

Nicely finished stops

Startrite TS1

Derek Jones gets behind the wheel of Startrite's new tablesaw that puts performance over curb appeal

It's far too easy these days for manufacturers to dazzle us with features that promise to streamline workflow. When it comes to the low volume workshop of just a couple of workers, you tend to find that when the shine begins to fade on a new machine, so does the attraction of a fully automated system with digital display and virtual CNC capability. As this level of technology becomes cheaper to produce it is in danger of systematically replacing craftsmen with operators. And although I don't for a minute think that the people at Record Power were on a crusade to preserve the integrity of artisans when they spec'd out the TS1, that's more or less where they ended up. You see, there are no whistles and bells on this machine. Or at least, none that you can see. They have instead combined the best of old-school woodworking machinery with sensible modern upgrades to produce a machine that craftsmen will enjoy using.

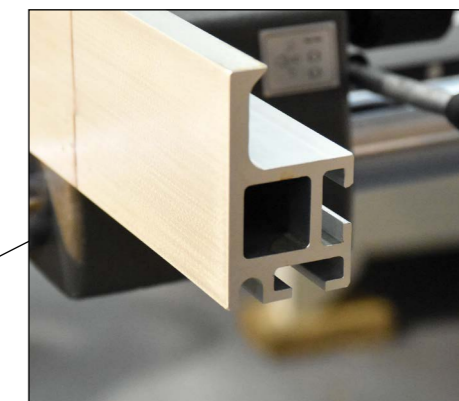
Heart of steel

The heart of a good all-rounder tablesaw like the TS1, is not the motor as many folk think, as the majority of work during the lifetime of the machine will barely cause it to break into a sweat. Although it has a maximum depth of cut capacity of 102mm at 90° something in the region of half that and probably less is more likely to represent the daily grind. A great motor is only as good as its mountings and the TS1 has a combination of cast-iron machined trunions integral to the base cabinet that soak up any trace of vibration. The motor chassis is machined to fit up to, and not suspend from, the cast-iron table meaning there is no unnecessary stress applied to the table when the motor is tilted.

With a sliding carriage stroke of 1250mm the squaring frame is quite adequate for cross cutting a 1220mm wide board. Ripping it down the 2440mm length may present a few logistical problems as far as space and

support is concerned but the TS1's rock steady fence is easily up to the job. This machine features a fairly universal system to enable the user to switch between working from the front or back of the cross cut fence. Loosen the large knobs beneath the frame and you can prepare for angled cuts or remove them altogether to change position. The knob nearest the machine is a snug fit but there is a sweet spot when the carriage is slid back that makes access easier.

Simple but effective lock nuts are used to ensure the fence registers in position. More importantly, they are easily accessed should the need arise for adjustment, which is a common theme on this machine. Sprung levers attach the frame to the carriage so that it can be removed completely. Putting it back on single-handedly can be a little awkward but the same can also be said of virtually every other machine with this feature.



Substantial aluminium fence

with the fine adjuster as some lock mechanisms have a knack of deflecting the fence when engaged. I didn't encounter a problem with this machine and for a 100% handraulic unit that's quite a rare thing.

One of the things that's never a deal breaker when buying a machine but you'll wish it was one day is the level of access for routine maintenance. It's a fact of life that extraction ports on tablesaws get blocked and when it happens you invariably end up on the floor with your arm up a pipe, James Herriot style trying to remove the blockage. The TS1's main port is high up on the back of the machine exiting the cabinet in a straight line precisely where any blockage is likely to occur. The cut-out on the cabinet also allows good access to the interior of the machine so you can keep tabs on the dust building up inside the unit. Around the side of the cabinet there's a removable panel that gains access to the motor bay and all the parts that need servicing. As I said, you won't appreciate this until you have reason to put it to the test in which case you can thank me later for this insight. When you need to change blades there's ample room when the guard is dropped to get a spanner and your fist in the void. You may have to remove the crown guard to drop the bar that locks the spindle through the table but loosening a small Bristol lever is the only thing stopping you.



All the settings are via hand wheels

There are areas where the TS1 appears to be over-engineered compared to other machines in this class. The solid steel bar onto which a substantial cast-iron fence mount is fixed is a rigid platform for the equally robust aluminium fence, which incidentally slides back and forth without sticking. The factory specification states a maximum rip dimension of 900mm from the blade but you can actually get close to 965mm. For accurate rip cuts it's generally good practice to creep up to a dimension

The flip stop on the TS1 is also a generic design but unlike some I've come into contact with, it's well finished and not about to slice into my digits every time I insert one to flip it over. In fact the contact surfaces on the machine are well finished throughout suggesting an above average level of attention has been applied in its construction.

Heavy duty

The controls on the TS1 are all manual and all the better for it. Flipping the blade from 90° to 45° is smooth in both directions as is the height adjustment for the main blade. Less obvious at first are the controls for the scroll blade to align it left or right of the main blade and raise or lower it completely. Once mastered, lateral adjustment in increments of 0.01mm are well within your grasp. Although the scroll blade has a separate motor so it can be turned off when not in use, the settings remain in sync with the main blade.



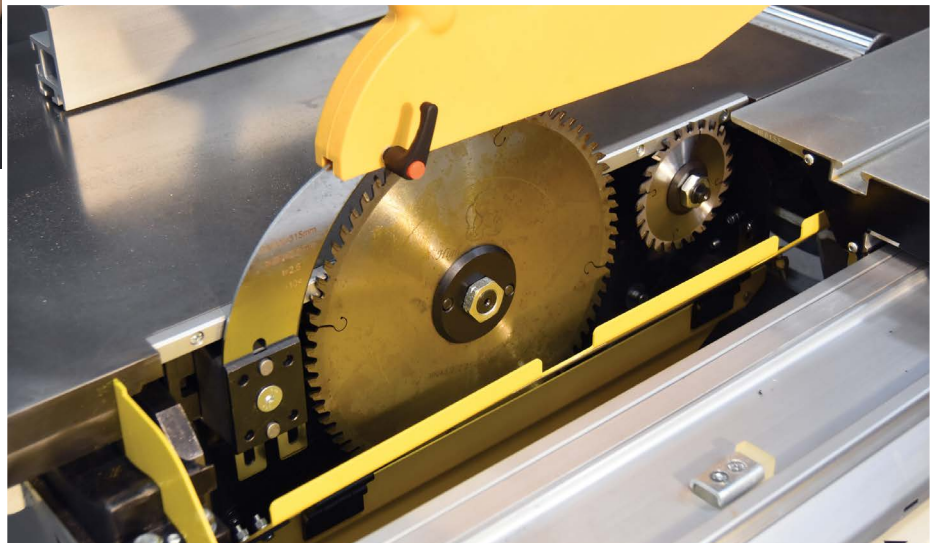
Work either side of the squaring frame fence



Rock solid fence lock off

F&C verdict

The TS1 is without a doubt a good honest, no nonsense machine. It may not be quite as refined as a Felder, a Martin or an Altendorf but the general build quality is most definitely on a par and rather than having to learn how to communicate with the machine you'll be able to work with it immediately, which is not such a bad thing. Available in either three phase or 240v the TS1 has a number of add-ons that make it suitable for serious amateurs and serious professionals alike whether one-offs or production runs are your thing. *F&C*



Plenty of space for blade changes

The numbers

Maximum Blade Size: 315mm
Blade Bore: 30mm
Scoring Blade Size: 120mm
Scoring Blade Bore: 30mm
Blade Speed: 4000rpm
Maximum Rip Capacity: 900mm
Sliding Carriage Stroke: 1250mm
Blade Tilt: 45°
Maximum Depth of Cut 90°: 102mm
Maximum Depth of Cut 45°: 72mm
Table Height from Floor: 870mm
Motor: 2.5kW
Weight: 400kg
Size: H860 x W2030 x D1730mm
Price: £2799.99
From: www.recordpower.co.uk



Clear route for waste material