

A different device for dovetails

Jig offers not only quick setup, but also a special router table option

by William Sampson

Lots of jigs on the market promise to make quick work of router dovetails or box joints, but few really deliver on those promises. Too often there's a lot of fussy setup and wasted material before coming up with the right settings for both jig and router. It's no wonder that so many cabinet shops that offer dovetailed or box-jointed drawers do so by outsourcing or by having just one permanent jig.

With the introduction of the KatieJig system, shops have another alternative. With refreshingly clear and concise instructions, we were able to cut our first joint with the KatieJig in less than 30 minutes from the time we opened the box. That includes unwrapping, unpacking, leisurely reading the directions, minimal assembly and setting up the router. And it would be hard to describe the results of that first cut into wood as anything other than perfect. The joint was a clean, precise fit.

The inventor of the patented KatieJig is Terry Hampton, an auto industry tool and die maker by trade. He is an amateur woodworker, but he has built features into this jig that should endear it to professional woodworkers. It uses heavy-duty machined aluminum guide forks that mount securely in an extruded aluminum guide channel with facing boards on either side. One Allen wrench is all it takes to adjust the spacing by moving the guide forks.



Special handles mounted on the KatieJig make it easy to use the unit inverted on a router table for quicker, more stable cutting. We first cut the pins with the supplied heavy-duty dovetail bit.



For the second cut, we turned the fixture around, mounted the supplied heavy-duty bearing-piloted straight bit and cut the tails.



Although this joint was cut just minutes after unwrapping and assembling the unit and with no test cuts, the fit is clean and precise.

Hampton says his primary motivation in developing the jig was to create a unit that allowed variable spacing of through dovetail and box joints without requiring time-consuming setups or test cuts. Indeed, our shop tests show that changing the setups takes almost no time at all and provides results as good as the first cuts we made.

But our favorite feature of the jig is an option that makes the unit even more attractive for production use. Hampton developed ingenious handles to mount on the side of the jig. Normally, the jig is used in a similar fashion as other dovetail jigs: workpieces are clamped to the fixture, and a router with guided bits is run over the jig to cut the joint. The KatieJig can be used that way, too, and it comes complete with heavy-duty bearing-guided bits designed just for it. But when you mount the accessory handles, you can turn the unit upside down and slide it over your router table. This makes the whole operation faster, easier, and reduces the dangers of miscutting joints from accidentally tipping the router.

Right now, the basic KatieJig system lists for about \$250, and the accessory handles are about \$40. Currently the system will do only through joints with a minimum pin size of 5/8 inch, but there are plans to offer 7/16-inch pins and half-blind joint options in the near future.

For more information about the unit, call 317/881-8601 or circle 216 on the Reader Service Card. □