



No flash in the pan

Altendorf celebrates the centenary of the sliding table saw

What is an Altendorf, and why is it so special technically? This is a question that needs answering, especially when a joiner or carpenter talks about ,going off to work on their Altendorf', even though they are using a completely different brand of sliding table saw in their workshop. Altendorf has long been synonymous with this type of machine, in the same way as ,hoover' and ,walkman' have become common parlance in the field of consumer goods. Klaus Buck takes a look behind the scenes at this interesting and virtually unique phenomenon.

As a rule, it takes more than a flash in the pan to become a household name. And this is certainly true for Altendorf. 100 years ago Wilhelm Altendorf invented the sliding table saw and gave his name to the company that produced it in Minden. And ever since, Altendorf has been continually developing this circular saw technology, again and again redefining what constitutes the ,state of the art'. It goes without saying that throughout its history, the success of this brand – as represented by worldwide sales of over 120,000, often custom-built, machines – has been founded on a clearly defined corporate and technical strategy. This holds true even if the technology moves on as a result of new developments and discoveries – as is the case with this year's premiere at the ,Holz-Handwerk/Fensterbau-frontale' fair in Nuremberg.

In the main, however, Altendorf remains true to its traditions. The Minden makers do not make a habit of overloading their machines with technical features, nor do they blindly follow here-today-gone-tomorrow trends or fashions. They only include as many features as are required to meet the day-to-day needs of their customers. As a result, they are also simple to operate, even by less skilled users. The user interfaces are self-explanatory and can be followed immediately, not only in the machine's standard

configuration, but also on upgraded versions. Complementing the long-term product quality, worldwide service and expert advice can likewise be readily obtained either from an appointed dealer or directly from the factory.

Concentrating on one product

Altendorf builds essentially only one type of machine. The different model names such as ,WA', various ,F45s' and the two types of ,F45 ELMO' represent configuration variants. By focussing on only a single product, the company is taking a considerable risk on the market, but on the other hand it is then able to channel all its efforts into improving that one product. All of its innovative energies, striving for quality and endeavours to meet the needs of users are concentrated on the sliding table saw. As a result, Altendorf is rightly recognised as being both technology leader and market leader.

Modern technology redefined

The starting point for Altendorf's table saw is the design of the machine itself. Originally fabricated from sheet steel, the machine frame is now constructed from tubular steel to provide even greater torsion-resistance and vibration damping than in the past.



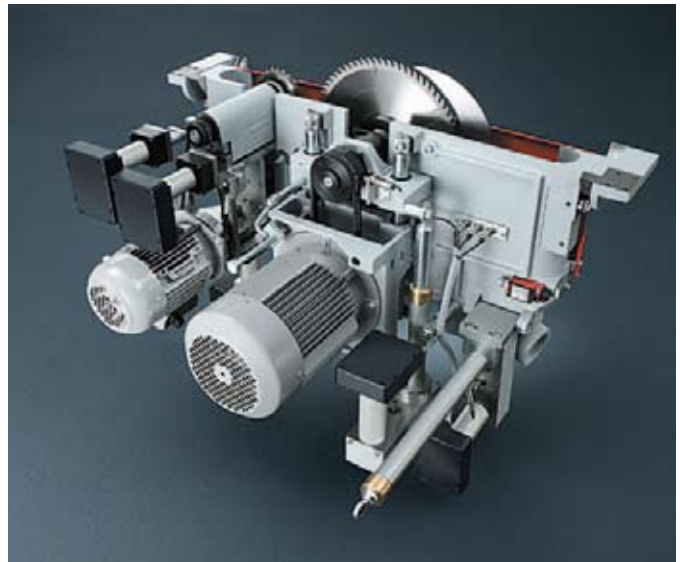
The new ultramodern, super-stable and low-vibration tubular machine frame.

The Minden engineers have designed in smooth running, thus ensuring clean, chip-free cuts. As a bonus, this also results in a long service life – even if the machine is frequently changed around. And of course, there was no need to reinvent the wheel – Altendorf called upon the services and know-how of an experienced tubular frame specialist.

Tried and tested

The basic principle of a lightweight and smooth-running double roller carriage which, like the machine itself, was pioneered by the Minden firm, remains essentially unchanged. Tubular steel guides have been used for this since 1998. Its large rollers and heavy-duty wipers make the sliding table virtually maintenance-free. And a grease gun or service interval guide will not be found on an Altendorf, as the guidance system is designed to last for virtually the entire service life of the machine. The rollers and slides are sourced only from top-notch manufacturers.

The powerhouse at the heart of the Altendorf, i.e. the saw unit itself, has also been tried and tested over many years. A new development here is a ‚suspension‘ design for linear vertical guidance. The saw unit is suspended under the cast frame, which in turn also contributes to the extremely smooth running of the machine. It is for exactly this reason that, like on the machine as a whole, many cast components are used. Final balancing of the saw shaft unit itself – which has a particularly rigid saw shaft bearing – is performed post-assembly. This attention to quality during machine assembly is therefore of great benefit to subsequent users. The zero line or ‚core axis‘ of the unit on the sliding table side is designed for a 3.2 mm saw blade to be virtually at zero. The optional scoring blade is likewise aligned with the saw blade. A new feature here is the motorised mutual adjustment of the two scoring blades, with the ability to select presets on the machine controls. The main saw shaft is driven by the familiar and dependable 5.5 kW motor which, unlike standard motors, can briefly exceed its pull-out torque by a factor of 3½–4. The new 5.5 kW VARIO drive is also capable of much higher loads than its standard ratings would suggest. It can be infinitely adjusted between 2000 and 6000 rpm, in steps of 5 rpm in the case of direct input, or in steps of 50 rpm using the plus/minus key. This option is provided as



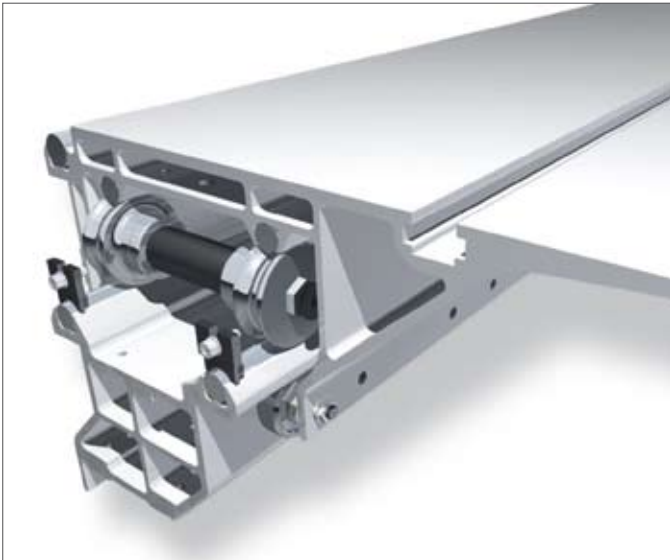
The heart and soul of the Altendorf – the saw unit.

standard on the two ‚F45 ELMO‘ III and IV models, and is available as an add-on in three option packages for the ‚F45‘. The safety hood is also an interesting feature on the Altendorf. It has been redesigned to allow cutting depths of up to 200 mm and deliver a higher extraction performance. A simple click closure makes for easy hood changing.

The rip fence mounted on round bars represents yet another proven feature of the Minden sliding table saws. The fence moves smoothly and can be fine-adjusted, and while the basic version comes with graduated scales, an optional digital display is also available. The motorised rip fence is standard on the two ‚F45 ELMO‘ models, and is an optional extra on the ‚F45‘. With linear guides and a roller bearing drive, the unit is capable of supporting adjustment speeds of up to 20 cm/s. The standard crosscut fence is designed as a crosscut mitre fence with length compensation. A new feature on the ‚F45 ELMO IV‘ is a motorised crosscut mitre fence with independently settable flip stops and automatic length compensation.

That the operation and use of today's generation of woodworking machines is heavily dependent on machine controls and software is nothing new. And this is equally true for Altendorf. Ushering in a whole range of new advances, the pioneering Minden firm was and still is a clear technology leader for these systems. For instance, to complement its modular mechanical construction, the controls of the machine will be modular in future, too.

To assist the operator when cutting thick planks or making other difficult cuts, in 1998 the ‚TIP-Servo-drive‘ for the sliding table was unveiled for the first time at the Holz-Handwerk woodworking fair in Nuremberg. The majority of machines now come equipped with this highly convenient control option, and it is sure to be developed further by the manufacturer. This option provides a particularly good illustration of Altendorf's basic philosophy of designing all the technical features of its machines to maximise simple and effortless operation. The ‚F45 ELMO‘ series also includes a 12" touch screen monitor, for which the already clear user interface has been further optimised. All the basic functions of the machine are located on the start page, allowing even



The matchless sliding table with its large rollers is virtually maintenance-free.



The crosscut mitre fence with integrated length compensation makes complex arithmetic a thing of the past.

inexperienced users to quickly get their bearings and find their way around the machine. Fast access keys for favourite programs, such as cutting grooves or user-programmed menus, can be configured by users themselves and placed on the start page. In addition, the machines are equipped with USB interfaces for reading in USB sticks containing new software or programs created on a PC into the controller.

As already mentioned, Altendorf sliding table saws are very easy to operate, and the option packages offered are logically structured and self-explanatory to a large extent. Nevertheless, users will always find a local expert on hand for advice and servicing virtually all over the world, either within the company's own sales organisation or from specially trained authorised dealers. The 'Altendorf', the undisputed king of sliding table saws, is therefore a serious contender in all respects – in its technology, in its controls and operation, and not least in the service support provided.

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The safety hood designed for cutting depths of up to 200 mm.