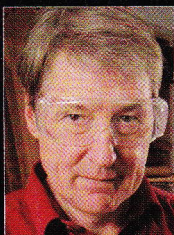


# EVOLUTION OF THE... ROUTER TABLE



**Peter Brett** reveals the intricacies of perhaps the most useful of router accessories

**1** *Hold-downs* on the fence and table – the curved combs should face the finish end. Make sure they fit and support the work well

**2** *The table* – flat and stable with slots for mitre gauge and side-holds

**3** *Table inserts* should be flush with the table surface and easy to change

**4** *Stops on fences (not shown)* – a great way of making stopped chamfers or grooves. Small clamps and blocks can be improvised on most fences

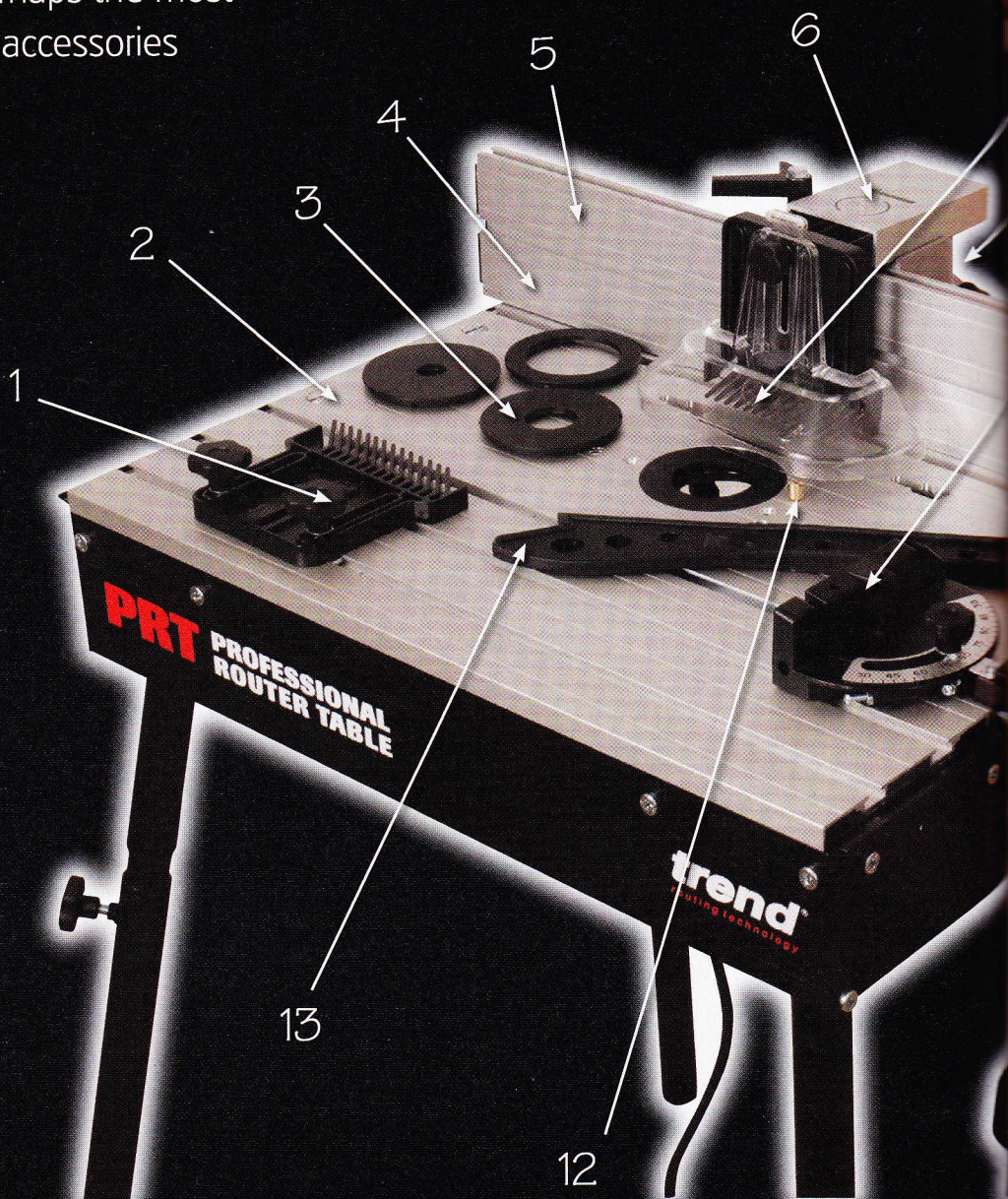
**5** *The fence* – reasonably tall, the length of the table, and ideally adjustable for square to the table. Each individual fence cheek should be movable

**6** *Feed direction reminder* – feed any other way at your peril

**7** *Adjustable top guard* – for preventing straying fingers contacting the cutter during freehand routing. This one also serves as a chip extractor

**8** *Vacuum extraction port* – important for quick chip extraction allowing good vision of the workpiece. Saves a lot of sweeping up too

**9** *Mitre gauge* – can be fitted with auxiliary fence to support work at many




# Evolution

In the days before power tools, a router was a small plane with a slim blade set at right angles to the plane body used for planing out housings, also known as “old woman’s tooth routers”.

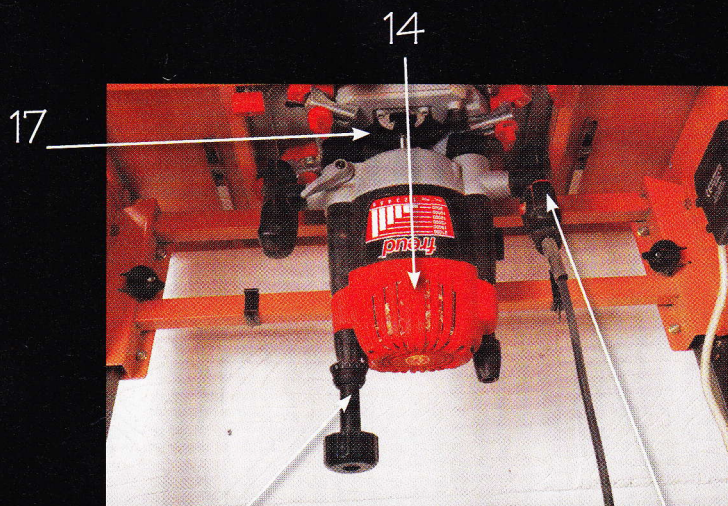
In **1922** a patent for a “shaping device” invented by Ray L Carter of New York was applied for. It was designed for “rounding and bending the corners of patterns”. It consisted of a high-speed electric motor on the shaft of which were “mounted rotary cutters”.

Carter also foresaw the modern router by suggesting that a “relatively small and light shaper” would be a logical development from the main patent.

However, it seems as though the invention of the Elu plunge router, the famous MOF96, and the huge popularity of DIY, brought about the smaller, affordable and homemade router tables.

In the 1970s, Charles Hayward’s book, *Tools for Woodwork* still focused mainly on hand tools, but the closing chapters mention the router being used “virtually as a spindle moulder” by mounting it under a bench. 

Today, it really is a case of never having had it so good – we have a huge choice of routers and tables, from budget to professional, bench-mounted and floorstanding to help us with our woodworking projects.



angles closer to the cutter. Add sacrificial pieces to prevent breakout at the end of cuts

**10** *The legs* – floorstanding router table legs should have some way of adjusting for uneven floors

**11** *NVR switch* – vital for safety. Prevents accidental restarting

**12** *A lead-on pin* is very handy for freehand edge moulding. Standard on some commercial tables

**13** *Push stick* – make sure you have one within reach, always

**14** *The router* – the best and biggest you can afford. Speed adjustment is important for using a range of cutters

**15** This router has a *lock-on switch*, but you may need Velcro tape for holding the switch on.

**16** *Cutter height adjustment* – critical for accuracy and convenience. Newer tables have systems to adjust through the top

**17** *Fixing the router to the table* – some commercial tables have custom made mounting plates. otherwise careful drilling or clamp fitting are the solutions

