



£199

Small bench mortisers have always tended to be a bit like toys, with minimal capacities and fiddly fence adjustments that make anything other than the occasional job more of a chore than a pleasure. But this machine is different...

Record BM16 bench mortiser

Several manufacturers have recently started to introduce bench mortisers with many of the better features found on the more industrial machines, but still at a distinctly bench-top price. The latest offering from Record Power, the BM16, epitomises this concept, effectively being a scaled-down version of their much larger and heavier machines.

However, this doesn't mean that it is lightweight machine, the whole thing is based around a substantial casting and weighs a hefty 39kg! The long handle inspires confidence that it will work up to the maximum quoted chisel size of 16mm, though to be realistic 12mm is probably a better day-to-day maximum. If you need to cut 16mm mortises on a regular basis, you would be better looking at a bigger model.

Positive features

The head return is achieved with a gas strut that is not particularly strong, but is fine for me. As you would expect, there are decent enough depth stops, which as well as controlling the maximum downward movement, also limit the amount of return on the head to minimise the amount of movement required on the main handle.

The timber clamping mechanism is one of the best I've seen at this level, and in fact is probably better than some of the bigger machines. The large clamp knob is easy to grip, and the distinct angle of the screw thread provides really positive downward force, minimising the problem of the timber being pulled out of the clamp if the chisel jams.

Easy movement

At first sight the fore-and-aft movement is not quite so convenient, being achieved via with a small knurled knob. In reality, this action is so smooth that the rather diminutive control is actually quite sufficient and allows you to make very fine adjustments if necessary; it just doesn't look the part!



The machine is based around a substantial casting



The long handle promises maximum capacity of 5/8in...



...but 1/2in is more realistic for day-to-day cutting



It's easier to tighten the chuck with the key vertical



TESTED BY ALAN HOLTHAM



The clamping mechanism is one of the best around



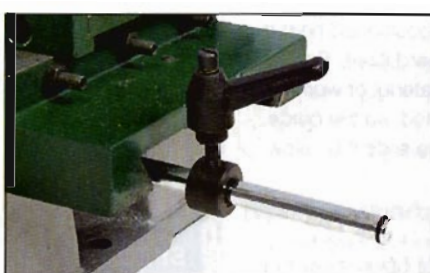
A small knob controls fore-and-aft movement



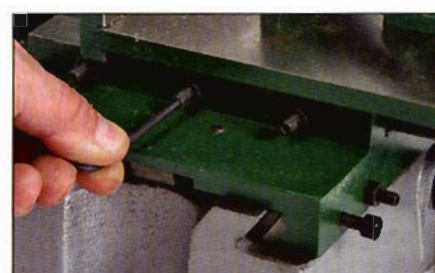
A single lever effects side-to-side movement



The table is moved by a large rack and pinion



Simple stops limit the amount of travel



Set the movements as tight or slack as you like

Side-to-side movement is achieved with a capstan-type knob operated with a single lever. This rather strange arrangement again works well, but is somewhat less user-friendly. Ideally the BM16 needs mounting at the front of the bench so the lever can be operated pointing down, but then it drops out when you let go.

Simple adjustment

If you use it in the upright position, the lever will sometimes foul on the fore-and-aft adjuster knob unless you are working on very thick timber. This is not a big deal as you can quickly reposition it in one of the other holes, but sticking the capstan boss out a bit further would have eliminated any conflict and allowed you to use the handle upright, which is more intuitive.

However, I soon got used to positioning the timber on the table so I had the maximum available travel. The table is moved by a large rack and pinion that gives it plenty of mechanical advantage so it doesn't need a lot of effort to operate. Simple but effective stops on either side of the table limit the amount of travel, so you only have to mark out the first mortise.

Chisels are gripped in the head casting with a grub screw, but the bits are held in a conventional drill chuck. This is a bit tricky to access, making it more difficult to get the bits really tight, which is a very necessary requirement. It's actually easier once you learn to operate with the key vertical, but this is perhaps just a niggle.

On the run

In use the BM16 is a pleasure to use, the quiet induction motor having more than enough power, and the sheer weight of the construction ensures a vibration-free performance. As with any machine it's the quality of the tooling that makes or breaks it, and the offer at the time of writing includes a very respectable 1/4in chisel and bit that just glides into the timber, provided you set it correctly!

The quoted 16mm capacity is perhaps a little optimistic, but up to 12mm this is a superb little machine to use, and apart from the slightly fiddly chuck is very hard to fault.

SPECIFICATION

MOTOR	375W (0.5hp)
TABLE SIZE	180 x 157mm (7 x 6 1/4in)
MAXIMUM DRILL DEPTH	70mm (2 3/4in)
MAXIMUM WORKPIECE HEIGHT	120mm (4 3/4in)
MAXIMUM WORKPIECE WIDTH	125mm (5in)
CHISEL CAPACITY	6-16mm (1/4-5/8in)
MAXIMUM CHISEL STROKE	130mm (5 1/4in)
CHUCK CAPACITY	13mm (1/2in)
CHISEL SHANK DIAMETER	20mm (3/4in)
WEIGHT	39kg (86 lb)

VERDICT


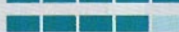
This machine will make an excellent addition to the workshop. If you are in the market for a small mortiser, this one is well worth a serious look, particularly at the offer price.

PROS

- Vibration-free performance
- Excellent build quality

CONS

- Fiddly chuck adjustment
- Side-to-side capstan movement

VALUE FOR MONEY 
PERFORMANCE 

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Record Power
- 0870 770 1777
- www.recordpower.co.uk