

Hammer's latest addition

Peter Sefton tests the new entry-level Hammer A3-26 planer thicknesser



FELDER UK

Peter demonstrating the A3-26 at the Hammer in-house show

I was recently invited by Felder UK to join them in Milton Keynes to test and demonstrate their newly launched Hammer A3-26 planer thicknesser, for the UK press launch and for their in-house show open weekend in June. It was the first time I had been to Felder's headquarters since I purchased my machines from them in 2005. They had moved since I last visited them, to a great showroom

with a demonstration area which they have set up. The new A3-26 machine is the baby brother to my A3-41 (26, 31 and 41cm is the cutter block length). The new machine has the same fantastic three-knife quick-change cutter block and gives the same quality of planed finish as mine. It's as good as any I have ever used including planers costing four times the price. The new

models also include the well-tried and tested dual-lifting planer tables (as used on the larger Felder machines) and they are a delight to use. The machine is single phase, and it has a maximum depth of cut of 4mm but I only tend to take 3mm maximum on mine. The machine comes with very well machined cast iron tables and the thicknesser bed has a limiter on the height to stop at

The new spring-loaded dual lifting table



► 4mm thick. I took a false bed with me and managed to thickness cherry down to 2.5mm whilst still keeping a surface finish good enough to use for laminating straight from the machine, without the use of double-sided sticky tape, a true test for any thicknesser.

The cutter block can be fitted with an optional mortising chuck 0–16mm, for cutting slot mortises on an optional extra moving table. I didn't see or use this part of the machine so can't comment but will say that my personal preference would be to use a hollow chisel mortiser in the standard way.

The extraction outlet is 100mm diameter fixed to the flip over extraction hood that protects the cutter block when thicknessing. I always isolate machines before adjusting or changing from under to over, but it is comforting to know that the machine comes with good quality micro switches and 10 second breaking, as required by regs to keep us safe.

The overall weight is 245 Kg; not always important but it gives you a comparison with other similar machines as to how much metal has been put in. For example, the Startrite Industrial SD300 weighs in at 215kg

for a bigger machine.

The A3-26 uses an anodised aluminium fence with a space saving set up with the main fixing on the end of the in-feed table and a new bracket at the back to protect the cutter block

and add rigidity to the centre of the fence at any angle between 45° and 90° on the stops. I'm old fashioned and personally prefer the fence mechanism to be on a single heavy block mounting on the out-feed table as I have on my A3-41, as I feel it's a more accurate way to keep the fence square. But, I can see why Hammer did this design modification, as it saves so much space behind the machine which is ideal for the smaller workshop.

The in-feed table height adjustment is quick and easily done with a hand lever and scale on the front of the



The A3-26 is a solid and reliable new addition from Hammer

Space saving fence fixed to the end of the in-feed table



The depth of cut is adjusted using a hand lever on the front of the A3-26

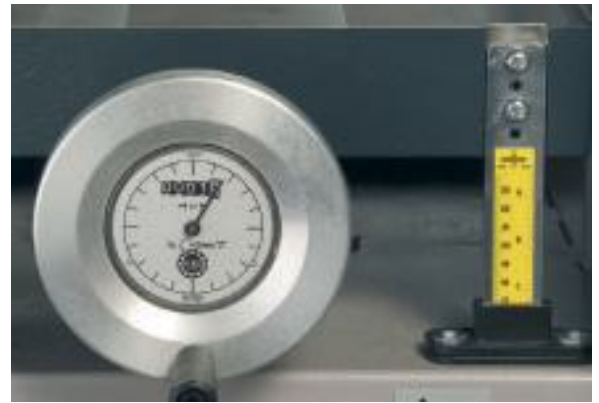
machine. I was surprised to see no adjustment for the out-feed table and asked if it was missing on this first one? A very confident answer came back that there is no need to adjust the out-feed as the quick changeover knives just drop into the same place every time. However, I am pleased to say you can make adjustments if required by using a pair of spanners on the out-feed table. That's why I have always enjoyed using my Hammer machines, they are robust, well designed and built with accuracy but you can still fiddle and make tweaks if required.

The in-feed roller is serrated solid steel and set up on springs behind the anti-kickback fingers. The out-feed roller is lightly printed with a slight knurled effect to grip, but not mark the timber surface. It has a

single feed speed of six metres a minute, which gives a very good, clean finish.

As optional extras, you can buy a set of floor rollers if workshop space is an issue; the one thing I would really recommend is buying a digital dial reader for the thicknesser height. I would certainly miss mine now.

One visitor to the show brought some very twisted English cherry with him to see what the planer could do and put me through my paces at the same time. We must have both been on a par as he was the first person to purchase the A3-26 and has just completed a bespoke wood machining course with me, along with another Hammer customer, to really get to grips with their new machines. *F&C*



I recommend buying this digital dial reader as an optional extra



The three knife self-setting cutter block system



Extractor hood which protects the cutter block when thicknessing

F&C verdict

I would say for anybody serious about woodworking or who has a small trade workshop you would not go far wrong with this machine. It's a well-built, solid and accurate machine with good safety features and doesn't take up a lot of floor space.

Pros

*Very good quality three-knife cutter block
 Dual-lifting planer tables
 Solid steel in-feed and out-feed rollers
 Quality Felder build*

Cons

Spanners required to adjust outfeed table

The numbers

*Single phase 230V motor 2.6 hp/1.6kw at 50hz
 Surfacer cast iron beds 260mm wide x 1120mm long
 Thicknesser table 260mm wide x 750mm long
 Weight 245kg
 Single feed speed: six metres a minute*

Price £1,530 inc. VAT

*From Hammer
 Web www.ukhammer.co.uk*