

# Bench-top beauty

This trade-rated bench-top bandsaw from Axminster is made to very high standards and is definitely a contender for the bigger, more expensive machines out there



same quality of the big boys; just as I would have hoped, and depending on what you work with as far as materials are concerned, there's the option to have an equally well made two-speed machine or this model with an inverter drive to control the motor. This allows the speeds to be controlled within the ratios of the two belt positions with a dial mounted on the neck of the machine. This speed control allows a wider material base to be used, including mild steel up to 10mm-thick.

There's no indicator on the dial to give an idea of the speed, however, so it's a case of using an adjustment on the fly type control to find the sweetest spot on some materials.

Metals respond better on the lower belt speed and lowest blade speed to gain maximum torque under load and to minimise heat build up. Lower speeds tend to work best with plastics as well to prevent any melting issues from heat.

### On test

Putting the steel function to the test, I tried the saw with a suitable blade on an 8mm-thick piece of flat bar. If you haven't cut thick steel on a bandsaw before, then don't expect it to be as nippy as a cut in timber; it is far slower but the saw is very capable, not struggling as the work is fed and leaving a decent finish.

So before looking at the timber performance it's well worth analysing the adjustments and settings. The upper guides are fitted to an externally mounted heavy steel rack and pinion

It's always perplexed me that smaller machinery seems to be built and aimed at a budget audience when there are plenty of people out there who do fine, high quality work at smaller levels.

Instrument makers, box makers and beyond are prime examples of such needs and I've mentioned it often, so having been invited to check out this new machine from Axminster that is aimed at just that market, I was more than happy to go and have a look.

### The nitty gritty

So let's talk costs first. At a price that would buy a very nice bigger machine, this one is built to the



The depth of cut is altered with this heavy-duty rack and pinion setup



The upper guides are adjusted without the need for tools



Height adjusting screws allow the insert to sit perfectly flush



The fence locks with a cam lever and has a fine adjuster built in



You swap the belt to alter to either of the two speed ratios



Metal cutting up to 10mm-thick is a breeze with this saw

adjuster, with equally stout guide adjusters. These are again all steel and of a good standard, including the locking wingnuts; an area where penny pinching is often employed.

Roller bearings support the sides of the blade with a further roller bearing acting as the thrust support.

All the setup tweaks needed are made with fine threaded adjusters for quick and easy accurate positioning when swapping between blade sizes. The downside is the lower bearing setup; these are again all roller bearings, but you have to get the hex wrenches out to position them, although access is decent enough for this.

The cast-iron table adjusts on a rack and pinion trunnion for setting any bevels and has a pin locking index for the 90° and 45° positions. There's no reason why you can't drill out a couple more locations on the trunnion if you work a specific angle regularly, which is a bonus, but the Bristol lever secures firmly for general setting.

There's a side loading slot for changing the blades in the table so the front fence support stays in place. A thick metal insert closes the blade aperture and sits on adjustable jacking screws to set it perfectly flush, which is a nice touch as a slightly high or low insert can be frustrating when the work snags or catches.

Blade tensioning and tracking is standard with a top-mounted tensioning knob and rear-mounted tracking knob, while a viewing window in the side of the cabinet is useful for checking the blade position on the wheel.

There's no blade tension indicator, however, so you have to adjust and tweak accordingly; not



Blade tension and tracking are set using the top and rear knobs



Rack and pinion gearing make tilting the table easy



The saw is equally powerful for deep ripping of timber

really a huge problem as the tension indicators tend to be ball-park positions that need fine-tuning as well.

The fence is secured with a cam lever and holds securely without flex; there's also a fine adjuster built in for fine-tuning a cut, which proves useful if you are cutting tenons or veneers and need to achieve a very accurate setting.

### Machining timbers

Putting the saw to work on timber, I found that it matches its ability to cut steel in the power department but at a higher feed rate. The high build quality makes it a smooth ride and therefore you can work to good accuracy, which I put to the test by making some veneer cuts.

I was able to book-match veneers directly from the saw with no steps in the fit when I butted them up, which will be a major asset to the box and instrument makers where veneers and small components need to be cut accurately and consistently.

Capacities are decent as well with 160mm being the maximum depth of cut, so it's at home on bigger pieces such as tenons or deeper veneers as required.



Thin repeat veneer cuts are accurate and consistent

### Conclusion

It's refreshing to see that Axminster have invested in a bandsaw that matches the big boys in terms of build quality to fit in with the end of the market that works to a smaller capacity but still demands accuracy and consistency, and this saw is definitely one to take a closer look at if you fall into this particular category.

If you don't require the steel cutting side of things, then you can save yourself a few bob and opt for the standard BS11 version, which doesn't have the inverter motor. **GW**

### Specification:

- ▶ **Motor:** 750W
- ▶ **Blade speeds:** 42-660 & 64-1,001 metres per minute
- ▶ **Blade width:** 3-12mm
- ▶ **Max depth of cut:** 160mm
- ▶ **Max width of cut with fence:** 220mm
- ▶ **Throat capacity:** 250mm

▶ **Typical price:** £1,199.95

▶ **Web:** www.axminster.co.uk

### THE GW VERDICT

- ▶ **PROS:**  
High quality construction; very stable; can cut metal and other materials
- ▶ **CONS:**  
Lower guides aren't tool-free adjustments; no speed setting indication on speed dial
- ▶ **RATING:** 4.5 out of 5