

First Impressions

Gramercy brushes

You may've spent days, weeks or even months working on a project, but it can be made or marred by the quality of the finish. Finding a brush that's up to the job can be tricky, but these US-made Gramercy brushes are just the ticket. The ultra-soft, fine bristles are made from pure European ox hair, and are held firmly in an epoxy binder and stainless steel ferrule around the hardwood handle. The result is a high-quality finish that's almost brushmark-free and perfect for your latest creation. They're not the cheapest brushes on the market, but why spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar? Available in 1in, 2in and 3in sizes. Tools for Working Wood. Prices from \$19.99 plus shipping. www.toolsforworkingwood.com

Dakota DKD55 T-track cam clamps

Arriving too late for last month's round-up of bench holding devices, these clamps are certainly worth a look. You'll need to buy the T-track in which they slide (also available from Rutlands), but letting a couple of tracks into a work surface will give you an infinitely adjustable clamping system. Just slide the clamp along to the desired spot, tighten the hex screw, and then operate the cam clamp to nip up. The jaw has a serrated face for grip, and pushes inwards and downwards at the same time to both hold the work and force it down onto the bench. Sold as a pair, the all-metal plated construction should give years of good service.

Rutlands
£13.95
www.rutlands.co.uk
01629 815518

Tormek T7 grinder

Keeping tools sharp and in good order can be the most difficult part of woodworking. To some, sharpening comes naturally, but others will struggle to achieve consistency, so anything that makes life easier has to be a bonus.

Tormek had the market pretty well sorted for wet-wheel grinding thanks to the quality and performance of the brand, and the massive selection of jigs available for its sharpening system – there can't be many edge tools that can't be worked on a Tormek.

However, Tormek may've been prompted to rethink its strategy by the recently launched Jet grinder, which incorporates some handy features such as variable speed and an improved water trough. Enter the T7 – a new grinder with an industrial rated motor and a whopping seven-year warranty that cover the machine regardless of who's using it, amateur or professional.

Initially, the T7 seems little changed from the Tormek 2006 Supergrind model: you get the 250mm grinding wheel, a 200mm leather stropping wheel, plus a toolpost, straight grinding jig for chisels and plane irons, as well as a tube of honing paste for the leather wheel. Closer examination, however,

reveals some subtle differences, the most important of which is the tool holder.

Improved tool holder

The performance of the original tool holder has always been a bone of contention. Trying to keep an edge at 90° can be a matter of trial and error, involving adjustments to the clamping pressure, and juggling the finger pressure on the tool as it addresses the wheel. In truth, it's not as bad as it sounds – a slightly out-of-square edge won't cause too many problems in a chisel or a plane with lateral adjustment. However, shoulder planes and the like are a different matter: it's paramount that the edges on tools like these are as square as possible, and this is where the new tool holder – the SE-76 – scores heavily (Good news – the new tool holder is retro-compatible with older Tormeks).

The rest ensures that chisels and plane irons are always clamped square to the stone by reversing the clamping plate so that it pulls up on the underside or bevel side of the tool rather than the flat side, so the flat side then addresses the registration surface.

Fine tuning

The micro-adjustable toolrest, which was introduced as standard on later models, is a further refinement included on the T7. It takes the form of a threaded end on the bar and a

Tormek's latest sharpening system raises the bar for wet-wheel grinders

collar that allows adjustment in increments of 0.25mm when setting the bevel angle.

The water trough seems no different to those on the previous Tormeks, so dripping water is still an issue, although the tool rest stops do help by restricting the travel. I would still prefer the wider trough used by Jet though, which helps to keep mess to a minimum.

Talking of the Jet, the neat little storage drawer on which it sits is something that would benefit the Tormek, if only to keep the basic accessories close to hand. Saying that, we're all woodworkers, so making a simple box with a drawer for the purpose shouldn't be too taxing.

One thing that the Tormek does have is power: the 200W motor doesn't sound big, but you'll be hard put to apply enough load on the tool to stop the wheel. It may slow slightly, but that's to be expected of any tool like this.

The stone itself cuts very quickly, and can be re-graded using the supplied stone so you can go from coarse to fine cutting in a matter of seconds. Be prepared to give it a good dunking before you start work as it's a thirsty stone, taking a couple of pints of water before the trough maintains a steady level to work.

You're also supplied with a TT-50 diamond dressing jig so that you can re-dress the wheel. It's a very simple process, and the jig is adjustable so that you can remove the least amount of material from the stone while ensuring that it remains perfectly round.

The leather stropping wheel is a bonus for those who want the ultimate edge, especially woodturners and carvers. I don't really like using a round wheel to polish flat-backed tools as it can dub the edge if you aren't careful, but the honed edge that you can achieve with one is second to none, and ideal if you struggle for consistency.



Value for money

Coming in around the £380 mark, the T7 certainly isn't cheap, but it performs flawlessly, and with the TT-50 worth around £46, the new tool holder, and the long warranty, you should have years of trouble-free grinding ahead of you. What's more, at the moment there's a 'lifetime' offer on the grinding stone. Tormek will replace it up to three times if it wears out, and at around £90 a throw, that's not to be sneezed at. The offer's open until the end of 2007, so get in there quick!

Good The Woodworking Verdict

+ The new tool holder makes it easy for square grinding
- A big investment at this price

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £380
Made in: Sweden
Motor: 200watts
Brimarc
Tel: 0845 330 9100
Web: www.brimarc.com



▲ Pic.1 The new tool clamp registers on the back of the tool so it stays square to the wheel at all times. The old clamp registered on the back so bevel tools could twist slightly and grind out of square



▲ Pic.2 This collar can be used to restrict the travel across the stone to stop it slipping off the edge...



▲ Pic.3 ...while this wheel is used to micro-adjust the height of the tool post when setting the bevel angle



▲ Pic.4 A small screw-in knob stops the tool clamp from running off the tool post as you grind