

Charnwood W030 spindle moulder

Great value for money and an excellent introduction to the world of spindle moulding

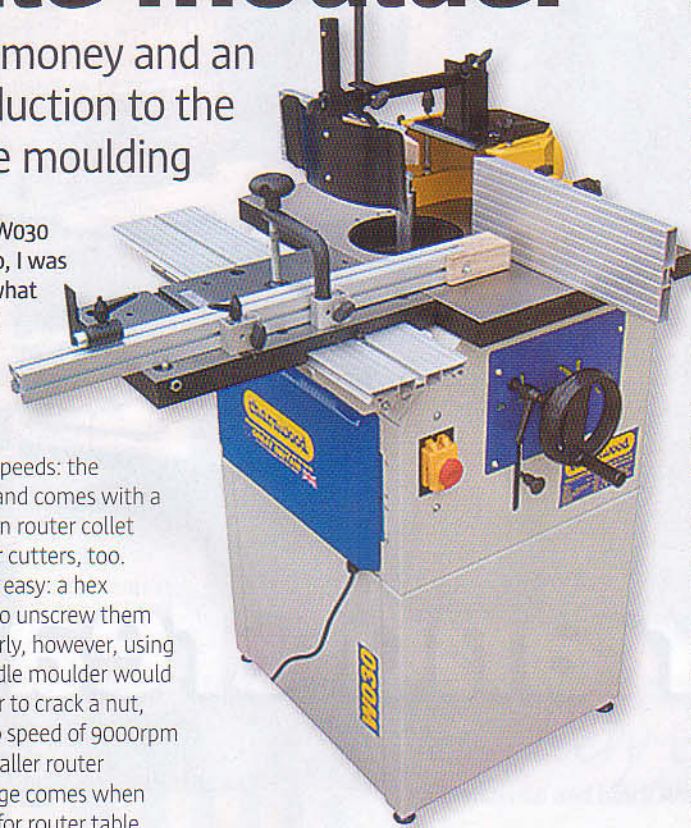
When I looked at the W030 about two years ago, I was very impressed by what you got for your money, but nowadays, as our friends across the pond might say, you get even 'more bang for your buck'.

The major difference is the upgrade in speeds: the W030 now has four speeds, and comes with a removable shaft and a bolt-on router collet spindle so you can use router cutters, too.

Swapping these spindles is easy: a hex wrench is all that's required to unscrew them from the tapered shank. Clearly, however, using small router cutters in a spindle moulder would be like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, and besides, the spindle's top speed of 9000rpm is still on the slow side for smaller router cutters. No, the real advantage comes when using large cutters designed for router table work, which benefit from the spindle's extra power. For example, I fitted the Charnwood with a panel-raising router bit that not only cuts the raised front profile, but also a rear profile. With a router, forming the full profile would require making several passes and moving the fence back a little each time so as not to overload the tool. The W030, however, was able to cut the profile in just one pass, and leave a clean finish in both MDF and timber.

No more wooden fences

Sadly, the timber facings that were fitted to the fences when I first met this machine have been replaced with aluminium ones. For me, this is a retrograde step: being able to tack false fences on a spindle has always been the



safe way of limiting the cutter opening and projection to what is required, but aluminium facings prevent this.

Adjustment for the fences is positive, with each one sliding out to accommodate wider blocks or profiles, and being independently adjustable for alignment and to provide an offset for work that requires a stepped fence. To get the facings perfectly straight to each other, I had to use a couple of thin cardboard shims, though this isn't a flaw – it's a technique that has been used as long as spindles have been around.

A variety of holes in the table allow you to position the hood to suit the block being used. These holes also allow you to turn the fences through 180°, so you can work on the other

side of the block where – without the sliding carriage in the way – there's more table space, which is particularly handy for standard long-grain cutting jobs such as moulding rails and stiles for frames. However, there's no ring fence option with the Charnwood, which limits you to straight stock machining operations.

Setting up the spindle is very simple: a handwheel sets the height, and a small Bristol lever locks it. The speed, meanwhile, is altered by slackening the motor to move the belt, and because the motor is held by a Bristol lever the job is spanner-free and takes just a few seconds. Having a low, fourth speed gives the W030 a bit more versatility as you can fit bobbin sleeves for sanding work. You won't have the oscillation function of a dedicated machine, of course, but altering the spindle height will help to utilise the abrasives more economically.

While a spindle is a very useful machine in its own right, a sliding carriage makes it so much more useful when doing cross-grain work, such as scribing shoulders on rails. A carriage is standard on the Charnwood, which makes the W030 all the more desirable if you're thinking of moving up to the world of spindle moulders without breaking the bank.

Summary

At the moment, the W030 is available with a package deal including the a spur cutter rebate block, a six-profile block, drum sanding kit, wheel base, and router collet. This will add £200 to the price, but still offers superb value for home or light trade user looking to do smaller joinery or furniture work.

The Good Woodworking Verdict

- + Extra routing and sanding options
- No wooden fence facings; no ring fence option

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £599 (Package deal: £799)

Made in: China

Motor: 1500W (2hp)

Speeds: 1400, 4000, 6000, 9000 rpm

Spindle travel: 110mm

Max tool diameter: 160mm

Weight: 95kg

Tel: 01530 516 926

Web: www.charnwood.net



▲ Pic.1 A spindle lock means that only a spanner is required for block changes



▲ Pic.2 The hood hinges back for access, held with these basic but effective lugs



▲ Pic.3 You can remove the spindle to swap it for a router collet version