Trend PRT

The latest product to be added to Trend's extensive range is the Professional Router Table. **Ron Fox** tries it out to see if it lives up to its name

The new PRT router table from Trend was previewed in the last issue of *Routing* and looked good. We have now had the chance to put it through its paces to see if it lives up to its promise.

Main features

● It is all metal, with a top measuring 650 x 550mm, standing 830mm high in floor-standing mode, but also capable of being mounted on a work bench on its four fixed short legs.

● The alloy top is in three extruded sections. The two outer ones are fixed but the middle one is removable, held by four cam screws. This enables it to be lifted out to mount the router and, if necessary, to change an awkward cutter.

● The middle section is drilled with the three standard EDT holes for mounting the router. This enables a wide range of models to be used without any drilling by the user. Apart from the Trend T3, T5, and T9, numerous other models with the same base fixing holes can be fitted. Some of these are listed in the box below. Many other models can be fitted by re-drilling the insert plate or router base.

● The cutter aperture is 90mm in diameter, allowing the table to accept all but the very largest cutters. Plastic reducing rings bring the aperture down to 68mm, 54mm, 35mm, and 20mm for smaller cutters.
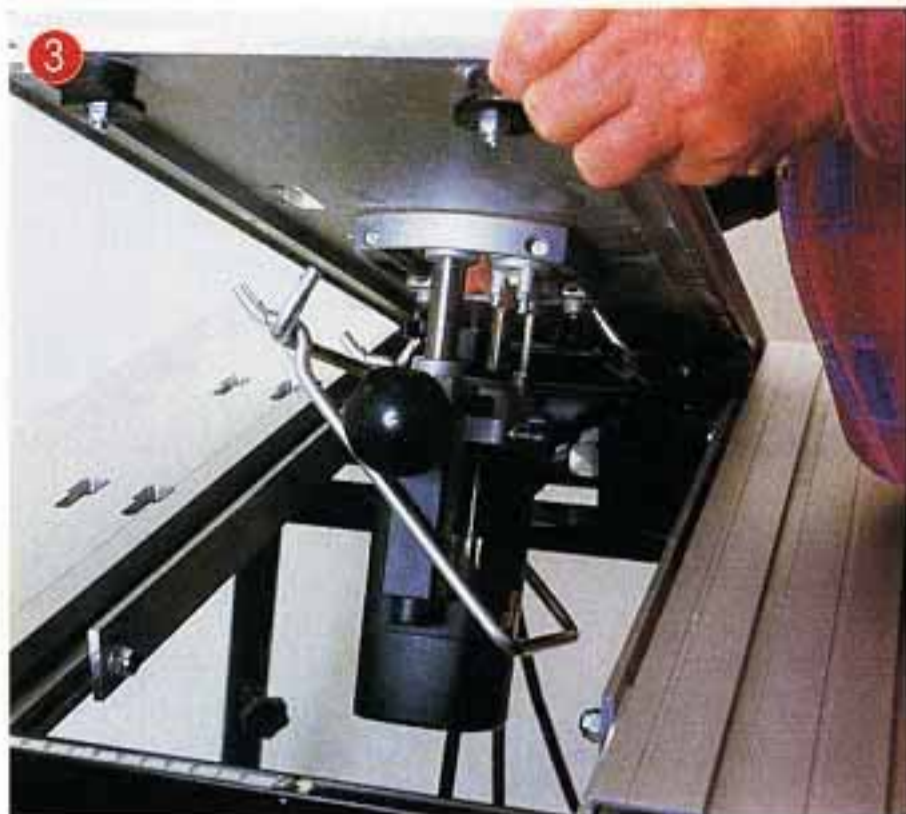
● The table comes fully specified with adjustable fence, clear plastic guard, vertical and horizontal pressure guards, mitre fence, lead-in pin, NVR switch and push-stick. Very little assembly is required. **Photo 2** shows the fully equipped table as supplied, with all the guards, mitre fence, reducing rings and NVR switch.
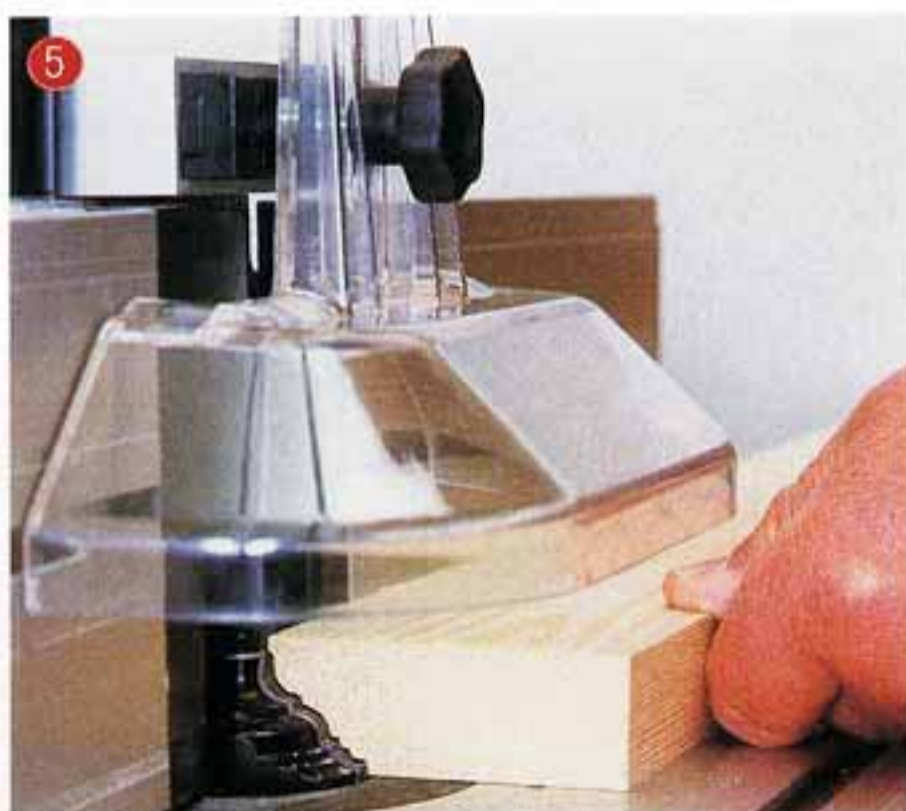

The fully equipped table

The T5 router complete with PlungeBar being lowered into the table

The dust extractor connected with a home-made adaptor

The edge of a board being moulded as part of a built-up compound moulding

Routers used

We used the Trend T5 and T9 for most of our testing, but we also used the DeWalt 625. Mine is fitted with the Router Raizer, but we thought we'd better not drill a ½in hole for the winding handle in the top of a review table. We were, though, able to use all three of the above routers with the PlungeBars, which make depth setting and cutter changing very much easier in a table. Two of the three, the T5 and DW 625 could be fitted to the centre plate and lowered into the table with the PlungeBars fitted. With the T9, however, the size of the particular style PlungeBar necessitated fitting the router from below, with the centre plate already in position. **Photo 3** shows the T5, complete with PlungeBar being lowered into the table.

Dust extraction

The back of the fence casting has a dust take-off port 58mm in diameter. This is bigger than the normal extractor hose and the instruction manual shows an adaptor as an accessory. We, however, made our own from an aerosol cap reinforced with a ring cut from 18mm MDF. **Photo 4** shows a rear view of the fence casting with the extractor connected by means of the home-made adaptor.

COMPATIBLE ROUTERS

Bosch 1600/1700
CMT 1E
DeWalt 613, 615, 621, 625
Elu 96, 97, 177
Makita RP0910, 1110C

The tests

We began our tests by checking the top for flatness and the fence for alignment and verticality to the table surface. The top was acceptably flat except for the front right-hand corner, which was low. We loosened two nuts and levelled it as best we could but it looked as though it might have suffered a blow or been dropped in transit. Once adjusted, however, performance did not seem to be affected.

The fence consists of two sliding alloy extrusions mounted on a cast metal carrier. We were pleased to see that they were accurately aligned when tested with a straight edge. When tested with an engineer's square, however, the top leaned back very slightly. This would not affect edge-moulding of boards etc., but could affect operations such as vertical panel raising. Shimming the tops of the two sliding components with coarse abrasive paper cured the problem without affecting the alignment of the fence.

There is no adjustment for moving the out-feed fence forward or the in-feed fence back for operations such as edge-planing or full-face moulding a board, but it would be easy to shim the out-feed fence with a piece of laminate or veneer to achieve the desired effect.

The fence extrusions have two T-slots in them, one along the top and one along the vertical face. These are very useful for mounting stop-blocks or false fences for particular operations. An example is shown in **Photo 8**, where a zero-clearance auxiliary fence is fitted for raising a panel with a vertical cutter.
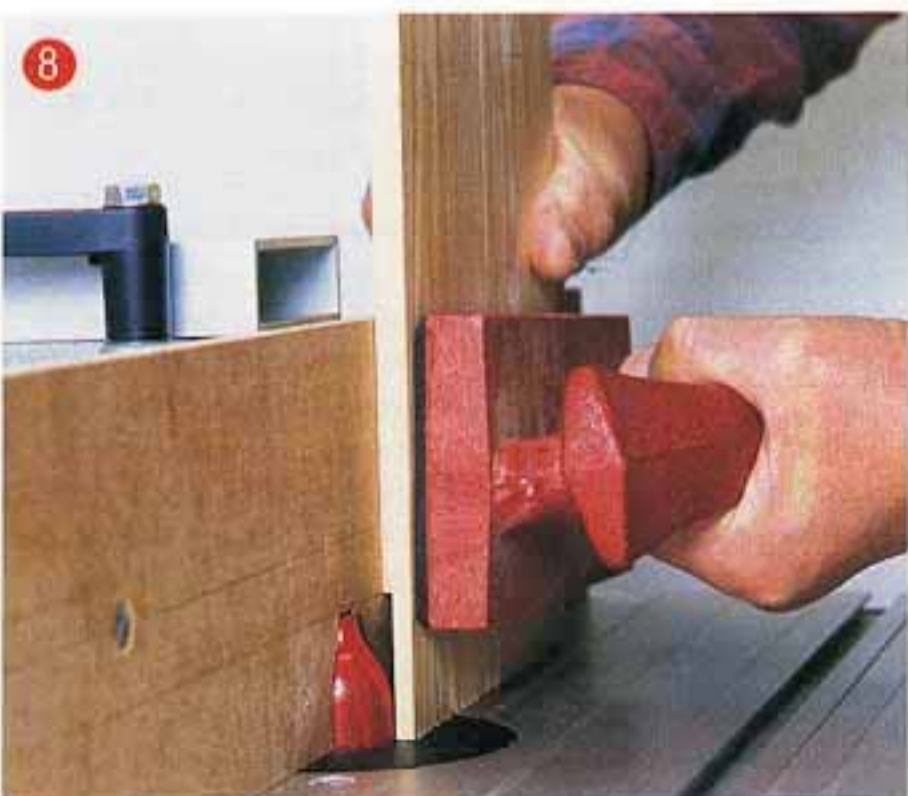
Two scales are fitted to the table top, one at each

A board being slotted for biscuit jointing. Note the white vertical lines on the black plastic fence trim, to mark the limits of the cut

A scribed door rail being profiled to take the edge of the panel

A rectangular panel being raised with a vertical panel raising cutter. Note the auxiliary fence and the use of a safety push block

end of the table. The purpose of these is presumably to help adjust the fence forward and back, but their value is reduced because the fence does not extend to the ends of the table top so the scales have to be used in conjunction with a straight edge.

With the fine tuning done we applied our usual range of test cuts to the table.

Edge moulding

This is one of the basic table operations and is shown in **Photo 5**. The moulding was to form part of a built-up compound moulding for a cornice. This is one of several techniques, shown in the photos, to be featured in future articles.

Biscuit jointing

Photo 6 shows a board being slotted to make up a wider panel. We are using a Trend slotter fitted with the appropriate bearing to control the depth of the slot. With a table it is not essential to have a bearing on the cutter, the fence controls the depth of the slot, but if the bearing is already on there is no point in removing it. The fence is aligned with the front of the bearing with a straight edge and gives a sort of 'belt and braces' effect.

Note that, with the black plastic edgings to the fence extrusions, the limits of the slot can be marked with a suitable wax pencil. Note also that the plastic guard has been raised for the purposes of photographic clarity.

Door framing

Photo 7 shows a door rail, which has already been scribed, being profiled to take the edge of the raised panel. Note the overhead plastic guard and horizontal pressure guard.

Panel raising

Photo 8 shows a rectangular panel being raised with a vertical panel raising cutter. This type of panel raiser can only be used with rectangular workpieces, curved and arched panels require a horizontal bearing-guided panel raiser to follow the shape.

For this job we fitted a simple auxiliary fence of 9mm MDF. This was attached to the fence by means of two 6mm countersunk machine screws and nuts running in the T-slot in the face of the fence extrusions. We normally use thicker MDF than this, but the positioning system of the fence on the table top did not permit thicker material. This kind of fence is usually called a 'zero-clearance' fence because its aperture closely matches the shape of the cutter and gives much better support to the workpiece both in the vertical plane and on either side of the cut. After roughing out the shape the final aperture is made by fitting the auxiliary fence to the table fence and carefully cutting through the MDF with the actual cutter.

Mitring board ends

Photo 9 shows the ends of a box side being mitred. The mitre fence is used to guide the workpiece past the cutter. A batten is screwed to the mitre fence to give greater support to the workpiece and to prevent breakout. The scales at each end of the table, used with a straight edge help keep the fence perfectly parallel with the mitre fence slot.

Miniature mouldings

Photo 10 shows a miniature cutter being used to rout a ¼th scale sash moulding.

The ends of a box component being mitred
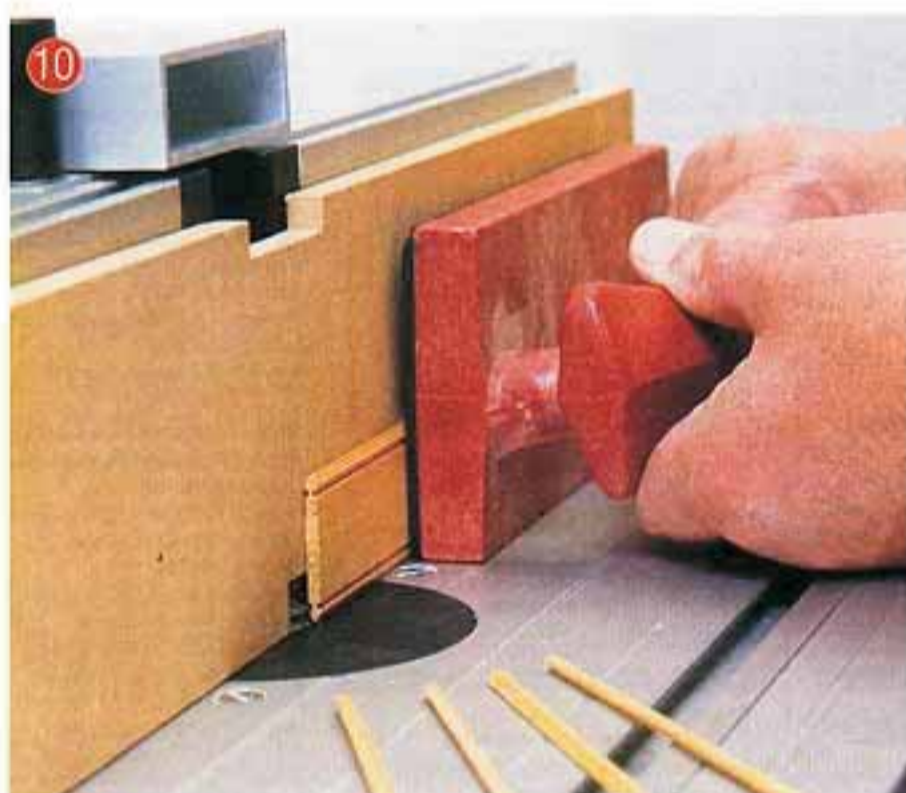
A miniature cutter being used to rout a 1/12th scale sash moulding

A base pattern in MDF being made for the Bosch 2000 router

made by machining the edges of a small board and parting off the moulding. A simple auxiliary fence is taped to the table fence with an aperture cut to match the cutter being used. Several lengths of completed moulding can be seen in the foreground.

Pattern routing

Photo 11 shows a base pattern in MDF being made for the Bosch 2000 router. The table fence is removed and the lead-in pin fitted to brace the workpiece at the start of the cut. The roughed-out workpiece is brought to the exact shape of the plastic router base with a flush-trimming cutter.

With this type of cutting, the table fence is removed and, with most tables, this means that guards and dust extraction are lost. I am therefore using my home-made guard/extractor take-off for the cut. I made this for my home-made router table but it happens to clamp firmly to the PRT. The dust extraction with MDF is remarkably effective but I would not do this kind of job without full facial protection i.e. dust mask and goggles, plus ear defenders.

Accessories

The table is pretty comprehensive as it comes, but one accessory is listed in the instruction manual. This is a copy-following attachment which enables pattern work or edge moulding to be carried out with unguided i.e. non bearing-guided, cutters. The attachment comes with a vertically mounted brush and extractor take-off to provide extraction when in use. We did not have one for review so cannot comment on its efficiency.

VERDICT

The PRT lives up to its promise pretty well. After a little fine tuning, mentioned above, we found it coping very well with jobs ranging from panel raising to miniature mouldings. The removable centre section of the top makes it very easy to install and remove the router, and the 8mm thickness of the extrusion makes it unlikely that you will ever need a collet extension.

The table is quite light, although it stands firmly, and can be further lightened by removing the centre section of the top, complete with router, for portability. At least one of my recent students went away with the intention of buying this table because he can take it out of his garage more easily than creating space by removing the trailer he keeps there.

With a full specification, portability, and user-friendliness, the PRT must rank among the top commercial tables currently available - and at street price it is less expensive than some.