

Product reviews

CMT Tools router bits, CMT Tools, 5425 Beaumont Center Blvd., Suite 900, Tampa, Fla. 33634; (813) 886-1819.

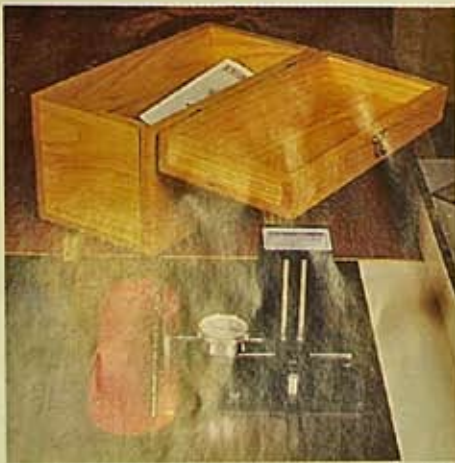
CMT Tools has been making router bits for 30 years but has only been selling bits under their own name in this country since January. CMT used to supply several major international tool manufacturers who did business in the United States, but cheaper sources of supply eventually supplanted CMT. In marketing their bits for the first time in this country, CMT is betting that there are enough woodworkers willing to pay a fair price for premium goods.

The first thing that struck me about the CMT bits (besides their color—Safety Orange) was the anti-kickback design; the profile bits look different from their conventional counterparts. CMT's literature explains that by milling the bodies of the bits so they're just fractionally smaller than the cutters, the bit can only take a small bite with each revolution. The result: Kickback is all but eliminated, and neither feed rate nor performance are affected.

As much attention seems to have gone



Even in rock maple, CMT bits met little resistance. Proprietary micrograin carbide provides a fine cutting edge, and baked-on Teflon all but eliminates drag. The bits are available individually or in sets.



TS-Aligner consists of a dial indicator mounted on an arm that travels vertically on linear bearings. The cam-follower bearings that fit in the miter-gauge slot allow horizontal movement.

into materials as design. According to Carlo Venditto, GMT's U.S. chief, the fatigue-proof steel used for the bits (and by Ferrari and Porsche for their engine and transmission parts) has excellent uniformity in hardness from the center to the surface, and it is electromagnetically tested for cracks before it's ground to shape.

Other features that set CMT's bits apart, according to Venditto, are the quality of the carbide and the process for applying the Teflon. Because the Teflon coating is baked on, not painted on, as with other Teflon-coated bits, it's there to stay.

Ultimately, though, a bit must be measured by how well it performs. These bits met the challenge. They cut coves on the edges of the mahogany shelves I was working on as though they were butter. I expected as much. But when another editor used a straight bit to rout dados for drawer bottoms in rock maple sides, I expected he'd encounter more resistance. Instead, the maple boards cruised effortlessly over the bit (see the top photo at left), leaving a clean, smooth surface, free of burn marks. I can't say how they'll hold up after a few hundred hours of use, but I suspect they'll still be going strong. These are among the finest bits I've used.

Prices vary according to the bit but range from \$12 to \$29 a piece. Savings are available when buying them in sets.

—Vincent Laurence, assistant editor of FWW.

TS-Aligner, 1016 Morse Ave., Fair Oaks Industrial Park, Suite 21, Sunnyvale, Calif. 94089; (800) 333-4994.

The Edward J. Bennett Co. recently introduced TS-Aligner, which is designed to make tuning up a table saw "a simple step-by-step procedure." According to the pamphlet that comes with the tool, TS-Aligner will check a blade for flatness, angle to the saw table and parallel alignment to the miter-gauge slots; it checks the fence for flatness, squareness to the table and alignment to the miter-gauge slots. TS-Aligner also determines the amount of miter-gauge play in the slots, the accuracy of the miter-gauge scale and the condition of the arbor bearings.

TS-Aligner consists of a dial indicator mounted on a base that slides in the miter-gauge slots. This basic setup costs \$190 plus shipping. There are numerous extras, including angle-plate sets, a precision square, a set of parallel blocks and an oak storage case. The complete package costs more than \$400.

I sent the Aligner to a couple of our machinery experts for evaluation. They felt that the product as a whole was poorly designed. One of the reviewers stated that the Aligner seems to be "designed to withstand wear that will never occur while it's susceptible to dust that's always around." And, as if to acknowledge this shortcoming, the warranty states that "damage due to dirt, sawdust, any other foreign matter or to neglect is not covered."

Both reviewers also noted that when checking blade flatness with TS-Aligner, all you can really determine is that *something* is wrong. It could be the blade, the flange, the arbor or the arbor bearings. Without a more specific diagnosis, you don't know. The owner's manual provides minimal guidance, but for nearly \$200, I'd expect more information on table saw tuneup.

When I tried TS-Aligner on a Delta contractor's saw, I found the Aligner's play in the miter-gauge slots excessive. The owner's manual instructs one to "put a small rotational force on the entire unit," placing "the cam-follower bearings against opposite sides of the slot [to] eliminate any play." But it's hard enough to rotate the blade by pulling on the drive belt while holding the Aligner still, without also having to rotate it in the slot.

Specific criticisms aside, though, I don't think that the TS-Aligner is worth \$190. For perhaps half of the cost, you can buy a quality combination square, a set of feeler gauges and a book on setting up your table saw. If you decide you need .001-in. accuracy when checking your saw's alignment, you can buy a good quality dial indicator with a magnetic base for around \$80.

—V. L.

Bandsaw tires, guides and blades

Parts for tuning up your bandsaw can be hard to find. Although large, general woodworking catalogs offer a little bit of everything, they can't—by their very nature—be all things to all woodworkers. That's where smaller, specialty companies come in. In conjunction with Bob Vaughan's article on installing bandsaw tires (see p. 50), we thought we'd provide information on a couple of small companies that specialize in bandsaw items.

Tires are available from G. C. Peterson Machinery Co. (3125 S. 108th St., West Allis, Wis. 53227; 414-543-5522) and from Carter Products Co., Inc. (437 Spring St., N.E., Grand Rapids, Mich. 49503; 616-451-2928). Carter also specializes in precision guides for most bandsaws. And, finally, Suffolk Machinery Corp. (12 Waverly Ave., Patchogue, N.Y. 11772; 800-234-7297) manufactures and sells Swedish silicon-steel bandsaw blades for every purpose. They have been in business for 16 years, and it's all they do.

V.L.

Notes and Comment

Got an idea you'd like to get off your chest? Know about any woodworking shows, events or craftsmen of note? Just finished a great project? If so, we'd like to hear about them. How about writing to us? And, if possible, send photos (preferably with negatives) to Notes and Comment, Fine Woodworking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, Conn. 06470-5506.