

A NEW ADDITION TO THE FAMILY



PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

Bill Cain weighs up the merits of the T3 router from Trend

Here's a question for you – what's brand new, comes in a custom-moulded black plastic case, spins at between 8000 and 32000rpm, has fencing, depth control and costs less than £50? The answer is the T3 – the latest addition to the Trend family of variable-speed routers. It's been quite a while now since Trend launched its middle weight T5 and the heavier T9 models. Aimed squarely at the hobbyist and DIY enthusiast, the lightweight T3 rounds off the family.

In common with all products from Trend, it comes with a clear instruction manual which contains a whole range of information, including, I'm pleased to say, vital criteria such as the maximum possible cutter size – which incidentally is 30mm dia. While a cutter of that size will fit, the telling question is will the machine cope with it?

I have to admit that I first saw the T3 back in the first week of September while visiting the friendly and entertaining Yandles Show down in Somerset. It was drawing quite a crowd, which shouldn't be surprising considering both Trend's reputation and its inexpensive price.

ACTION

So what do you get in the package? Well, in addition to the router itself and all the various paraphernalia I listed earlier, there's a tool kit, a 16mm dia. steel guide bush and three sizes of collets to cater for

1/4in, 6mm and 8mm dia. shanked cutters.

Assembly is both simple and quick and the adjustable fence – a sturdy pressed steel device with plastic working faces – is mounted on two 3mm dia. x 300mm steel guide rods in the traditional manner.

Having assembled the fence I couldn't help wondering whether fences from other manufacturers would fit. I was delighted to find out that they do, and as the baseplate drilling is identical to the T5 router, the T3 can make use of all the other routing accessories that Trend offer, such as guide bushes and various bases. So, that's 10 out of 10 for interchangeability!

MOTOR

The 550W (input) motor is variable speed and runs at between 8,000 and 32,000 rpm (unloaded). It has a 43mm dia. mounting collar, which is easily removed from the light alloy die-cast plunging base assembly. The on/off sliding action switch is well positioned on the front of the moulded plastic motor case and may be 'pulsed' or 'locked on' to suit the task at hand. Speed control is via a thumbwheel located at the top of the motor casing.

COLLARS, COLLETS & CUTTERS

With a 43mm dia. collar, the motor unit will fit a number of 'universal' portable power drill stands. It may also be used freehand for tasks that require light grinding or rasping. The one piece collets are fully machined in steel but not retained

by their locking nut. Cutter changing requires two spanners (both provided in the tool kit) and I noticed that there was a small spring in the bottom of the motor shaft drilling to prevent the cutter from bottoming out. This is a simple but effective method although make sure that you don't lose the spring when changing collets (thoughtfully Trend have included a spare in the kit, just in case!)

PLUNGE

The depth of plunge is controlled via a conventional three-stage turret and depth rod calibrated in millimetres. The Trend T5 fine height-adjuster accessory is a direct replacement for the depth rod and in my humble opinion this is a *must have* on any router. The twin 18mm diameter chrome-plated tubular steel plunge pillars have external springs with a well positioned plunge lock lever actuating directly onto the pillar opposite to the turret. The 'turret side' pillar runs in a narrow bronze bush while the 'locking pillar' runs directly in the plunge/motor assembly light alloy casting.

BASE

The light alloy base is faced with a removable plastic working surface – base drilling and table mountings are identical to the T5, so the full range of Trend accessories will fit with no problems whatsoever. A 2m long electric cable is fitted along with a 13amp UK-style plug. →



The 'paddle-style' plunge lock



The three-stage depth-setting turret

ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

Like most routers, I found the T3 very versatile. It performed well, wasn't excessively noisy (although ear protection when using any router is always advisable), the speed control was smooth and there was a nice overall balance to the machine.

I used a wide range of cutters and as long as the machine isn't abused, its performance is fine. Although I believed Trend's claim that the router can fit any dia. cutter up to 30mm, I only went up to 28mm and the router showed no sign of any undue stress. My best advice is to keep the speed up and the cutter size, feed rate and depth of cut down – this way you shouldn't experience any major problems.

There were a few things though which I found lacking on the T3 but do bear in mind that it is a DIY tool that sells for less than £50. A professional model, where these inadequacies would be put right, would cost many times more.

The plunge was initially a bit rough although the application of grease onto the pillars soon sorted this out. There was some unwelcome movement within the plunge action and when the plunge lock was engaged the base tilted slightly.

Another area of concern was that the manual gives the plunge depth as 35mm (1³/₈in). Indeed this is so, at least until you fit the moulded clear plastic chip extractor into place, which limits the plunge depth to around 28mm (1¹/₈in). This is a pity since even without the extractor chute the full 35mm plunge does not allow the face of the collet to reach the base working face. In fact it stops short by about 10mm (3⁷/₈in).

The effect of all this is that, with the extractor chute fitted, some 16mm (5⁵/₈in) of shank can be out of the collet and given that some of the 'regular' or 'starter-set' cutters are a bit sparse on shank length anyway, there is potential for them to be installed with little length down inside the collet. This is something to be aware of, and if shopping for cutters, my advice is to go for the those with the longest shanks you can find.

INCLUDED ACCESSORIES

- Storage case
- Adjustable side fence
- Dust/chip extractor chute
- 16mm dia. steel guide bush
- 6mm, 1/4in and 8mm collets
- Spanners/keys
- Instruction manual



The T3 package

THE VERDICT

A friend of mine has a DIY router very similar to the T3. While he doesn't use it everyday, it does exactly what he needs it to and didn't cost him an arm and a leg.

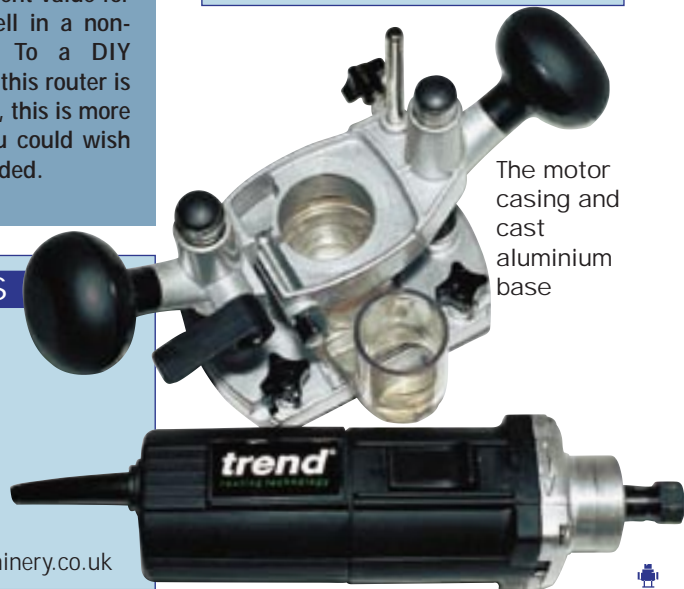
I guess these sentiments sum up the T3 – it's excellent value for money and works well in a non-trade environment. To a DIY enthusiast, the group this router is quite clearly aimed at, this is more or less everything you could wish for. Highly recommended.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model	Trend T3
Voltage	240V
Power Input	550W
No load speed	8,000-32,000rpm
Max plunge depth	35mm (with dust/chip chute removed)
Max cutter dia.	30mm
Collet sizes	6mm, 1/4in and 8mm
Price (RRP)	£46.94 (inc VAT).

CONTACT DETAILS

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The motor casing and cast aluminium base