

Mark Cass looks at the Trend Mortise and Tenon Jig

# TRENDY



MARK CASS

**T**he thing I like most about jigs is each one's individual nature. The maker usually has a specific cut or task in mind and this determines the shape and form of the finished jig. Most of my jigs end up in the bin shortly after their use, generally being of a specific nature. The few that survive their first outing tend to be generic hinge and lock jigs and the like.

## PURPOSE

The mortise and tenon jig from Trend is designed for two specific tasks (albeit two with the same end in mind) although, unlike most home-made ones, it's built to last and is highly adjustable

too. It can cope with tenons from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$ in using the standard settings and with additional accessories an even greater range of sizes is possible.

## PRESENTATION

The weight hinted at a substantial jig inside, or at the very least plenty of sheet steel. Taking the components out of their box I felt an assembly challenge coming on and, more than ever, I felt equal to it.

The pieces were all well machined, finished and, more importantly, all present and the way they should have been in the box. The instruction manual was more than adequate, although I did need to refer to the box-top for useful

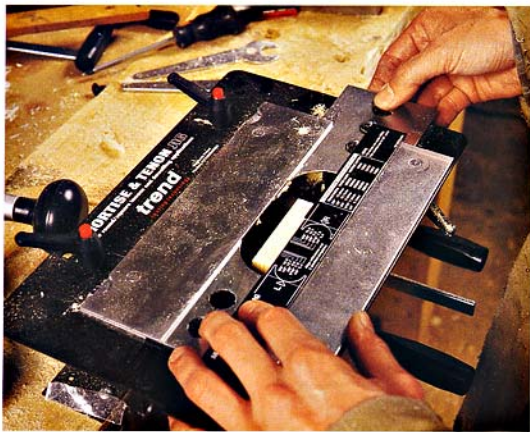
photos of the finished article to get started. For all its precision, the design has something of a homespun nature about it – you can almost see the stages in its development and the ways in which the engineers have overcome certain problems.

## ASSEMBLY

The set-up and assembly procedure was fairly intuitive and ably assisted by the aforementioned instruction manual. A 10mm spanner is useful to have during the assembly.

## THE JIG ITSELF

The jig consists essentially of a horizontal box fixed to the bench with a vertical plate



Using the mortising set-up



Setting up the template for the tenon

hinged to the front face of it. As well as being an integral part of the jig, this 'tilting-back plate' (as it's described in the manual) is positionable from 0 to 90°. This means that tenons can be cut at any practical angle (both front and side) within this range – a very useful attribute of this versatile unit. On top of the whole assembly lays the 'action' plate which features an adjustable aperture in the middle through which the actual routing is executed.

Four 'F' clamps are locked to the tilting

back plate using the stylish hex wrench provided – their purpose being to hold the work for both mortice and tenon cuts. There are moments during the process – mainly during setting up – when one or more of these clamps is found to be obstructing things and must be moved. Like most woodworking procedures though, it's all a question of establishing a methodology and repeating it routine-like so as to avoid those hiccups which are inevitably encountered the first couple of times.

## PREPARATION

After successful assembly the first step is to plan your job with regard to tenon dimensions. In the instruction booklet is a printed chart with full joint dimension details – this would be quite useful as a small poster on the workshop wall. From here a suitable tenon size is selected together with the appropriate cutter and corresponding guidebush. According to Trend, a square-ended joint is achievable with the jig, although personally I would embrace the future and go with the round-ends myself.

Until you become proficient with the Trend Mortise and Tenon Jig I would suggest that you continue to mark out all your mortises and tenons in the usual clear manner – at the very least you will need to mark a centreline and each end of the planned length. In a break with tradition, and operating under the restrictions that engineering can sometimes unwittingly impose, the setting-up and use of this jig is carried out in a somewhat back-to-front manner i.e. the tenons are cut before the mortises. Whilst this might outrage some of you out there (believe me) it all comes out right in the end.

## IN USE

So, we have our timber all marked up and ready to go. The soon-to-be tenon piece is loosely clamped into the jig and, making full use of the all important 'set-up bar', eased into the required vertical position relative to the top plate. Next, the front to back orientation is set by means of matching up the centrelines on work and bar, and the sliding top plate locked into position courtesy of two decent locking screws with pivoting lever handles. This is all clearly outlined step by step in the comprehensive instruction manual which benefits hugely in not being translated from another language.

The last part of set-up is completed when the two mobile template panels are slid laterally until lined up with register points on the ever-present set-up bar. Finally, the actual routing can be carried out. This, as ever, requires a keen eye, steady hand and a firm grip, or at least two out of three. Set the depth, plunge and rout in a clockwise direction, taking care not to stray from the edge of the jig's aperture or you might find your tenons a bit thinner than you had planned.

A similar procedure is followed for the mortice half of the joint, with only the router's guidebush needing changing – in this case for a standard-looking steel collar. If anything the mortice is the easier of the two cuts to make, with only really the depth to concern oneself with. If you have

# TEST

been following the instructions you will have hopefully been rewarded by a working mortice and tenon joint. Certainly my first joint on the jig was in this category – with a little more care, a bit of fiddling and some more practice, a spot-on joint is almost assured.

## AND...

But wait, that's not all. By the simple provision of seven extra template holes (and probably a few sleepless nights for the designers) the mortice and tenon jig can be readily enlisted as a useful dowelling jig.

Working on the same basic principles, a dowed joint can be created wherever needed, by means of a quick guidebush and cutter change.

## THE VERDICT

I carried out my testing with a Trend T3 router which, not surprisingly, was perfectly suited to the task. Its base (Trend Base Configuration) accepted the different guidebushes etc with familiar alacrity. A comprehensive list of suitable routers is included in the manual, if yours isn't on it don't worry, Trend also supply a Unibase, which will get you out of trouble.

If you're a jig type of person, this is definitely for you.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### Material thickness

Min. ....12mm (½in)

Max. ....50mm (2in)

### Material width

Max. ....100mm (4in)

Fully adjustable for compound angle joints up to 45°

Cuts mortice and tenon sizes of 6.3 to 15.8mm (¼ to ½in)

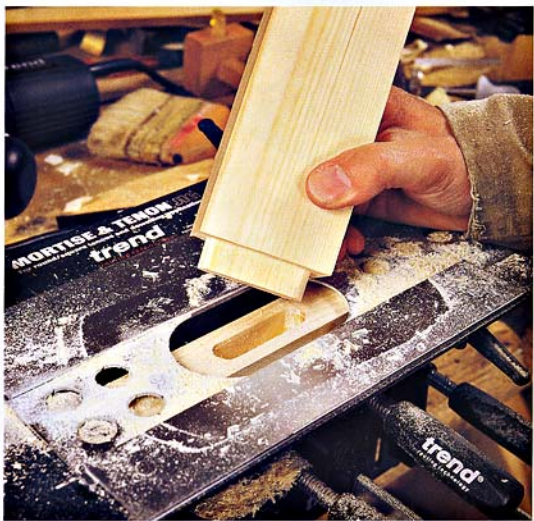
Price (rrp) £186.63 (inc VAT)

### Dust Extraction Kit

Available as an optional extra with 57mm dust spout aperture and 32mm adaptor: £12.34 (inc VAT)



Ready for routing the tenon



The completed joint