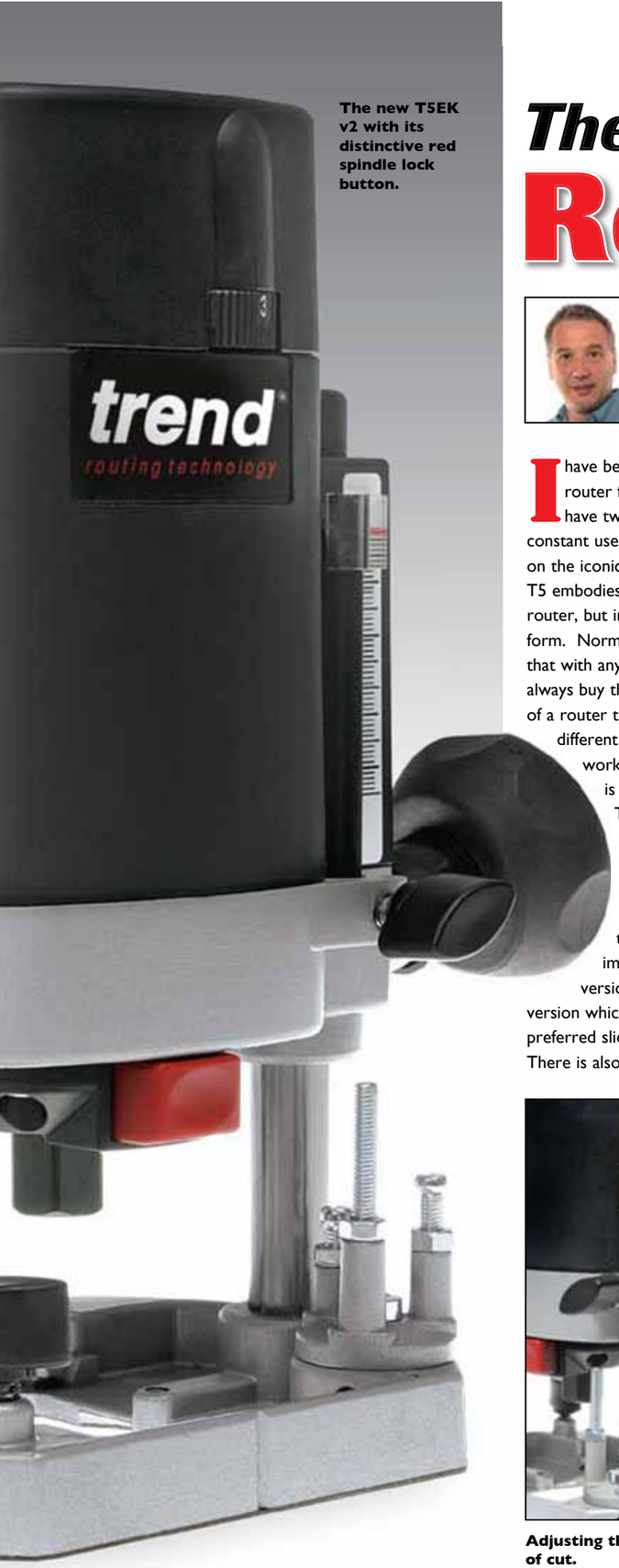

The new T5EK v2 with its distinctive red spindle lock button.

The New T5EK v2 Review

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER
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Alan Holtham gives the New T5 v2 a thorough work-out, to see if the best really has just got better.

I have been using a Trend T5 router for several years; in fact I have two of them in more or less constant use in the workshop. Based on the iconic Elu MOF 96, to me the T5 embodies everything you need in a router, but in a simple, uncomplicated form. Normally I would recommend that with any power tool you should always buy the biggest, but in the case of a router the situation is somewhat different and for the majority of work a smaller, lighter model is far more user friendly.

The T5 has always ticked all the boxes for me, so with some considerable experience of the model I was interested to see if there were any significant improvements on this latest version. I tested the standard version which is fitted with my preferred sliding on/off switch.

There is also a T5 Mk 2 version with exactly the same features but with the 'dead man' type of switch, although you can buy an optional lock for this if you want to mount the Mk 2 under a table. The T5 is supplied in 240 or 115 volt options, and comes either as the basic machine only, or in kit form which includes a carrying case and several useful accessories.

New soft grip handles, for safe adjusting of the plunge lock.

Adjusting the depth flag for depth of cut.

The most obvious improvement has to be the new soft grip handles. On the older versions there is a join on the two halves of the hard plastic handles, but these new softer ones are a real upgrade to the ergonomics.

The motor power has also been uprated from 850 to 1010 watts. This may not seem a lot, but in reality, coupled to the fact that the T5 will take an 8mm collet, it means that the machine is capable of using some relatively big cutters up to a maximum diameter of 40mm. Previously this size of cutter had to be used with bigger and much less user-friendly half inch routers. I am pleased to see that 8mm shank cutters, previously the preserve of our European cousins, are now beginning to appear in a wider range of profiles in the UK.

The extra rigidity of 8mm over the equivalent 1/4" shank version is quite considerable, particularly with the long narrow cutters. This combination of extra motor power and the bigger collet capacity extend the range of the new T5 considerably. In the kit form I tested both sizes of collet which are provided as standard.

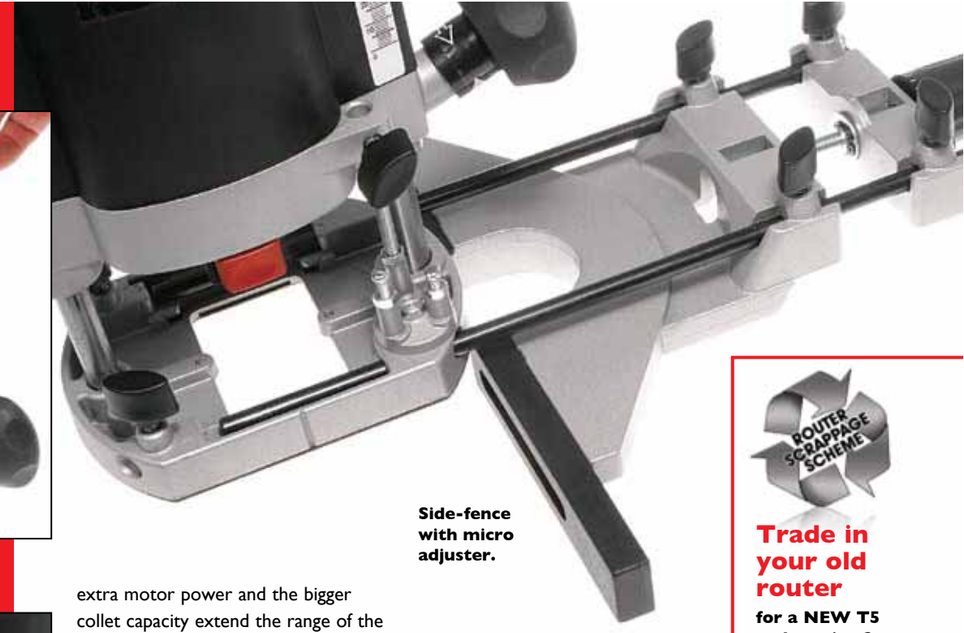
Adjusting the fine height adjuster.

New style on/off switch.

Using the spindle lock to tighten the collet nut.

Adjusting the fence using the microfine fence adjuster

Base plate showing holes for guide bushes and router tables.



Side-fence with micro adjuster.

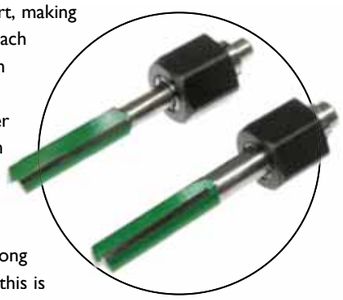
There have also been some minor changes to the router base with extra sight-lines being engraved on the sides and back. As you would expect the base has the standard TBC configuration, which means that the huge range of Trend accessories and jigs can be fitted without additional sub-bases. For me, the two flats on the base make it much easier to work against the straight edge. I have never been very keen on round base routers for this job although theoretically they should be just as good. For template work a 20mm guide bush is provided in the kit, with other sizes available as optional extras.

The spindle lock has been repositioned and redesigned with a more comfortable knob making it very easy to change cutters using a single 17mm spanner.

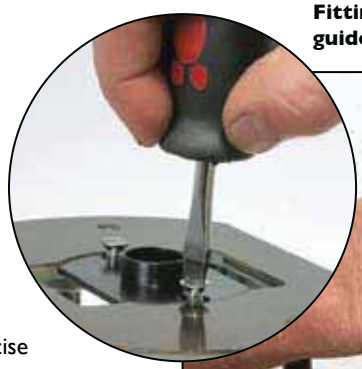
For dust extraction, a new clear plastic hood now clips in on both sides of the base and is probably as good as you get on a router. It is also lower in profile so you still maintain maximum plunge when using it. The snag is that whatever you fit for extraction it always seems to make it awkward to change cutters, and anyway the dust flies off in different directions depending on the type of cut. No one has yet cracked the problem of totally efficient extraction on the router and probably they never will, but the option to route the hose away from either the front or the back of the tool is a real advantage. And the amount of dust generated is considerably reduced when it's hooked up to a decent collector.

The side-fence has also been modified, mostly with a view to improving the dust collection ability. The integral fine adjuster allows you to move the fence backwards and forwards in 0.1mm increments. My only criticism of this fence is that the mounting bars are rather too short, making it difficult to reach in very far from the edge of a board. Another 75mm in length would make all the difference. However you can buy extra long 500mm bars if this is a real problem to you.

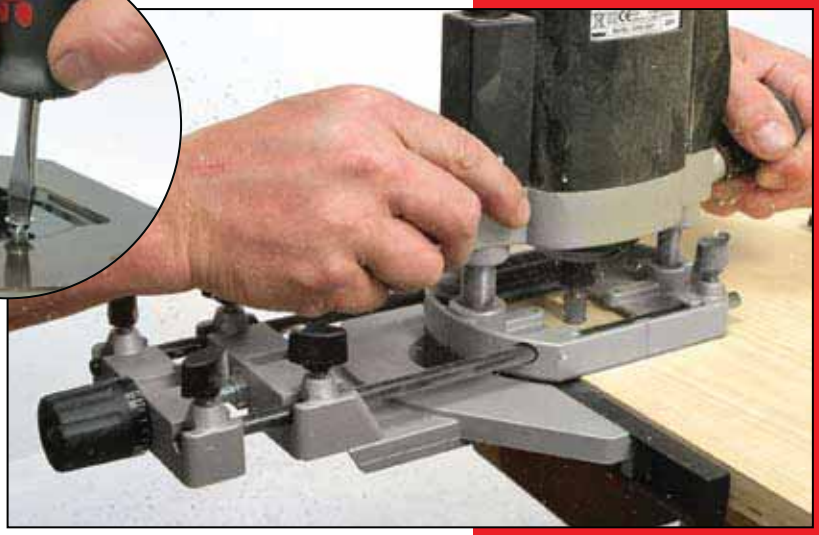
The depth stop is still a simple rod operating on the three position turret. I know this is often criticized, but in my opinion its simplicity is a real advantage as any type of depth stop will need zeroing for the amount of protrusion of the cutter and the more complicated the depth stop the trickier this operation becomes. Less is definitely more in this situation.



8mm shanks provide a far larger gripping area.



Fitting the guide bush.



Micro adjustment side-fence.

If depth-of-cut adjustment is critical as with some jigs like the dovetailer, the T5 Kit includes a fine height adjuster which fits onto the long screw of the depth turret. This allows precise control of cut depth and I have one permanently fitted to one of my old T5s.

In use it is hard to fault the new T5; it is still as easy to handle as the original MOF 96, despite the near doubling of power, but still only weighing 3.0kg. Everything is firm and rigid, there is none of that rocking about on the plunge columns that you often get with the cheaper smaller routers. The

Fitting the new low profile dust spout.

50mm plunge action is smooth and accurate and quickly locks with the now wonderfully comfortable side handles! The benefits of all the extra power soon become clear with the bigger cutters and you can now make a reduced number of passes, the full wave electronics maintaining a constant speed even under load. Where you are removing a lot of material in one pass it becomes essential to use the extraction hood, as without it the dust is thrown everywhere making for a very uncomfortable and unhealthy working environment.

Using the beam trammel bar to make circles and arcs.

One final accessory included in the kit is a trammel point that fits onto one of the side-fence bars for cutting circles. This is not something you use very often but is surprisingly effective when you do need it, although some means of locking it onto the fence rod independently of the wing nut clamp would make it easier to use. IP

Conclusion

The original T5 specification was hard to improve, but the additional features of the new model lift it to the top of the class for me. The cosmetic tweaks are all very worthy, particularly to the handles, but the real plus is the improved power output allowing you to access a far greater range of bigger cutters on 8mm shanks without the expense of having to move up to a bigger router. But please could we have some longer fence bars as standard!

Edge profiling with a bearing guided ogee cutter Ref. 46/30X1/4TC.

...and with a bearing guided cove cutter Ref. 46/264X1/4TC.