



Trend

Andy Standing tries out the latest two new dovetail jigs from Trend



CDJ600

Cutting dovetails can be a time consuming process. If you are making a chest of drawers there are a lot of joints to cut. Professional cabinetmakers, who have had many years of practice, can hand cut the joints surprisingly rapidly, however, for the less experienced it can be a demanding, and frustrating process. A router combined with a dovetail jig, can greatly ease this process. The joints produced may not be quite as elegant as hand cut ones, but they are just as strong and quicker to make. There is a wide variety of dovetail jigs to choose from, from the simplest which can cut only one type of joint with a fixed spacing, to the more sophisticated and infinitely adjustable which are considerably more versatile, though usually

more complex to use and expensive to buy. The Trend CDJ600, and its smaller stable-mate the CDJ300, offer both simplicity and versatility, and though they have their limitations they can cut a variety of joints without difficulty. They come from the Trend Craft range and are aimed more at the amateur user than the professional.

In this test we are using the CDJ600, which, as its name suggests can accommodate workpieces up to 600mm wide. The CDJ300 has half the capacity.

Design

This type of dovetail jig uses a fixed metal 'comb' or template which guides the router using a guide bush. The normal problem with this design is that it can be

very restrictive because the joint spacing is fixed, so you must tailor your timber to suit the jig, rather than the other way round. However Trend offer a selection of different templates to cut joints of

varying dimensions and types. The joints that can be cut are as follows: two sizes of lapped dovetail, two sizes of box joint, dowel joints and two sizes of through dovetail. The jig is supplied with a



Template set to cut the tails



Setting the cutter depth



Cutting the tails



Completed cut. Top board is inserted to prevent breakout.

template to cut 12.7mm lapped dovetails as standard.

Assembly

The jig is supplied in kit form and must be assembled before use. First the body is screwed to a work board which allows it to be securely clamped to the workbench for use, and easily removed when not needed. It is then a matter of attaching the clamping bars and the various adjusting screws and stops. This is all fairly straightforward and should cause no difficulty.

Setting up

This varies depending on which template is fitted to the jig. The test jig was supplied with both the standard lapped dovetail template and also the optional through dovetail template. For each template you need a particular cutter/guide bush combination. When cutting lapped dovetails, both workpieces are clamped into the jig and machined at the same time, so only one cutter and guide bush are needed, however with the through dovetail template each part is machined separately using opposite sides of the template, so a pair of cutters and guide bushes are needed.

The supplied manual gives precise instructions as to how to set the templates correctly and how to solve any problems of too tight or

MORE INFORMATION

Costs

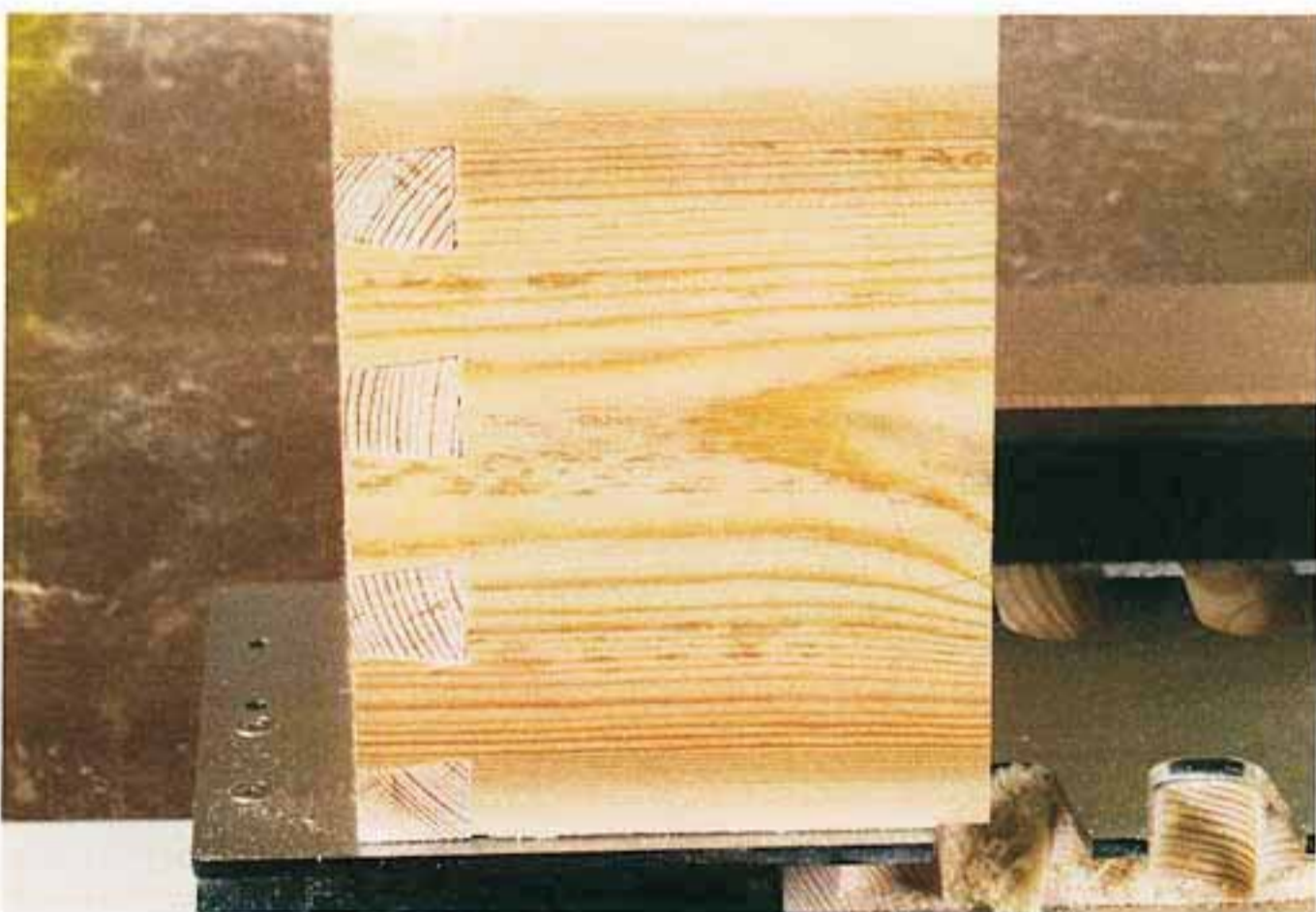
CDJ300	£82.19
CDJ600	£140.94

Contact

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Re-fitting template to cut pins



The completed joint

too loose joints. Router set up is also critical. A fine height adjuster must be used, as it is almost impossible to set the cutter depth accurately enough without.

Technique

For most routing jobs the best technique is to take several shallow passes until you reach your desired depth of cut. However with this type of

jig the majority of the cuts are made with the cutter plunged to its final depth. So you must be very positive when controlling the router. Feed it gently but firmly into the workpiece, moving from left to right. Make sure that it does not tilt on the template, and never lift it up from the dovetail template. Always slide it out. Keep the router plunged at all times and allow

it to stop before putting it down on the bench. If you release the plunge mechanism the cutter may foul the guide bush and cause considerable damage. The manual suggests making a router stand out of a thick timber off-cut with a large central hole bored to take the guide bush and cutter and hold them safely away from the benchtop and this is good advice.

In use

Before attempting to use the jig, your timber must be perfectly prepared. Ends must be square, sides parallel and thickness uniform. Any inaccuracies here will mar the joint. Initial set up is fairly fiddly. The router must be fitted with guide bush and cutter and set to a precise depth. The template must be fitted to the jig and adjusted, and the timber is then clamped in place with the rather slow clamping knobs. Before tackling your workpiece, it is always worth cutting a trial joint in an off-cut. Once the set-up is complete, the joints can actually be cut with remarkable speed.

VERDICT

This is certainly a well made and efficient jig. It fits together easily, feels solid and produces an accurate result. The range of additional templates also give it good versatility. Of the two jigs the CDJ600 is the better buy, not simply because it can handle larger workpieces, but because it has adjustable side stops, making it far easier to centralise your joints. My only minor criticism is the clamping knobs, which are rather small and slow to use. Some kind of cam lever would greatly improve things, though would also, no doubt, increase the price. Overall these are good quality jigs that should provide years of useful service.