

TOOL TEST

Jointer/Planer Combos for Less

New breed of affordable machines lets you do more in less space

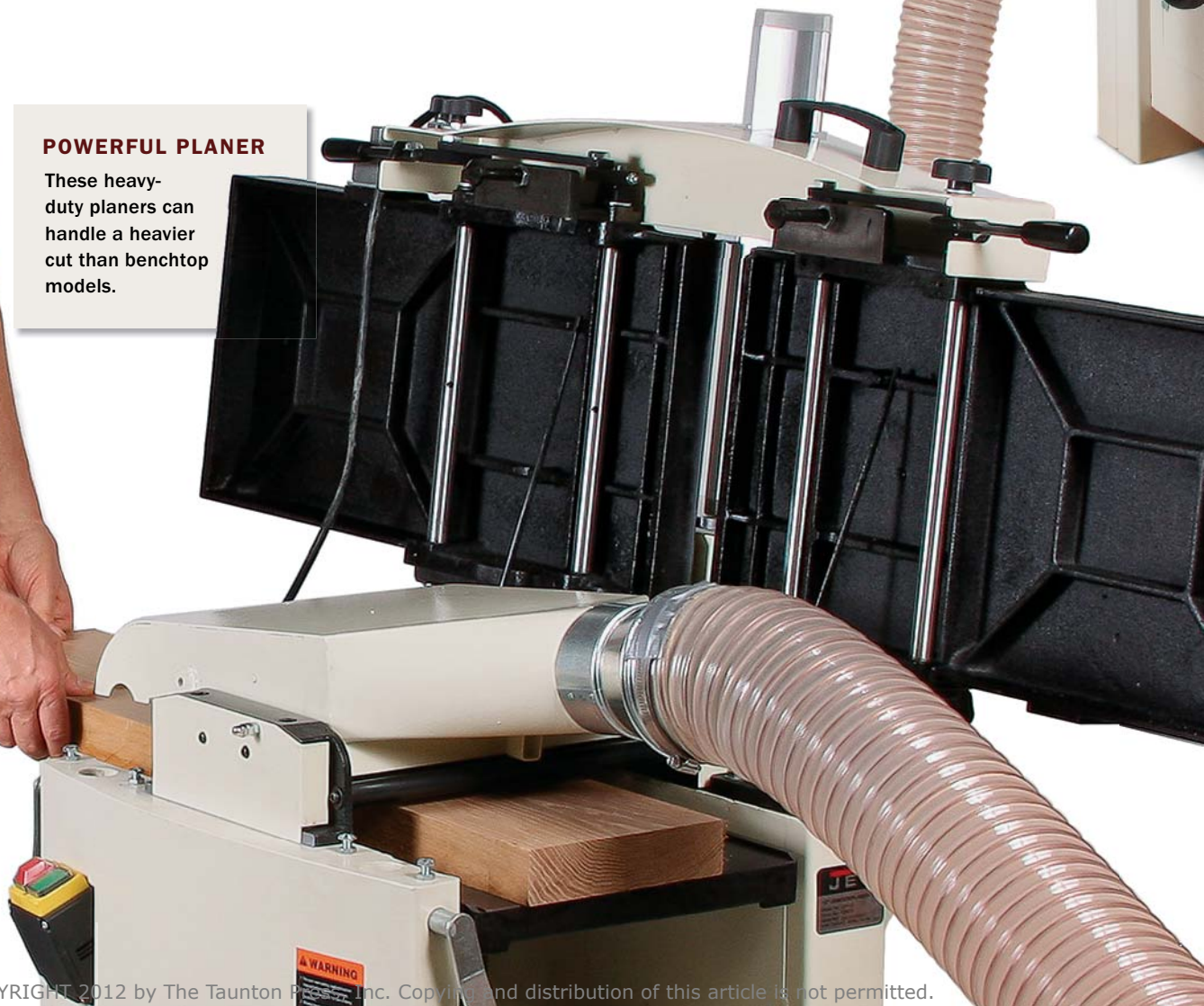
BY ROLAND JOHNSON

POWERFUL PLANER

These heavy-duty planers can handle a heavier cut than benchtop models.

WIDE JOINTER

Despite shorter tables, jointer/planer combination machines still allow woodworkers to comfortably face-joint 12-in.-wide stock that is up to 8 ft. long.





Jointer-planer combos, long popular in Europe, have made serious inroads in North America, for two good reasons. For one, they save space, putting the two essential milling machines into one small footprint. Perhaps more importantly, they get you a wide jointer—one of the gateways to truly efficient woodworking—plus an industrial-strength planer, for close to the price of the big jointer alone. That said, not everyone is ready to plunk down \$3,000-plus to upgrade the jointer and planer they already have.

When I last tested combination machines in 2007 (FWW #190), three of the four were European-made machines with 12-in. cutterheads and stout price tags. Since then, however, increased interest and competition have prompted several manufacturers to begin building and marketing less-expensive models. For this test, we were able to cap the street price at \$2,400, with a few available for far less, putting them in a range that we believe most hobbyist woodworkers or small-shop owners would be willing to pay. The big question is: What do you lose, if anything, by going with one of these less-expensive models?

What matters

I tested five machines—two each from Grizzly and Rikon and one from Jet—by milling an array of exotic, domestic, and figured wood—all of which are commonly used to make furniture. Just as importantly, I timed each machine's changeover, which is the time it takes to convert

Better cutterheads make a difference

The single cutterheads on jointer/planer combination machines are a double-edged sword. It's easier to maintain one cutterhead, rather than two as with separate jointers and planers. Of course, that cutterhead will pull double duty when jointing and planing, so its edges will wear down more quickly. Consider upgrading to a segmented carbide cutterhead, which will stay sharper much longer than straight knives. They're pricey, but since you're only buying one, it should be more economical than buying them separately for both a jointer and planer. Some manufacturers offer segmented cutterheads as original equipment, but aftermarket models are also available (see FWW #223).



Next-generation cutterheads are available. Segmented cutterheads are starting to appear in less-expensive jointer-planers, such as the Grizzly G0634XP. The carbide teeth last much longer than steel knives, and are easily rotated to a fresh edge.



Most use straight knives. It can be tricky to re-install and adjust the knives after they've been sharpened. Disposable knives, like those on the Rikon 25-010, are a bit easier to set up, but they must be replaced when dull.

12-in. models: Bigger is better

Larger machines combine wider jointing and planing capacity with friendlier features.



Segmented cutterhead is a game-changer

This machine combines a powerful motor with a superior segmented cutterhead that ensures good cuts, longer edge life, and easy maintenance. The benefits of this advanced cutterhead helped push this machine to the top (tied with the Jet JJP-12). I also preferred the Grizzly's American-style cutterhead guard, which swings away to let push pads go by.

This machine does have some small quirks. To adjust the height of the jointer's infeed table, you must turn a hard-to-reach, socket-head screw on the end of the adjustment handle before cranking. It's tricky

because the scale is on the opposite side of the machine and is difficult to read while cranking the handle. The fence was temperamental, too. It attaches through a bar at the end of the infeed table. It locks securely to the bar once set, but you need extra care to ensure the fence is seated properly. Otherwise, the angle between the fence and tables can be inaccurate. And it has to go on or off for each changeover.

Still, none of these quirks can detract from the high quality of this Grizzly's cutterhead at a price that no other machine can beat.

GRIZZLY G0634XP

Street price: \$2,195

Power: 220v, 5 hp

Jointer bed length: 59½ in.

Weight: 610 lb.

Changeover: 49 seconds jointer to planer, 59 seconds planer to jointer

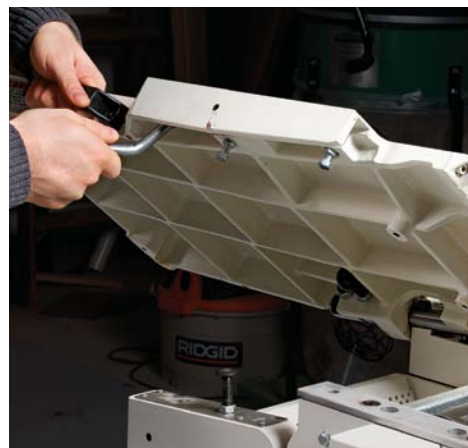
Cutterhead: Segmented, 32 carbide cutters



Familiar features. Unlike its peers, the G0634XP has a pork-chop-shaped, American-style cutterhead guard—which many woodworkers prefer to European-style guards.



Not the fastest changeover. Removing the Grizzly G0634XP's jointer fence (left) and finding a place to store it can be a little cumbersome. Then you pop two levers and lift the jointer infeed and outfeed tables separately (right), before flipping the dust hood over.



the machine between jointing and planing modes. Changeover is a key measurement for jointer/planer combination machines, and a common concern for woodworkers who are used to working with separate machines. I also tested the machines' dust-collection mechanisms, and evaluated their general performance.

When it comes to planing quality, the differences among machines are negligible. All five delivered excellent cuts with minimal snipe when removing up to ¼ in. of material in a single

pass over wide boards. Differences in dust collection and general performance also were minimal. For those core functions, the machines all performed similarly, and compared well with their pricier cousins from the last review.

There are moderate differences in the machines when it comes to changeover. The good news is that changeovers on the best machines in this test were better than the previous crop I tested. The fastest in this group took just over 20 seconds to switch



Fast and friendly changeovers

Changeover is where the Jet shines. It takes just 21 seconds to go from jointer to planer—fast enough that it no longer feels like a nuisance or momentum-killer to have to go back and mill one or two project parts. The main reason is that the jointer fence can stay attached when you raise the tables. Plus, the infeed and outfeed tables move as a single piece, making this machine the simplest of all five to use. Although its motor is smaller than that found on the 12-in. Grizzly, the Jet produced very good results without bogging down.

The Jet's cutterhead is similar to the others: a three-knife cutterhead with blades that can be resharpened and are held in place with gibs and jack screws.

For its ultra-fast changeover time and overall ease of use, I named it a **Best Overall choice**. For the ultimate in convenience, you can buy the JJP-12 with a segmented carbide cutterhead, but that adds roughly \$1,000 to the price.

JET JJP-12

Street price: \$2,200

Power: 3 hp, 230v

Jointer bed length: 55½ in.

Weight: 500 lb.

Changeover: 21 seconds jointer to planer, 25 seconds planer to jointer

Cutterhead: 3-knife, HSS

QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST



Unlock. Two levers keep the jointer beds fixed in place. Release them to switch from jointing to planing mode.



Raise. The jointer tables and fence move all at once, simplifying and speeding the changeover.



Flip. A single dust chute rotates around the cutterhead to handle jointing or planing, a convenient design.

between jointing and planing, while the slowest took more than a minute. I found the biggest differences among the machines in the nitty-gritty details—the ease with which fences and settings can be adjusted or changed, or the difficulty involved in changeover.

The best and the rest

This new crop falls into two groups, with either 10 in. or 12 in. of capacity, and the larger machines stood out. The Jet JJP-12 had the

fastest changeover time and was also the most user-friendly of the bunch. And the Grizzly G0634XP was the only model that came with a segmented cutterhead. Functionally, the Jet was the best machine tested, but the Grizzly cutterhead gives it a substantial advantage over all other machines (see “Better Cutterheads Make a Difference,” p. 63). I picked both as Best Overall choices.

For would-be buyers with slightly deeper pockets, Jet also makes the JJP-12HH jointer/planer, which I tested previously. It adds a



RIKON 25-200

Street price: \$1,700

Power: 3 hp, 220v

Jointer bed length: 49 in.

Weight: 386 lb.

Changeover: 31 seconds jointer to planer, 25 seconds planer to jointer

Cutterhead: 3-knife, HSS

Big but budget-conscious

The Best Value Rikon 25-200 performs almost as well as the Jet, and produces 12-in.-wide cuts of similar quality. It also has the same size motor and a similar, three-knife cutterhead yet costs about \$500 less.

Similar to the Jet, the Rikon's fence remains on the machine during changeover, but it must be moved to its rearmost position. It's better than having to remove it altogether, like the Grizzly, but it's a bit more of a nuisance than the Jet.

The Rikon also has a single-table changeover, but that is because only the jointer's outfeed table moves. The drawback is that the fixed jointer infeed table covers the outfeed end of the planer, making it difficult to remove short parts after planing. A set of outfeed rollers helps support longer stock.

The Rikon nearly matched the performance of the best machines in the test, and factoring in the cost, it's an excellent value.



Changeover is easy. You just slide the fence to the rearmost position and the cutterhead guard to the front. Then you lift only the jointer outfeed table into position (left). As with all the machines, you must move the planer bed to reposition the dust collection, but the Rikon's aggressive screw pitch speeds the process (right).



But access sometimes isn't. The fixed jointer table can be a nuisance when removing short, thin parts from the planer.

helical, shear-cutting segmented cutterhead to the JJP-12. The cutterhead brings the cost of that machine to around \$3,300 (above our price ceiling), but it will save some money on sharpening over the long haul, and will greatly reduce the tedium involved in replacing blades.

The Rikon 25-200, which changes over almost as quickly as the Jet, for \$500 less, was my choice for Best Value.

The motors on all five machines also performed well, despite

being less powerful overall than those on the previous batch of jointer-planers I tested. The fences on all five machines were more than sturdy enough for jointing, although some were a bit clumsy to adjust. The two Grizzly machines and the 10-in. Rikon required removal of the fence during changeover, which was a nuisance but by no means a deal-breaker. □

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10-in. models: Good value in smaller packages

The smaller machines have lower price tags, but their changeovers take a bit longer.

Two-knife head but heavy duty



GRIZZLY G0675

Street price:
\$1,125

Power: 2.5 hp,
220v

**Jointer bed
length:** 41¼ in.
Weight: 317 lb.

Changeover:
63 seconds from
jointer to planer,
70 seconds
planer to jointer

Cutterhead:
2-knife, HSS

The smaller of the two Grizzlies, the G0675 still offers wide jointing and planing capacity in a much less expensive package. Like the 12-in. Rikon, the G0675 features a single-table changeover. It's simple but slow due to the high number of cranks needed to raise and lower the planer bed, and the design of the dust chute.

It's the only machine I tested that has a two-knife cutterhead, a design drawback that can force a cutterhead to make fewer cuts per inch. The Grizzly compensates by spinning the cutterhead at 6,500 rpm, slightly faster than three-knife cutterheads, but the two knives are bound to dull more quickly than three would. For the price, it represents a solid value and would make a good pick for a hobbyist woodworker.

Remove and reattach. You split the dust chute in two for changeover, rotating one half into position and reattaching the other half.



Light duty but handles big stock



RIKON 25-010

Street price:
\$1,000

Power: 1.5 hp,
110v/220v

Jointer bed length:
40½ in.

Weight: 147 lb.

Changeover:
60 seconds from
jointer to planer,
74 seconds
planer to
jointer

Cutterhead:
3-knife, HSS,
disposable blades

Despite its small size, the 25-010 handles big workpieces well, even when planing difficult stock such as wide slabs of white oak. Its plastic gears and light castings aren't the best choice if you plan to mill boards all day long, but it should suit weekend woodworkers very well.

It's the only machine with disposable blades, which cannot be sharpened and must be replaced when dull. But disposables are much easier to install. Unlike the other machines, the Rikon requires you to remove the jointer's infeed table completely during changeover. It's a lightweight casting and has positive location points, so it's simple to do. But it is a nuisance to store the table while the machine is in planing mode.



Got an empty shelf? The jointer outfeed table, along with the fence, must be removed and stored to change from jointing to planing mode.