

TRENDSETTER

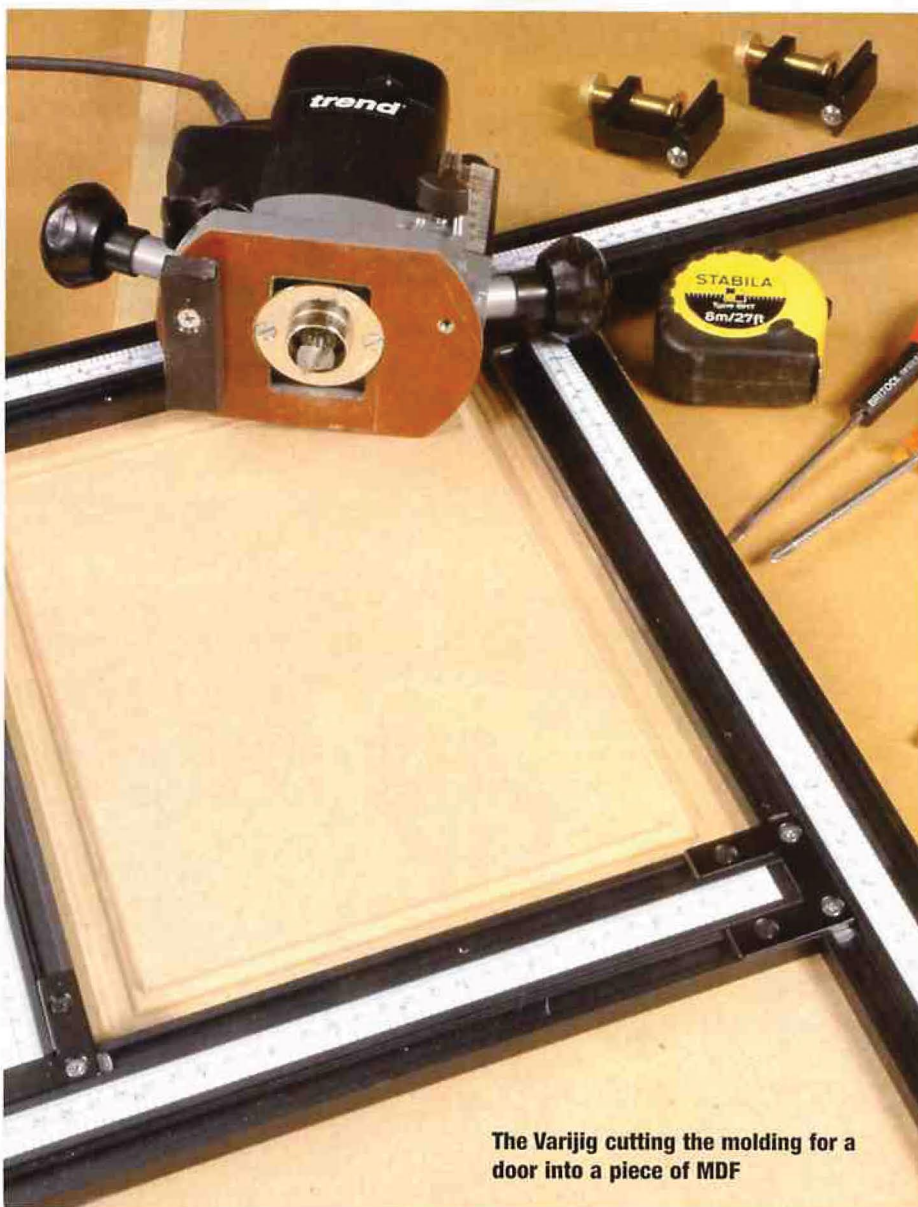
Ralph Laughton puts the Trend Varijig through its paces

I must admit to having been a little underwhelmed when I first heard about the Trend Varijig. That was before I got my hands on it. Like most good jigs, this one looks deceptively simple. It may be basic in its appearance – a few extrusions and a bag of hardware – but the high quality of the components and ease of use soon gets the juices flowing and inspires thoughts like “now if only I had this when I was....”

Upon opening the box, I was confronted with four alloy extrusions, four brackets each with four T-nuts attached with M5 machine screws. Also included is an anti-tilt block and M6 machine screw for fixing it to the underside of a router, full instructions and a guarantee card.

Assembly could not be simpler. The U-shaped brackets are fixed to one end of each bar. The attached T-nuts slide into the T-slot of another bar, forming a 90° angle between the adjoining bars. The process is repeated to form a rectangle using all four bars. The assembled jig can now be adjusted to form a rectangular template of infinitely variable size within the parameters of the bars. The set size is locked by tightening the screws.

The router is guided around the jig either by using a template guide, a bearing-guided bit or the edge of the base. This is easier if the base is round. For routers that have a base that is smaller than 6 1/2", a Trend Unibase can be fitted. Centering the Unibase on the router will mean that it can be used to guide the router around the confines of the Varijig, regardless of its orientation. This is an ideal way of cutting grooves and the like. Due to the large offset required, this



The Varijig cutting the molding for a door into a piece of MDF

method does have its limitations of use. It is, however, a very stable method of working.

FAVOURED METHOD

The favoured method for most applications is to use a template guide fitted to the router. This must have a minimum spigot projection of 3/16". Trend makes and recommends the use of

its 1 1/8" template guide with a specially lengthened spigot. Trend's reference for this is: GB30/A. Using the guidebush means that the router has to be sitting on top of the jig rails with the template guide running against the extrusion. This will make the router unstable. To eradicate any risk of wobble, an anti-tilt shoe is provided with the jig. This is simply a plastic block that is dimensioned so that it



Assembly is simple; all the parts go together easily



The jig can be configured in many ways



The anti-tilt block and screw supplied with the Varijig



A 1 1/2" outside-diameter template guide is recommended. This one has a longer spigot than the standard model



Clamping the jig in place using conventional clamps

is of similar height to that of the Varijig's rails. The block has a countersunk hole in it and is supplied with an M6 screw. This will fit the threaded mounting holes on all Trend routers and lots of other makes too. The block may be a bit big for smaller jobs and could be cut down, although a better course of action would be to make a smaller hardwood block, of similar thickness and use it when the larger block becomes too cumbersome. Profiling bits with shank-mounted bearings can also be used with the jig,

although care must be taken not to plunge (or, indeed, de-plunge) the bit past the extrusion in order to avoid removing the paint.

IN USE

Once assembled, the jig is easy to use and is very stable when clamped down even from just a single position, although some other form of support in the form of a batten is advisable. Most of the time a pair of clamps can be applied at opposite corners, providing more than adequate holding power alone. Trend also offers a pair of bespoke clamps designed to slide into the underside of the extrusions. These are sold under the reference: VJS/CK. Where possible I have used these nicely made clamps as they do not project above the jig as conventional clamps do, creating an obstacle that has to be navigated around. I have used the jig here to produce the molding on a door front, which is probably the obvious use. However, there are many more uses for this neat, very nicely made jig. Cutting the recess for router plates springs to mind.



The bespoke clamps slide into the underside of the extrusion

THE VERDICT

I am sure that this jig will become a common sight in my workshop. There is a lot more to discover about this deceptively simple device and I, for one, am looking forward to finding out.

AVAILABILITY

The Varijig is currently available in the UK but may be released in the USA by the time this article is published.

CONTACT DETAILS

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