



MARK CASS

THE

LATEST TREND?

Mark Cass takes a look at the new Small Router Table from Trend

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GMC/ANTHONY BAILEY

I've never been a massive fan of router tables, having been fortunate enough to possess a Wadkin spindle moulder in my workshop. Having said that, it's just possible that the new Small Router Table (more commonly known as the SRT) from Trend could convert me.

My test sample came to the shop as part of a fully assembled kit, so sadly I can't comment on how easy or not this initial task would be. I suspect it is fairly straightforward, being just a case of taking one's time. I was able, however, to tighten the odd screw on the legs prior to mounting the table on a suitable baseboard. This is something I would definitely recommend, as I feel the pressed steel legs could have been a trifle stouter and hence need to be well anchored to something solid.

BUILD AND DESIGN

The table is simply constructed from a machined 25mm (1in) slab of MDF with

The table comes as a self-assembly kit



← a set of four pressed-steel legs attached. The MDF top features a circular stepped opening to take the router mounting plate, double slots for the fence, and a side-to-side plastic-lined channel for the sliding mitre guide. It took me a while to realise that the table top was indeed something other than what it appeared – to all intents and purposes it looks and feels like some kind of space-age plastic-metal alloy.

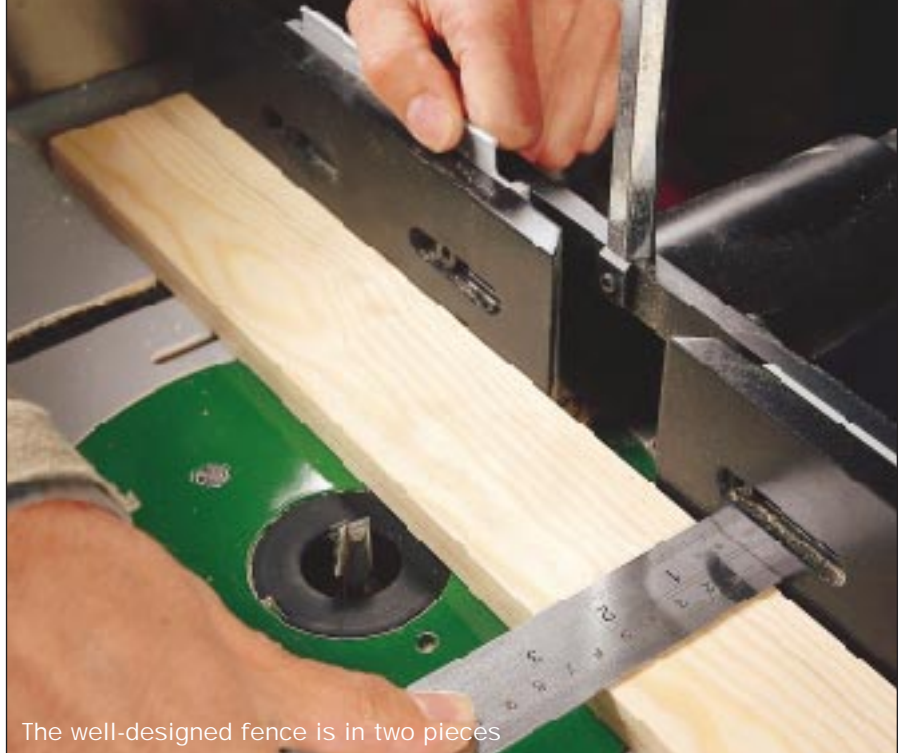
I do have a slight beef about the mounting plate though – this concerns its (almost) flush fit with the table-top propper. The plate rests on four washers in its circular rebate and is screwed through these into the table top. While this design sounds good in theory, in reality the washers aren't quite up to it and consequently leave the insert plate at a slightly lower level than the top. This may not be a big problem to many people but I would recommend taking the time to shim up the plate until the two surfaces are perfectly level. You'll only have to do this once and it will certainly be worth it, especially after you have used it more.

Once put together, the finished assembly is not unattractive to behold and the table is of a pleasing size and proportion. I suspect its compact size won't dominate the smaller workshop and should be able to be stored quite comfortably under a bench. It has been well designed and thought out, and features nothing that is not absolutely necessary for its function. The SRT is compatible with virtually every router known to man (up to 1100W), even though many of these do require an additional screw pack to adapt.

FINDINGS

All my testing was with the Trend T3EK variable-speed router. This comes supplied with the new Routing Workshop Kit, which I was fortunate enough to receive ahead of its official release date. At only 550W, the T3 is a touch on the light side, but more than adequate for most of your standard router tasks. Still, it did mean that I was able to effortlessly screw it straight into the table with no fuss or bother. Some other routers may need adapting to fit – details on base drilling etc (two pages worth) are given in the well laid-out instructions, as well as a list of compatible routers (those marked with the Trend Base Configuration mark, 'TBC').

As with many successful things, simplicity often works best. This is certainly the case with the SRT. Its set-up and operation border on the intuitive – I found myself using it with confidence right from the start. I was pleasantly surprised to see a full set of 12 1/4in cutters included with the kit – and a half-decent



The well-designed fence is in two pieces



The back fence is easily adjustable



The friction fingers being used for long grain

Using the sliding mitre fence



set at that, not just the least-popular ones in the Trend range.

Once you have the router fixed to the table, a cutter of your choice can be fitted, checked for height, tightened again and be ready to go. Also supplied with the table is a selection of plastic ring inserts so as to ensure the minimum gap between cutter and steel mounting plate.

My first real criticism of the kit was the fine height adjuster. For anyone who hasn't used one, this allows precision adjustment of the cutter height by means of screwing in or out of the appropriate depth stop, thus moving the baseplate up or down by a fraction. The one supplied with my test sample had somehow made it past quality control and hence required a bit of cleaning up before it fitted its holder.

The back fence is easily adjustable and can be lined up with the cutter by eye or by maths (making use of the decent scales for parallel positioning), or a combination of both. If you want to make a deep cut or have a particularly hard workpiece to be moulded, you can always edge the fence back in small increments on successive passes, saving your router from excessive toil. This well-designed fence is in two pieces – each of which is independently laterally adjustable – the take-off part even has a built-in step increment of its own. This permits the user to perform reduction-type planing operations or will support the finished moulding of a full-face cut as it leaves the cutter.

A nice set of featherboards (or friction fingers) is provided. These perform far better than any I have been able to make. Easily positionable both horizontally and vertically, it all seemed too simple and left me wondering what it was that I had forgotten or overlooked.

Well obviously it was the power supply.

This is one of my favourite features on this table and gives the whole set-up a well-deserved professional appearance. Instead of having to plug one's router into the wall, a socket on the back of the front right-hand leg does this job, leaving power control easily and safely at a standard set of on and off buttons correctly positioned and coloured within a yellow mount. This is described by the manufacturer as a 'No Volt Release Switch'; whilst the electrically knowledgeable amongst you may know exactly what this means, to me it simply says 'safe'.

Straightforward in-line routing can be accomplished with ease, while trickier curved work can be accomplished using the lead-in pin, which simply screws in when needed. To complement the free-form routing set-up, a cylindrical clear plastic guard is mounted on the stout hexagonal rod that can also support the vertical featherboard. The guard can also double as a dust extraction point, to be used as an alternative to the more

customary one mounted on the back of the main fence.

The table comes with a useful sliding mitre fence which, although a little light, is a very good fit in the table's channel and nicely adjustable. It's also pre-drilled to accept a custom extension of one's own design and manufacture. A 'T' handled 4mm hex. wrench for assembly and adjustment completes what is a very decent router table.

// As with many successful things, simplicity often works best. //



The free form routing set-up

ROUTER THE VERDICT

On its own or as part of the full kit, Trend's SRT represents terrific value for money – if you're thinking of buying one you could do a lot worse than this. For the person who is just starting out or setting up, I would recommend the full Trend Routing Workshop Kit which comprises the table, router, a set of cutters, fine height adjuster and even a helpful video! Further details are available online at www.trendmachinery.co.uk/srt.

ROUTER TABLE DIMENSIONS

Base (approx.)	W450mm D550mm H360mm
Top	W352mm W608mm

ROUTER PRICING POLICY

Small Router Table	£89.95
T3EK Router	£39.95
SS8 Cutter Set	£19.95
Fine Height Adjuster	£9.95
Project video	£9.95
Full Kit	£149.95
(You do the maths!)	