

Classic Tools REVISITED

Dewalt DW625

Andy King takes a look back at an old router that has become a workshop favourite

There's a temptation to brand a tool with 'classic' when it's one that we continually reach for over others, but these are as much personal favourites as classics. In my case, I'm in the envious position of seeing practically every bit of relevant kit on the market, and from that I get the chance to see what I consider the best out there. In some cases, I'm so smitten with a tool that I go on to own and use it as my own personal preference. The DeWalt 625 router, based on the original Elu Mof 177, is one of these.

Of course, in most cases I only get a short time to look at and evaluate a tool, and although glaring problems are usually picked up in a review, a more subtle foible or two can only become evident over a long-term period. The purpose of these Classic Tools retrospectives, then, will be to look at favourites that have stood the test of time, but

▲ The DeWalt 625 router is one that Andy tested and went on to use as his preferred choice. The one pictured is the latest version, the DW625EK

also to consider how they vary from my first impressions after months or years of use.

Origins, variations, changes

In terms of this tool, the Elu brand has once again made its mark. The Mof177 was the first router I ever used, and it was quite a scary thing back then. It had single speed and started with a massive surge of power, but the layout of the adjusters was one that set the base for me when I went on to use other routers throughout my career. When DeWalt bought Elu the router remained as the flagship big

router, the DW625 the variable speed model.

Since then, little has changed from the original concept. The main difference is the more powerful motor being, along with a much more user-friendly soft start. A subtle sculpting of the grips to rest the thumbs on the current model is also a nice touch.

Having had a DW625 for a number of years, it still remains one of my favourites, holding its own with the new models. This design of router has even been sold by CMT in an orange livery, and by Trend as the T10 and T11. If there's one area where it has been improved, Trend has



▲ Pic.1 The micro adjustable fence is still one of the best on the market



▲ Pic.2 As standard, a spindle lock button is used to swap cutters

NEWS EXTRA

Stanley launches Premium Planes

Stanley used to be renowned for high quality, old-fashioned tools, but for a long time now its range has sat at the lower-end of the market. Soon, however, the company will be launching a set of Premium Planes and in doing so, is seeking to take a radical step away from its current planes. In fact, with these planes it seems to be targeting the hallowed market occupied by Lie-Nielsen, Clifton and Veritas, although these are set to be less engineered and finished products.

It'll be interesting to see what Stanley has done to bring these planes closer to the big guns, as well as how they compare to the original Stanley Bailey line. We'll have more next month...



▲ Heavy duty work such as worktop scribing is where DW625 excels



▲ Fitting a Router Raizer...



▲ ...makes an enormous difference



▲ It's simple to preset a depth, as shown

It still has plenty of strong points and will remain a favourite

done it with a link through the base for inverted use so you don't have to get beneath the router table to make any adjustments. The original DeWalt/Elu doesn't have this, but on my own, I fitted the excellent RouterRaizer (available from www.woodworkersworkshop.co.uk) that does the same job, and doesn't take a great deal of work to fit.

I think if I had to make a suggestion for an upgrade it would be to extend the plunge lock lever. Most routers have them tucked behind the casing, and they can be either difficult to reach or to operate. That's the case I find after using this one for a long session. A longer lever would be both easier to reach and also easier to operate.

Although a range of bushings are available for template work, trade jigs are usually based around a 30mm guide bush. That alone is not too much of a problem, even if you have to screw them in and out as needed, but I have to admit that I've lost a few screws over the years. A quick release, tool-free swap would be a big advantage.

Of course, the inverted height adjustment and the guide bush swaps are advances that

have been made by other manufacturers – long after the Elu made its mark – but it still has redeeming factors that make it such an iconic router.

The standard height adjustment based around the three-post turret is superbly simple as it's so easy to use. The rack and pinion adjustment with the side dial makes it a cinch to set a depth using gauge blocks with the turret for example.

The sliding lens cursor can be used to good advantage for offsetting a known depth, while the simple threaded adjuster when fitted with the separate fine adjustment post makes it very simple to alter.

Still safe, still strong

Although the safety feature on some routers is a two-part trigger, the push-through switch on the DeWalt is so simple to use – you just have to be aware that it can be left on inadvertently and start up when the tool is plugged in. While some routers can be seen as getting long in the tooth, the DW625, even with the upgrades done by others, still has plenty of strong points and will remain a favourite of mine for quite some time to come.

The Dewalt 625E costs around the £240 mark, while the Trend T11 version with the inversion adjustment for table use is around £280. Although you can get hold of these tools from a number of good dealers, D&M currently has some great deals on both versions at the moment – visit www.dm-tools.co.uk for more. 🔧

