

TOOLS & EQUIPMENT



Above: Leigh's FMT jig and above centre and right: Trend Mortise and Tenon Jig

Trend and Leigh FMT Mortise and Tenon Jigs

Trend Mortise and Tenon Jig

This black powder coated jig is made from 3mm fabricated steel and uses a router, guide bushes and adjustable templates to allow various joint widths to be cut. This is simply done by moving the templates one way or the other.

The illustrated instruction manual is well written and easy to follow—I was ready to cut the first joint after half an hour's assembly and familiarisation. You cut the tenon first, then after changing the cutter and slipping on the large collar, you rout the matching mortise. This is all done with the same template setting.

New, perfectly dimensioned cutters must be used as the tenon thickness will be incorrect if resharpened cutters are used. This is a drawback with the jig, but it may be possible to hone cutters with a diamond stone and retain their original dimension. I also found that the centring of the tenon was a bit hit-and-miss and a few test runs were required. This may, however, be due to a non-centred bit in the guide bush on the router.

This jig also cuts traditional square ended mortise and tenons. A variety of plastic guide bushes allow most tenon thicknesses to be cut, and steel guide bushes are an optional extra. Cutters are not supplied, and while plain cutters are recommended and work reasonably

well, the more expensive upcut spiral cutters are much more efficient.

Because the router is trapped within the template on top of the jig, you need to make multiple clockwise cuts using the plunge mechanism on the router. As with most jigs of this type, the climb cut ensures a crisp, clean shoulder line and also helps to keep the guide bush pressed firmly against the template.

The vertical steel table has built-in quick release clamps and is adjustable for angled joints. A dust extraction port is an optional extra. The *Trend* can also be used as an accurate dowelling jig. At \$575 it is an excellent entry level jig.

Leigh FMT

The high quality of this top of the range jig is reflected in its accuracy, versatility and price. I failed to find any problems with it at all. The thorough and superbly illustrated instruction manual makes the jig easy to set up, and the device itself is well resolved. It is made of precision-machined aluminium and uses a router sub-plate that you can custom fit to most routers, ensuring total accuracy.

The jig is supplied with several templates to cut predetermined sizes of mortises and tenons using the same cutter and set-up. To position these relative to one face you simply sight the centre through a retractable crosshair, adjust the top plate and secure it with a single cam lock. Larger joints can be cut by using various combinations

of cutter sizes and templates, and the machine can also cut minute joints, making it ideal for delicate work. The *Leigh FMT* can also cut side-by-side twin, tandem double, triple and quadruple tenons—all achieved with simple adjustments by following the instructions in the manual.

It features a cunning, simple method to fine tune the tightness of the joint by adjusting a pair of knobs on the sub-base. To detach the router from the sub-base for other duties you simply loosen four screws.

The workpiece is held firmly in place against the vertical table with a pair of cam clamps that can be positioned almost anywhere. Immediately behind the workpiece is an extraction port that extracts most of the swarf when connected to a good dust extractor. The vertical table and fence can be adjusted from 0–30° to cut angled and compound angled joints. As the template is remotely positioned the cut can be made in multiple passes without changing the depth setting on the router. I believe that this is a superior method as it is impossible to overcut.

While the *Leigh FMT's* price of \$1818 may seem high, I feel that it is justified by the jig's overall quality, precision and versatility. I highly recommend this machine. Both jigs are available from MIK International (08) 8363 4666. *Leigh* jigs are also available from Carba-Tec outlets.

Reviewed by Neil Erasmus