Xcalibur 12in planer


Keith Smith

Keith Smith tests the latest addition to the Xcalibur range of machinery

ON TEST

Woodford Woodworking Machinery has just increased their Xcalibur range with the introduction of two new planer thicknessers. In the April issue I tried the 10in model, this month I've been using its big brother, the 12in.

"This machine is bigger in every way, a real heavyweight"

Design

The two machines look similar in many ways, they have the same type of adjustable tables that swing up out of the way when thicknessing, and the feed system is the same, so is it worth spending more than double the money for an extra two inches of cut?

USEFUL INFORMATION

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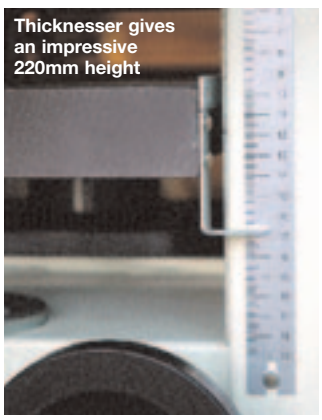
For a start this machine is bigger in every way, a real heavyweight. In fact it's so heavy that I decided not to take it off the pallet it arrived on because I knew I would have real difficulty getting it back on!

Made in China to a robust quality and with a good finish, the machine looks extremely durable. It comes ready assembled, just needing the grease and anti-rust treatments removing from the cutter block, rollers and tables before it's ready to use.

You are going to need a good sized workshop to house this machine as it is 1600mm long and 620mm deep, plus the fence support plate projects out a further 330mm so you need to allow nearly a metre for its overall depth.


Thicknesser gives an impressive 220mm height

Capacities

The fence has been well designed to allow up to the full width of the blade (310mm) to be used when planing; the maximum cutting depth is 5mm, although I wouldn't recommend trying to take anywhere near this amount off in one pass with any hand-fed machine. The thicknesser bed is 308mm wide and the machine has an impressive 220mm maximum thicknessing height.

Specification

A 2200W electrically braked induction motor drives a four (re-sharpenable) knife cutter block and the feed rollers which are turned on and off by means of a lever at the infeed end of the machine. Both rollers are metal with the infeed roller toothed for grip and the outfeed roller smooth so as to not mark the finish. When thicknessing the feed speed is eight metres per minute.


This is a massive machine that will need its own 16A separate ring

The cast iron planer tables overall are 1600mm long and the cast iron thicknesser table 750mm long; they are all ground to an excellent finish. The outfeed table is easily adjustable for height and both infeed and outfeed tables are adjustable for tilt. The alloy fence is 1100mm long and 130mm high, it can be angled up to 45 degrees and has an adjustable stop in order that the fence can be accurately set to 90°.

Electrical connection is via an industrial socket housed in the no-volt release switch;

there is an additional cut-off switch by the roller engagement lever. The tilting tables are fitted with a safety switch, so that the machine can't be started with the tables up, unless the dust extraction hood is in the thicknessing position.

In use

Although the machine is rated at 10 amps it is not practical to run it from a 13 amp socket. On start up it will take a lot more than its rated current and it needs its own 16 amp circuit. On some very cold January mornings, on start-up, it even tripped my 16A breaker a few times.

This is a smooth running powerful machine which can generate noise levels of around 110db when thicknessing. Although it is smooth running, it is still noisy enough to require ear protection.

Conversion from planing to thicknessing is straightforward, only the fence needs to be removed so that the planer tables can be tilted up out of the way, and the dust extraction assembly swung into its thicknessing position. The extraction works well, but because of the large dimensions of the extractor hood and the quantity of chips produced, a reasonably powerful extractor is needed. The conversion from planing to thicknessing does require a little more effort than with the 10in model, purely because of the extra weight of the planer tables.

The only slight problem I had with the machine was that the guard would stick as I tried to lower it. This was caused by the arm of the guard binding on the locking lever and tightening as I lowered it; fortunately this was easily resolved by inserting a washer under the lever.

You can't start the machine with the tables up unless the hood is in place

WW verdict

I used the planer to convert some air dried oak planks into useable timber and I was very impressed. The long tables make a massive difference when planing timber flat and the large thicknessing table allows more room each side of the blades, reducing any chance of snipe. In fact I didn't have any noticeable snipe in all the time I used it. The machine is well thought out, it feeds well and even when planing well seasoned oak the motor never laboured. I was very sad when it was time to return it to Woodford. At £1100 is it worth spending more than double on this machine compared to the 10in? If you have the funds and the space, definitely.

RATING

Value	0	5
Performance	0	5