

NEW TOOLS

All the latest tools and equipment tested and rated for a better workshop

Charnwood Machines

How do Charnwood's new tablesaw and spindle moulder stack up? They turn out to be rather good for a whole host of reasons

When readers ask how best to set up a workshop we often recommend they do so gradually, starting with a small bandsaw and Workmate or bench, and then work their way up. There is, of course, an argument for buying a raft of machines all in one go, from the same manufacturer, for compatibility as much as anything. To do that you have to have confidence in the brand, but can get woodworking more quickly from day one.

As a company, Charnwood have a reputation for friendliness, good service and reasonable machines. Their kit has always been fine, but nothing special, and you wouldn't necessarily have chosen to equip your entire workshop in their familiar rich blue products. Recently, however, the Leicester-based company has been working hard to improve the quality of its machines, both in livery and spec. They've also introduced some new models, and we were particularly intrigued by the combination of spindle moulder, tablesaw and extractor.

We have a bit of a mantra at *British Woodworking*: never buy a router table. You're better off making one yourself. That said we've got the parts of a few bought models, but generally we advocate purchasing the inserts for a router table, but suggest you fabricate the table yourself. The Charnwood W030 spindle moulder, however, incorporates a collet for using router cutters and also a drum sanding attachment. This makes it a remarkably versatile machine, even for novice woodworkers who might



Solid The W650 tablesaw is pretty sound really, with good capacity. A 10in blade does make life so much easier. Pity about the switch on the saw, under the rip fence



not expect to use the spindle moulding facility straight off.

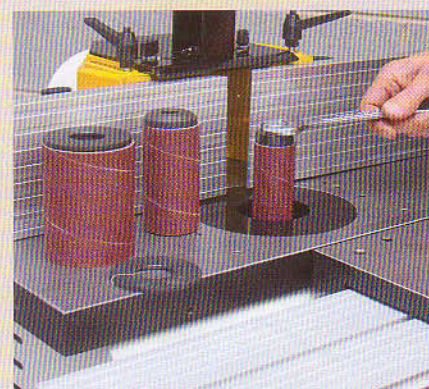
Buying all your kit from a single manufacturer does put all your wooden eggs in one pressed steel basket, but they should all share the same extraction port sizes, and in the case of Charnwood's spindle moulder and new W650 10in tablesaw the same sliding fence assembly as

well. The fence both machines use is similar to a Kity and takes a bit of getting used to.

The fence pivots on the hold-down clamp, and there are any number of Bristol levers to master. A pop-up peg acts as a stop for returning to 90°. The adjustable stop, which flips up out of the way, is ok, but you'd be better off making your own or fitting an after-market FlipStop (from



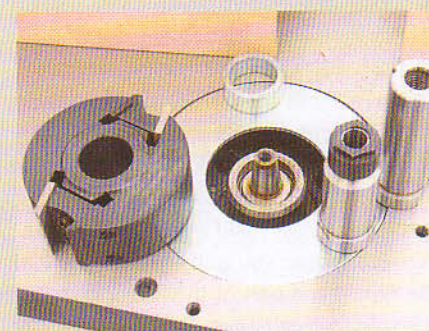
Versatile spindle



Home woodworkers tend to resist buying a spindle moulder because they are frightened by the power, but also because they can't necessarily afford to dedicate the space to a machine they may not use very often. Charnwood's model now comes with a router collet and a drum sanding accessory, which means you'll be getting a lot more bang for your buck, both financially and space-wise. Changing between the three functions is very simple, and there's a handy tray for all the parts. You may want to make a lid for it though, so that your cutters and bits don't get too dusty.



Adjustments The bar for the sliding carriage is easier to adjust than on some saws because the fettling can be done with the bar in place, which isn't always the case. The mitre fence on both the spindle and saw take a bit of getting used to, and may need a bit of work to be perfectly square. Being able to use the spindle as a router table is a huge advantage



Versatile There is much longer plunge on the Charnwood spindle moulder than you'll ever have experienced on a router table

FlipStop) or similar from Rutlands or Kreg. There is plenty of opportunity for improvement of the fence, in our book, not because it is particularly bad but because you could easily adapt it to suit your needs. The table runs well on the bar, and we were able to achieve accurate cuts within a few minutes, though it would need careful setting up to get it spot on.

In both cases the sliding table runs on a bar attached to the machine's casing. Adjusting that bar with the table and fence in place is relatively simple, though moving the bar forwards and back to gain more or less capacity is a bit awkward. The contrast with an old Scheppach TS2000 we have in the workshop is marked, in that levelling the sliding table on the Scheppach is a

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nightmare as it cannot be done with the table in place. That said moving the bar on the Scheppach is dead simple.

Coming to terms with the fences and tables on both machines at the same time, because they are so similar, and being able to fettle them both effectively, would be a significant advantage.

Switch position

There are many good things about the W650 tablesaw, but the switch is not one of them, positioned as it is towards the right of the machine, beneath the rip fence. You have to stretch too far, we think, to reach it easily. The switch on the spindle, in contrast, is located just where right-handers like it to be, near the front and to the right.

The only other real problem with the tablesaw is that the rip fence slides on a round bar, and so to remove it you have to run it off to the right. In a small workshop this can be a pain as the saw is often positioned with a wall to its right. Rip fences that drop on and off are much easier to work with when moving from crosscutting to ripping and back again. Charnwood's new W721 bandsaw has a drop-on fence which would be ideal on the tablesaw. The extension tables on the tablesaw are a good size for almost any workshop, giving you enough support for most workpieces, while not being too big.

Charnwood admit that there is a bit of a problem with the spindle moulding guarding: it is too well made! The big yellow guard is fixed to the cast iron table with two long bolts, registering on a slot in the casting. The yellow paint is applied with, perhaps, too much enthusiasm, and until it's worn down in the slot the guarding is difficult to position accurately. You just have to scrape away the paint.

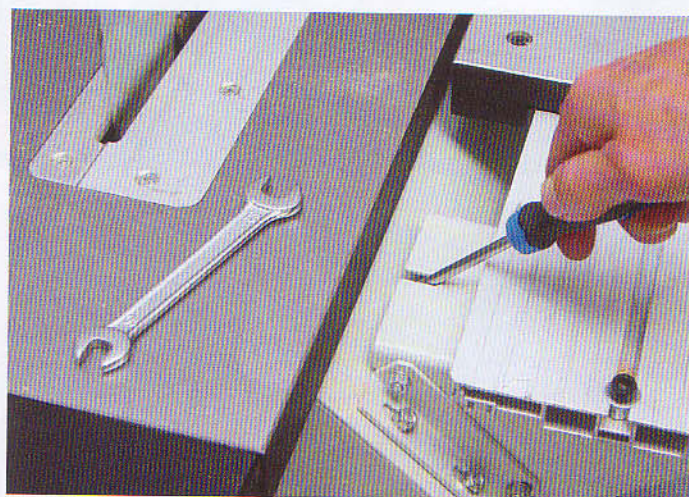
What we think

Otherwise both these machines are sturdily made and easy to use. Tooling and blade changing is simple on both, and on the tablesaw this is aided by a crown guard you can remove easily and a split throat plate. We recommend you drill an access hole in the right-hand part of the throat plate for the spindle-locking bar. The rise and fall of the tablesaw blade is very smooth, as is the case on the spindle moulder.

One of the most notable features of all the Charnwood machines is that they are so

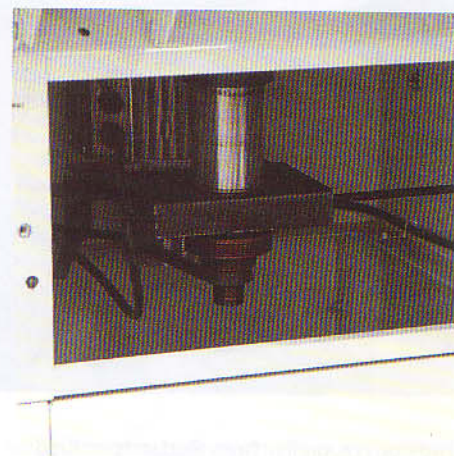


Fiddly The fence and guarding on the spindle moulder take a little getting used to, but nothing practice won't overcome, except that there's too much yellow paint on the main guard fixing slots. The sliding carriage bar (right) is relatively easy to adjust, though you have to bend pretty low to change the speeds on the spindle (right)



quiet. The tablesaw only registered 85dB, which makes it easier on the ear than the multi-tools we've been testing this issue. We couldn't always tell if their new W696 extractor was actually on, though it seemed to have enough power to keep the machines pretty clean. The quietness makes a huge difference to anyone in a small workshop with neighbours and makes a machine less fearsome to use. The heavy cast iron tables add to that sense of substance and confidence you'll have with this pair of good machines.

Details Charnwood W650 10in Cast Iron Tablesaw: sliding carriage; extension tables right and rear; table 750x800mm; tilt 0-45°; 80mm cutting depth at 90°; max ripping width 610mm; speed 4000rpm; 1.7kw induction motor; 120kg; light trade rating; £749 inc.VAT. Charnwood W030 Spindle Moulder inc. free 1/2in router collet adaptor:



cast iron table; 1.5kw induction motor; 600x400mm table; 30mm diameter spindle; four speeds (1400, 4000, 6000, 9000rpm); 110mm vertical stroke on cutterblock; 160mm max tooling diameter; 870mm table height; 95kg; light trade rating; £599 inc.VAT; sanding drum kit £29.99; details from