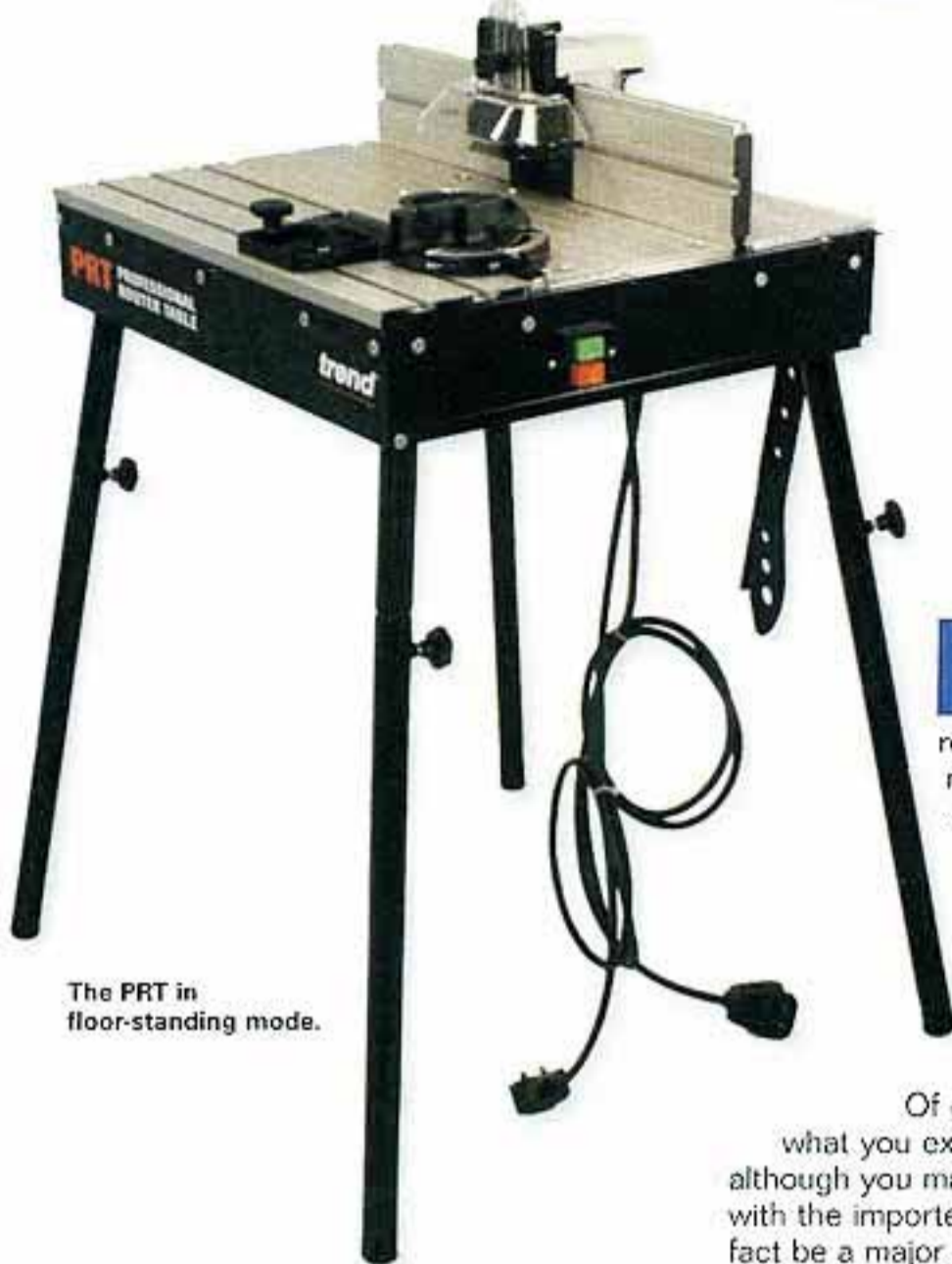


Trend PRT router table



The PRT in floor-standing mode.

Having been happily using one of the very heavy cast iron router tables for several months, I'm more than convinced that they offer extremely good value for money, so I was very keen to try out the Trend PRT Table which, with its hefty price tag, initially appears to be rather less good value.

Of course, it all depends on what you expect for your money, and although you may get masses of metal with the imported versions, this may in fact be a major stumbling block for those with restricted workshop space. Many users will only need a router table occasionally and haven't the room to leave it permanently set up in a dedicated space, and in this case the PRT weighing in at just 25 kgs offers a much more portable option. In addition you can slip off the leg extensions and use it bench-mounted as well to further increase the versatility.

This portability is achieved by using aluminium for the main construction, and the generous 650 x 550mm top has a beautifully smooth, brushed finish. A useful range of insert rings are supplied to provide maximum support no matter what size cutter you're using, up to a maximum of 86mm and

these fit in place easily, finishing perfectly flush with the top — an important point as any undulations will affect the finish on the work.

Fence and guard assembly

The fence/guard assembly is another very nice aluminium casting, perfectly machined so that the fences are dead true. Whilst these fences are adjustable for aperture, I was a little disappointed to find that they weren't independently adjustable for depth of cut. While this may not be important for the majority of edge moulding, if you're producing a profile that covers the whole face of the edge, the option to move the rear fence separately is very useful. Without this movement you have to make your own shims, not difficult but it's much easier if there's a micro adjustment built in.

The fence housing also incorporates a large extraction aperture, although you have to buy the 58mm connector as an extra. It would have been nice to see such an essential item included with the original kit, particularly as it's a non-standard size.

The fence assembly is easily fixed on the table in one of three positions using tee bolts which slide into specially machined slots. As with everything else on the PRT, this is a very neat way of location that confirms the quality of the whole thing.

Legs removed for bench mounting.



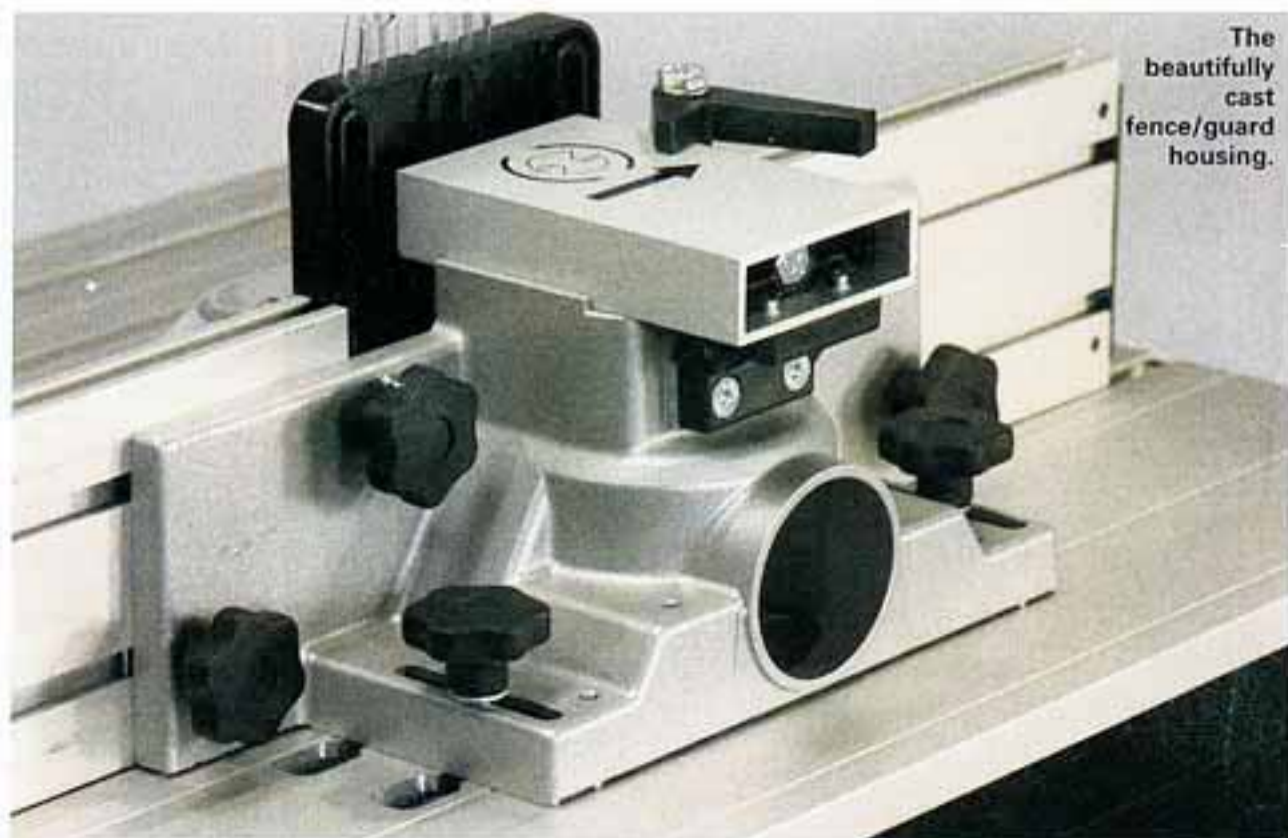
A selection of different table inserts is provided.



The fences are properly true but not independently adjustable.



The beautifully cast fence/guard housing.

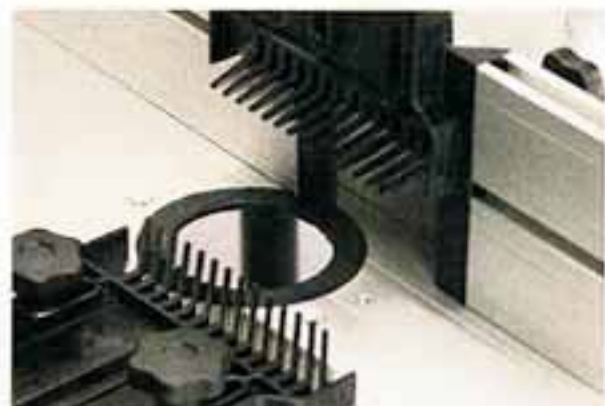




The fence housing locks onto the table with tee bolts in slots.



The Perspex guard hinges back for better access.



Horizontal and vertical featherboards hold the work firmly in place.



Router mounting is simple with the centre section of the table removed.



The solid mitre guide seems very accurate.



The lead-in pin locates forward of the cutter.

Clouding the view?

The overhead guard consists of a plastic featherboard with a clear Perspex shield. Whilst this looks and works well, I always worry about the long-term visibility of Perspex when it has been exposed to clouds of fine dust. The dust build-up due to static is often severe, and whilst I had no problems in the relatively short term I used the table, it may become an issue in the future. The whole top guard assembly swings back neatly out of the way to give better access if need be. Another adjustable featherboard mounted in the table slots provides efficient horizontal pressure — very important if you want a consistent finish to the work.

Simple mounting

Actually mounting the router to the table is a major issue with most of the other tables I've ever used, but on the PRT Trend have simplified the whole problem by making the centre section of the table removable, allowing you to mount the router separately. Four large cams operated with a screwdriver quickly release this section, though it would be nice to have a suitable tool provided for this. Even the widest screwdriver is too



Velcro strap provided to hold switch in the 'on' position.

narrow and will end up eventually chewing the screw head.

Routers with the Trend Base Configuration (TBC) just bolt in place with two countersunk screws through the table top — simplicity itself and a major plus if you don't have a dedicated router for the table and need to remove and replace it on a regular basis. However, the handbook gives detailed instructions for drilling and fitting many non-TBC routers, so you should have no problem no matter what make you have.

Easy access to cutters

The other major advantage of this removable table section is that access to the cutter is now simple: there's no more grubbing around in the dark underneath the table, banging your knuckles in the process. Simply lift out the router still attached to the table and the cutter is now so easy to access. In addition the loss of cutting depth due to the table thickness is only 8mm. This has been a bit of an issue on some other router tables which may need a collet extension to get the full cutting depth — there are no such problems on the PRT.

Further provisions

A substantial mitre guide is included, and you feel that this one is probably accurate as well — the polished slide moving freely in the table slot, which doesn't always happen with aluminium tables.

For curved work a lead-in pin is provided, which screws into the table in just the right place — another small but vital aid often overlooked on other makes of table.

Locking on with Velcro

The router plugs into the on/off switch in the standard way, and this switch is easily accessible on the near end of the table. If you have a router with a switch that doesn't 'lock-on', a Velcro strap is supplied to hold it in the operating position.

I also liked the provision of a decent pushstick which hangs handily at the back of the table. A small point, but if such things are kept within reach you tend to use them.

Tested by
Alan Holtham



VERDICT

This is a very nicely made table; everything fits and works well, and my only real complaint is the lack of independently adjustable fences. The high price tag may initially put you off, but when you look more closely at factors like portability, space requirement and ease of use then the price is much more reasonable. If you like well made tools that are a pleasure to use then it's certainly worth spending the money on the PRT.

Price: £375 + VAT

Contact: Trend Tel: 0800 4 TREND or 01923 224657, Fax: 01923 236879 or visit www.trendmachinery.co.uk

RATING ★★★★★