



DeWalt DW717-X mitre saw

No need for lasers? This mitre saw gets down to the basics

My love/hate relationship with lasers can swing favourably in the case of mitre saws, but they have to fire a fine beam and be accurate to be of any use. A failing even with the accurate ones is the single beam, meaning you align to one side of the line to accommodate the kerf when often you need to cut to the opposite side of the blade. Festool has a very good dual laser beam fitted to its Kapex saw to overcome this.

DeWalt, on the other hand, has gone back to basics and dispensed with the laser, instead using a very bright white LED to cast a shadow down either side of the blade to indicate the exact position of the kerf, meaning that you can align on one side as easily as the other. It doesn't need calibrating either, making it a very simple device. The negatives, however, are obvious enough...

Unlike a good laser, with the saw head in the raised position, this LED can't retain a sharp profile; the shadow widens so you can't align it

to a specific mark. Dropping it down on the work it actually picks out the TCT tips so you can be sure it will be spot on, but you have to get the work roughly in place, before adjusting with the saw head grazing the work. Another

The DW717-X saw is relatively compact with great capacities

problem is bright sunlight. I mimicked this using a LED torch and the shadow washes out, much the same as a laser.

Tough competition

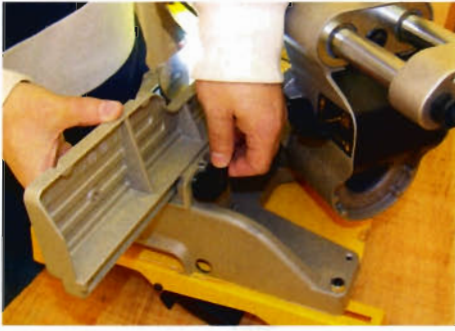
Apart from this, the DeWalt has some very nice touches and very good build quality, even if it's perhaps not quite as high spec as the Kapex, its

main rival. For functionality, however, it will give the Kapex a run for its money and save you a bob or two in the bargain!

Like the Kapex, it has a dual tilt working 60° to the left and 50° to the right with common indent angles, but it also needs to have the sliding fences removed to take advantage of the full tilt and compound functions (like the Kapex). A couple of retaining screws need to be slackened to do this - I'd likely keep it that way for ease of use.

Similarly, it has a brush motor so it's not the quietest, but it is belt driven so it doesn't jerk as you engage the power switch.

Tilting isn't as sweet as the Kapex - you don't have the rack and pinion adjustment for finer tweaking, but it runs smoothly when you flip the small side-mounted levers (accessed from either side of the saw dependent on the way you need to tilt) from 'indent' position to 'unlock' to put it into the free running mode, and overrides the 45° setting to gain an



▲ Pic.1 Both fences slide back for compound functions. You can remove them by slackening a retaining screw



▲ Pic.2 This flip stop is easily altered for different trenching depths



▲ Pic.3 These levers are used to tilt and lock the saw for compound work. The lower one is pretty stiff

additional 3° for 48° maximum bevels. This lever is pretty stiff to move however.

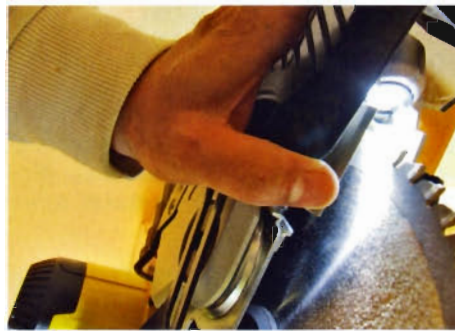
If you need to hold angles away from indents, the top mounted lever locks it firmly.

Devil's in the detail

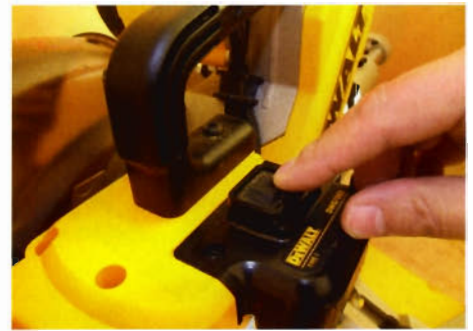
Where some cheaper and even rival saws fail is holding a position close to an indent on the turntable for basic mitring, often slipping into the indent when you need to shave a fraction of a degree. Here, the paddle-type locking lever is excellent; I could get it to lock within around a quarter of a degree alongside an indent. In this respect I would think the inclusion of a fine cursor lens with fractional increments would be a distinct advantage.

The compound function has similar indents limited to 22.5°, 30° and 45° positions, plus the usual settings for American style crown mouldings, allowing them to be cut flat on the turntable. There's also a set of fences available for cutting mouldings while held at their correct angle – certainly a better option for more complex angles as the indented settings only allow for a 90° joint.

If you do go down this route, the DeWalt (like the Kapex) has a lock-out to hold the saw in a set position for dealing with deeper stock. This is a simple pressed steel flip-over bracket that



▲ Pic.4 The LED shines alongside both sides of blade to give a shadow that indicates the cut line



▲ Pic.5 You can switch the light on or off with this rocker button

locks over a stud, but it works very efficiently.

Trenching is normal on a pull-over saw with a parallel running bar system; the DeWalt doesn't deviate from this and there's a flip stop so you can swap between trench and full-depth cuts easily.

On the scales

Some of the bigger DeWalt saws are able to sit on a standard 600mm worktop and swing through the range of angles. That's not the case here, however – you'll need a minimum of 700mm to allow it a stable footing and get the bars to attain full crosscut travel.

Still, while the Kapex is seen as the lusted-

after model, the DeWalt isn't streets away. The DW717-XLS has some very nice touches, is reasonably compact considering its great capacities and at around £400, it's a saving by comparison. You'll have to ask yourself if those extras offered on the Kapex are justifiable when this saw can equal its cutting performance.

The light is switchable, so you can turn it off, but it's useful in its own right for illuminating the work area. The shadow function, meanwhile, is a neat idea and does work well once you get used to aligning stock first off, but if you need to set to a pre-marked bevel I think a decent laser still has the edge, especially when it comes to a dual beam.

This is a great saw, nonetheless, and with capacities close to a small radial arm, it's ideal for the workshop as well as out on site. 🛠️



▲ Pic.6 The shadow is only crisp when the saw blade is down on the work, but does give a perfect alignment – ideal for swinging the saw to line up with a pre-marked line

The Woodworking Verdict

- + Shadow concept is interesting, great capacities
- Needs a deep work area to sit on

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: **£480**

Motor: 1675W

Speed: 4000rpm

Weight: 24kg

Capacities: Max crosscut @ 90°: 320mm

Max crosscut @ 45°: 260mm

Max depth of cut @ 90°: 88mm

Max depth of cut @ 45° tilt: 58mm

Max depth for fixed position vertical mouldings: 152mm

Web: www.dewalt.co.uk