Feature-packed router table

This new router table features a solid setup and allows you to easily maximise the versatility of all popular portable routers

The insert plate has a series of levelling screws to get it flush to the table surface

A square shows the fence facing to be perfectly square to the table

WIN!

There's a whole host of Trend kit up for grabs, including the WRT Workshop Router Table, T5 & T11 routers, & the T35 M-Class Dust Extractor. Each of these pieces of kit will be reviewed over the coming months, so look out for entry details in *GW327*. With a prize total of over £1,600, make sure you don't miss it!

I f you have the space for a dedicated router table it's a sound investment, especially if you can afford to keep a router permanently fitted, which has the benefit of allowing you to use it as a small spindle moulder type setup.

But it can be a balancing act when looking at tables and trying to get a good work surface and a fence of equal stature, so it pays to spend a little more to ensure you get a table that gives you the best of both worlds.

Various configurations

Trend's WRT table ticks the boxes for stability and rigidity of the fences, and when married up with the Trend T11 router, it really comes into its own as the 6.35mm-thick aluminium insert is drilled to allow the height adjuster to drop through to the router for fine adjustment from above the table.

The plate is drilled for all the Trend routers as a direct fit with set screws into the router base and any other router using this configuration will fit directly. The plate can be easily drilled for other makes and models, however.

If you go for the T11 router, there's also a set of quick-release lugs available so you can take the router in and out of the table easily for hand-held work, but whatever your choice of router make or model, operating it is easy with the well positioned front-mounted NVR switch just below the table surface. This allows the router to be plugged into it so it always remains ready for action, but isolated by the NVR until needed.

You still need to get beneath the work surface to release the cutters when it's fitted into the table, but the square tubular frame design offers rigidity without any restrictive bracing or aprons, so access to the collet isn't hampered.

Table & framework

The table and framework requires assembly before you can get down to work, but the superb instruction manual is clear and concise with excellent diagrams. Another benefit is that it is written in 'proper' English, rather than a poor translation from another country, which often serves to confuse more than enlighten, meaning that it doesn't take long to get things set up and ready for action.

The open, straight-legged framework also has the advantage of featuring lower rails, allowing a simple lower storage shelf to be fitted or a storage cabinet to be built beneath the table, which is always useful.

For a static operation the table is supplied with adjustable levelling feet, but if you need a mobile option, a heavy-duty castor set is also available. This is worth considering if space is tight as the table weighs in at around 27kg without the router fitted, so it's quite a lump to shift around regularly if you don't own a wheel set.

The business end of things

Moving back up to the business end of things, the look is very similar to that of the CRT Mk3 version with a laminated table and solid one-piece aluminium fence extrusion.

The 804 × 604mm table gives a good referencing surface to support the work as it passes the cutter and with a standard 19mm slot for a mitre fence, you can upgrade to an alternative fence if you require a finer, more adjustable option.

The supplied alloy mitre fence is still of

Checking the fence facings with a straight edge showed them to be smack on

The sponge helps prevent dust ingress behind the fence when routing

These two rods slide behind the outfeed fence to pack it off for planing functions

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Two locking knobs secure the fence with twin scales on the table, thus aiding positioning

The cutter aperture can be closed down with the clip-in insert plates

With a T11 router in place the cutter height can be easily altered from above the table

Adjustable featherboards are supplied for both vertical and horizontal control

Once set up the featherboards keep the work tight to the table and fence for great results

A lead on pin is provided for curved work; it stores on board when not in use

You can see the principle here, providing a pivot point to introduce the work to the cutter

The router is controlled by plugging it into the NVR switch provided

a good standard, however, with a snug fit and smooth action for maximum control and consistency through the cut, so you shouldn't need to look to upgrade unnecessarily.

Ensuring the work runs smoothly requires a snag-free and flat surface. The jacking screws around the perimeter of the aluminium insert ensures fine-tuning the flush fit to the melamine table surface is a cinch to achieve, and once done, four additional screws secure the plate.

Two removable inserts close down the aperture for different diameter cutters and with a maximum diameter of 86mm available, panel raising cutters and other bigger moulding cutters are well within its grasp, as long as the router being used is capable of driving them.

The fence is where a table has to cut the mustard if it is to make the grade, as any misalignment, twist or play will result in poor performance. Checking this fence for these important factors proved to be accurate and true across the board and the sliding melamine fence faces helps to keep the timber running smoothly. As we did, you may find that the sponge on the fence at the cutter aperture end of the facings prevents the fences from sitting flat to each other if they are closed down enough to sit over the sponge, unless they are tightened very securely, so it may help to trim a little of it away if this is the case.

We'd look to buy a few threaded inserts from Trend to allow you to swap the melamine ones for timber or ply equivalents, which will allow you to tack sacrificial fences for zero clearance fence work as and when needed, so that the melamine ones remain in good nick, and the fence design allows this to be done with ease.

'T' slots in the extrusion keep the cutter guard and vertical featherboard in place and it allows them to slide out of the way easily for cutter swaps without needing to remove them.

The mitre slot in the table also doubles up as a slot to secure the horizontal featherboard so that the work can be held in both planes, which helps to maintain consistent pressure as the work is moved through.

Two long square section rods store on the fence and can be used on the outboard side, slid into channels in the extrusion to pack the fence out by either 1.4 or 2.4mm for edge planing work with a straight cutter fitted, which I found to be a useful function for jointing boards.

The fence can be backset away from the cutter up to 225mm for running plough grooves or mouldings in from the edge of a panel or workpiece and are great for running wider boards through for making moulds on the face for false panel work, which gives the look of narrower strip moulds, such as wainscoting or matchboards. There's also a supplied lead on pin that stores onboard and allows curved work to be undertaken easily.

At the rear of the fence the angled dust port is compatible with the 63mm dust extraction systems if you want to 'plumb it in' to such a system, or you can attach it to a portable extractor with suitable hose or adaptor, with the open frame/lower shelf option acting as a great space for siting one.

Conclusion

The WRT does what any router table should do: hold its settings securely, while being easy to adjust and operate without any faff or rigmarole.

It doesn't have any bells and whistles as such, but it doesn't need to: we've seen a fair few tables that offer a lot of additions, which while sounding like 'must haves', are invariably stocking fillers that prove unusable, inaccurate or both.

So a table that has nothing but a solid setup and performance along with locking and adjustment knobs of equal stature has to be a good thing. Fit the T11 into the table and the whole kit and caboodle will enhance what is already a solid and dependable workshop workhorse. **GW**

Specification:
- **Table top size:** 804 × 604 × 35mm
- **Table height:** 890mm
- **Router cutter aperture:** 98mm
- **Max cutter diameter:** 86mm
- **Insert ring sizes:** 31.8mm; 67.5mm
- **Backfence height:** 68mm
- **Dust spout aperture:** 57mm

- **Typical price:** £399; list price: £478.80
- **Web:** www.trend-uk.com

THE GW VERDICT

- **PROS:** Square and solid fence; large table area; rigid leg frame; easy adjustments; perfect companion to the T11 router

- **CONS:** Sponge on fence can prevent fence facings from aligning flat

- **RATING:** 4.5 out of 5