

High time for a

For small shops looking to contain costs, the light weight and work rate can be just what's needed

BY CHARLIE SELF



Ridgid's 10" granite-top model.

It's not uncommon to have a small shop's single table saw tied up when there's a need for a series of cuts that only a table saw can do well. Is it time to panic or time to move another saw into position and start cutting?

For most small shops, a second or third saw is not a large enough imperative to spring for another cabinet saw. Contractor's saws have been an option for many years, an option that is still available and quite low in cost. Job-site saws aren't much of an option for anything but job sites, or so it seems. Power is down. Noise is up.

HYBRID SAW

Dust collection isn't good. Dust collection is also not good — and not easily made good — with a contractor's saw.

Where did hybrids come from?

About a dozen years ago, DeWalt announced a hybrid saw — a cross between a contractor's saw and a cabinet saw. It debuted to fairly universal puzzlement as woodworkers tried to figure out just where it fit. In price, it usually falls between a similarly equipped cabinet saw and a contractor's saw. In power, most hybrids are mildly more powerful than most contractor's saws with 1-3/4 hp for the hybrid and 1-1/2 hp for the contractor's saw.

They are a step up from a contractor's saw, giving competition to the more costly ones. They're a step down from cabinet saws, saving money for the woodworker who doesn't need a saw to make hundreds of feet of rip cuts in maple, cherry or oak every week. The lack of a motor hanging off the back is appealing to many people, too.

Those baffled by the introduction didn't have too long to wait, though hybrid saw sales weren't explosive. They did take off enough for other makers to follow suit. Today, most table saw manufacturers also offer a hybrid version, sometimes two, and occasionally more than that.

Hybrid saws always have a longer cabinet than a contractor's saw, often fully enclosed down to the floor. Interiors are enclosed or baffled to allow good dust extraction, something that eludes almost all contractor's saws even today. Hybrids with full cabinets include Craftsman, Delta, Steel City and Woodtek. Those with 3/4 cabinets include DeWalt, Jet and Ridgid. Because all seem to emphasize good dust collection, the cabinet style is more of an appearance item than a real feature.

Fences used to be a major difference between cabinet saws and contractor's saws, though that has changed with a slightly lighter-duty version of the Biesemeyer T-square fence and a host of clones with and without upgrades. Usually, though, a contractor's saw needed a

fence transplant to be really useful. Hybrids already come with excellent fence systems, mostly based on the Biesemeyer fence. I like the look of the new Craftsman T-square, though I haven't had a chance to really try it out. The HDPE surfaces remind me of the HTC table saw fence, one of the best made.

If you are interested in maintaining cabinet saw ease of adjustability, look for one of the hybrid saws that uses cabinet-mounted trunnions. As we all know, adjusting a contractor's saw ranges from a time-consuming task to a royal pain in the butt. Some of the hybrid saws offer the ease of adjustability of cabinet saws. Check at the time of purchase as to what is on a particular saw because it may vary from model to model within the same brand.

Saw weights

On the whole, hybrid saws are lighter than cabinet saws. They are usually heavier than contractor's saws, with most hybrids moving

the needle to 275-325 lbs. or more. The DeWalt 746X comes in at a svelte 254 lbs., making it easy to walk around without wheels.

A note on the weight of the tops may be of interest: I weighed the extension wing from the Jet hybrid of cast iron. It was 40 lbs., give or take the vagaries of a home scale. The Ridgid weighed in at 54 lbs. Overall, that means the top and extensions probably weigh about 120 lbs. in cast iron, going to 215 lbs. or so in granite — a considerable difference.

Granite as a top

Granite makes some woodworkers nervous as a tool top because of its supposed fragility. In real life, granite is no more fragile than cast iron. Drop either one onto a concrete floor and major damage may result. Granite does chip a easier, but chips are simple to fill with epoxy, which is then sanded smooth.

We all know the major problem with cast iron:

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Craftsman's new 22116 hybrid with fence scale (inset).

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rust. If you live in a humid area, rust is a day-to-day nuisance, one that absorbs time in removal or prevention. Most woodworkers use a good

paste wax for preventing rust but, even then, the top rusts when someone drips sweat or sets a Styrofoam coffee cup on it. Rust happens with ferrous metals that don't include nickel and the other ingredients of stainless steel.

Rust doesn't happen with granite tops. Period. The other major benefit is mass. The added weight, from 30 to 90 lbs. per saw, helps reduce vibration, leading to increased accuracy.

Granite can be waxed in the same manner as cast iron, which is a good idea. It increases slickness, making feeds easier.

Not long ago, I read a complaint that granite stains too easily. But spill the same staining substance on cast iron and then come tell us the results. This is a specious bit of nonsense.

Still, we don't yet know how the T-miter slots will hold up. Steel may wear those out too quickly (in which case, it should be possible to get a steel insert added later).

Granite may or may not be the wave of the future in tool tops, but it is certainly apt to be a part of the future for the next decade or so.

Hybrid saw options

A major factor in favor of hybrid saws is the motor that is enclosed in the cabinet. The whole appearance is neater and the saw is actually somewhat smaller in storage than a contractor's saw because there is no motor hanging off the rear.

Optional equipment builds tools that do most of the jobs of a full-bore cabinet saw: the DeWalt can be fitted with a sliding table for accurate, wide crosscuts. It comes stan-



Delta's 10" hybrid saw, model 36-717.

Model
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dard with a 30° fence, but can be bought with a 52° fence. Cast-iron wings are also an option on the basic saw.

What's available

Craftsman's 221160 is a new entry. It is heavy, at 462 lbs. a function of the granite table and extensions. Craftsman has gone with a six-rib poly-V belt, too, making for efficient power transfer. It comes with a 30° T-square style fence with HDPE side plates. There are storage mounts for both the rip fence and the miter gauge on the body of the saw. It sells for about \$1,000.

Power transfer modes differ, though not markedly so. The Delta, Craftsman and a few others use a wide multiple-V belt. Others stick with a single-V belt. The single V is not as efficient, but in a relatively low horsepower tool, that bit of added efficiency is not immense.

Delta's 36-717B has the 30° Biesemeyer fence and a table board. A 50° fence is available as an option, while the 36-716B model comes with a Unifence and the 36-715B comes with a T2 T-square fence. These are all 1-3/4 hp, with a 33-3/4" table height, a poly multi-V belt, weight of 358 lbs. (more, obviously, for the wider fence models). The table board extends the table width to 54". TEFC motors add to life ex-

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Steel City's granite-top hybrid weighs in at 490 lbs.

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Woodtek's hybrid is available with a 30" or 50" fence system.

ry with model 50-240, featuring a 40" x 27" granite table and two extension wings, along with cabinet-mounted trunnions. It weighs in at 476 lbs. and sells for about \$1,300.

Jet's ProShop JPS-10 1-3/4-hp hybrid has a three-quarter length cabinet and comes standard with a 30" rip fence, again on the Biesemeyer pattern. As with all

the saws, the motor is a TEPC, with capacitor start, capacitor run. Net weight is 350 lbs.; it is no lightweight, but it is easier to walk around the shop than any of the granite-topped tables. The Jet is powder-coated, a more durable finish than paint because it better resists chipping. There are a host of accessories available, ranging from a 56" rip

fence to router table inserts and lifts. Power transfer is through a single V belt. Look to pay about \$1,000 for the base model.

Jet also offers hybrid saws with fully-enclosed cabinets (the JWSS-10CSSPE series), 30" or 52" fence, and sliding table options.

Ridgid's granite-topped saw offers a poly multi-V belt, along with a non-standard fence that comes in two parts lengthwise, but assembles to work well. The trunnions are cabinet-mounted, making for easy adjustment, while the granite top is a full 1-3/4" thick to aid durability. Handwheels are oversized for easy use. The Ridgid comes with its own style of mobile base, a savings for any shop that wants or needs to keep the saw out of the way until it's time to use it. Ridgid's fence is based on the T-square design.

Steel City has a couple of hybrids, but the granite-topped model 35900G seems of greatest interest, especially as it weighs in at a whopping 490 lbs. This 1-3/4-hp table saw comes with one 12" granite wing and one 12" table board. The trunnion system is cabinet-mounted — a big plus. The standard fence is a T square, for a 30" cut with HDPE facings. Control wheels are very large and easy to use. A 50" fence is available. The same saw is available with a cast-iron top for those who prefer that material. The 30" version retails for around \$1,300.


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pectancy. Price is about \$1,150 for the basic model, though the unit with the T2 fence may be a bit cheaper than either the Unifence or Biesemeyer (real thing) fence models.

Getzly no longer offers its hybrid, model G0478, but General has stepped into the category.

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Woodtek is Woodworker's Supply's house brand. Its hybrid, model 148-271, comes in at 336 lbs. with a full-length cabinet and a cast-iron top. It has Woodtek's version of a T-square fence, 2-hp motor and single-V belt drive, and has large, locking

handwheels. Standard is a 30" rip fence, but a 50" is available. Base price is \$930 or \$1,000 with the 50" fence.

Somewhere in that \$600 to \$1,300 range, most shops can probably find their standby saw. *



Hitachi also offers a hybrid table saw, model C10LA.

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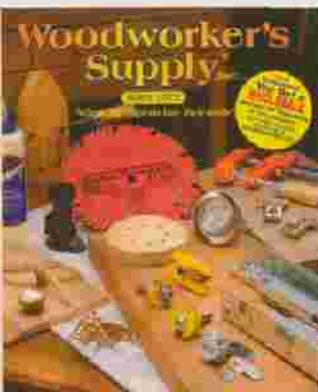
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