRT/3 connector accessory. The fence has a small integral workpiece support, which is adjustable, that is designed to provide support when routing a complete edge.

Optional spring pressure clamps (CRT/10) may be fitted, but I found these interfered with the perspex guard and were a bit of a fiddle to set. But, as the router I fitted to the table (Trend's T5, reviewed by *TW* in the November 98 and July 99 issues) worked so smoothly in conjunction with the table, I found I could often do without them.

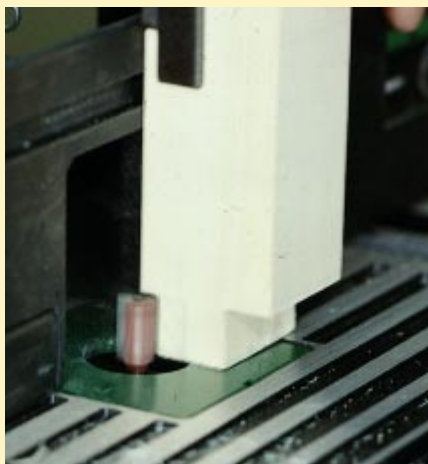
A tenon push block accessory is supplied with the table and cleverly fits on to the fence. To cut tenons, the workpiece is



BELOW: Router cutters



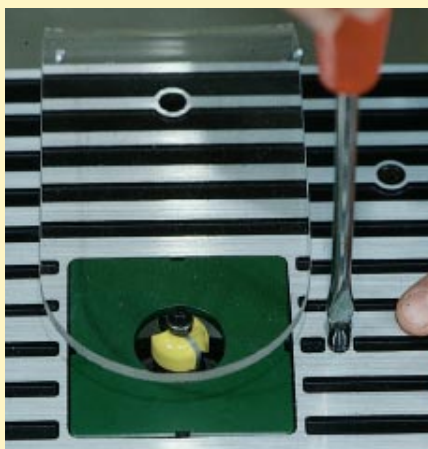
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**ABOVE:** Cutting a tenon

secured to the block and the two are slid along the fence to, and over, the previously set cutter. In practice, I found that using this did not prove much quicker than hand-cutting the tenons with a saw. However, for those not confident with their hand skills, it could prove a useful feature – though alternatively, of course, you can remove a tenon's waste sections using the router table's mitre fence, a method I have used successfully many times. Overall, once I had mastered the fence's foibles, it was relatively trouble free to use.

A router is fitted to the underside of the table by attaching a pre-drilled steel fixing plate. This is not supplied with the table,



**ABOVE:** Fitting lead on pin

and must be purchased separately. Four different plates are available, and the manual states which is the correct one for each different router – from a list of 51 different models! The excellent manual also clearly illustrates which bolts and bolt holes are suitable for each different router model.

The fixing plate is secured to the table by four countersunk screws – an operation that was simple and fairly quick. I therefore found removing the router – for a hand-held task – straightforward and not too time consuming.

One of the advantages of a router table is its ability to be used for profiling a curved wooden component or workpiece. For this task, the back fence is removed and a cutter with a ball bearing or pin guide used. A



**ABOVE:** Router table top

lead-on pin is supplied with the table, to which it is screwed. This pin acts as a guide for when the first cut is made, and is particularly effective when large-diameter cutters are used.

An obvious drawback of using this method of routing is one concerning safety, as you are moving your workpiece, by hand, around an exposed cutter. To help overcome the potential dangers, Trend produces a height-adjustable perspex profiling guard (CRT/2), which bolts on to the back of the router table.

A feature I particularly like is the no-volt release switch, which is attached to the front right leg. I was pleased to see that this had a large red stop button – this protrudes out, and is therefore easy to find and operate quickly.

The table can be mounted on a floor stand unit (CRT/FS), which can be turned into a cabinet by means of an enclosure kit (CRT/EK). However, I mounted the test unit on to a board and attached this to a Workmate, as suggested by the manual – although I needed to make my board slightly larger than it specifies. This arrangement worked well.

I linked up Trend's T30 vacuum cleaner via the large extraction hose. The power cable from the router table is plugged into

extracted.

I really like this vacuum cleaner (which was featured in Product News in last month's *TW*), as it effectively extracted most of the fine routed sawdust. It is also great to use as a workshop vacuum cleaner. Full marks to Trend for supplying it with a very long power cable and a five-metre-long hose, which makes cleaning up less of a chore – I'm all for that!

Among the many cutters I used in conjunction with the table were Trend's Panel Moulder Ogee Profile (C150 x 8mm TC) and Profile Scriber Ogee Mould (C149 x

## SPECIFICATIONS T30 VACUUM EXTRACTOR

Power	1200W
Autostart	max 2000W min 40W
Airflow	3300l/min
Max Vacuum	2300mm H2O
Noise	72dB
Hose	36mm O/D x 3m
Container Volume	34l dry, 25l wet
Dimensions	620x400x400mm
Weight	11.5kg
RRP	£149

## SPECIFICATIONS ROUTER TABLE MK-2

Table Leg Base To Table Height	367mm
Table Length	1030mm
Table Width	359mm
Fence Length	605mm
Fence Height	100mm
Weight (minus accessories)	10kg
RRP	£144.95

## INFORMATION

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**ABOVE:** Tenon push block

the vacuum, and the vacuum's power cable is plugged into the mains, an arrangement that allows the cleaner to operate as the router table's 'On' switch is activated. When the router is switched off, the vacuum keeps running for a few extra seconds to ensure that all of the fine sawdust is

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## T W VERDICT



**Integral workpiece support**

8mm TC). At £39 and £49 respectively, their prices may cause a sharp intake of breath, but they really are a quality product. I used them to form a raised panel and moulded stile/rails in oak, and found them



**Table in action**

superb. However, even though the T5 router performed adequately with these, in an ideal world I would prefer to use them in conjunction with a more powerful model ■

This router table presented few problems to assemble and was relatively straightforward to operate, and at the bargain price of £144.95 it is difficult to criticise. The only grouse, albeit minor, that I had with it was the back fence – I found its operation a trifle awkward and cumbersome, although, once its foibles were learnt and made provision for, it was okay to use.

The T5 router performed very well, especially with 1/4in shank cutters. It would be advantageous to fit a long, fine cutter depth/height adjuster when using the router in conjunction with the table, but I must confess to finding that I could manage without one.

I was particularly impressed with the T30 vacuum cleaner. Used in conjunction with the router table, other machinery (it worked well with my bandsaw) or simply for cleaning purposes, it would be an asset to any workshop.

In conclusion, all these Trend products – especially when utilised as one routing package – should prove very useful to most workshops.