

NEW TOOLS

Dovetail jig promises adjustment-free operations

Go from through dovetails to half-blind dovetails without adjusting the jig, says Akeda

By **Tod Riggio**

STAFF WRITER

Akeda has introduced a variable layout dovetail jig which the manufacturer says is completely free of adjustments, since the only moving parts are the clamp bars.

With the jig (model DC-16), the user can go from making through dovetails to half-blind dovetails, switch between pins and tails, change workpiece thickness, cut rabbeted drawer fronts and vary pin angle, all without adjustment to the jig, according to the manufacturer.

*"Within half an hour
you can cut a joint
that fits."*

— **Kevan Lear, Akeda**

"The original intent of the jig was to make it easy to set up and use," said Kevan Lear, Akeda's president and the jig's designer. "There are so many jigs out there with so many adjustments and people get frustrated with them. I wanted to do something that was just dead simple, so that there were very few chances of error and that anyone can get on the jig and be cutting joints. Certainly within half an hour you can cut a joint that fits."

The Akeda jig system incorporates an index strip in the rear guide rail. The rail accepts three types of guide fingers, which are snapped into place, including a universal fork-shaped guide for cutting through and half-blind tails, a straight-sided guide for cutting half-

blind pins, and five angled guides (ranging from 7 to 20 degrees) for cutting through-dovetail pins.

Each dovetail is 1/2" wide at the top and 1/4" wide at the bottom. The angle of the dovetail determines its length, and these lengths come in five sizes: 1/4", 3/8", 1/2", 5/8" and 3/4".

"The index strip is a way of positioning guide fingers and stopping them from slipping sideways or working loose," Lear said. "It has an incidental function that you can now repeat a joint layout with absolute accuracy because of the incremental positions."

Clamping channels are fixed in the jig, making it impossible for a workpiece to be out of parallel with the guide rails, according to Akeda. The clamping systems are operated with a single knob, leaving one hand free to position the workpiece. The knob fits either end of the jig to accommodate right- or left-handed woodworkers.

The jig offers parallel clamping in both the vertical and horizontal directions. "You're never going to pinch your wood because the clamp bars are always parallel to the work piece," Lear said. "But the really nice thing about it is that when you're installing a piece of wood with a single clamp bar, you've got one hand on your workpiece and one hand on the clamp bar, so it's really easy.

"And the router is supported on two guide rails so you're not trying to balance your router on the edge of a template. The guide fingers sit below the surface and out of the way. It's also got a window so you can peer in and watch what's hap-

pening."

The jig handles material up to 16" wide from 1/4" to 1" thick, and accepts drawer fronts with rabbets up to 1/2" wide.

"I think what we've done is create a new generation of dovetail jigs," said Lear. "It's still versatile, but it doesn't have the complications that the others have."

The jig requires at least a 1-hp router that accepts cutters with a minimum 1/4" shank, a minimum 6" diameter base and a 7/16" guide bushing.

Woodcraft is the exclusive U.S. dealer and sells the Akeda model DC-16 jig kit for \$300. The kit includes three sets of guide fingers for producing through dovetails, half-blind dovetails and box joints. Included are nine 7-degree through dovetail pin guides, nine half-blind dovetail pin guides, one straight bit, one 7-degree dovetail bit and a user's manual.

There is an optional dust collection kit for connecting to a shop vacuum, which sells for \$30. Woodcraft also offers a variety of pin guide and bit kits.

The National Router Academy is the exclusive dealer in Canada. Akeda does not sell directly.

Contact: Akeda Jigs Inc., 319 W. Pender St., Suite 280, Vancouver, BC, V6B 1T4. Tel: 877-387-6544. www.akedajigs.com

Woodcraft, P.O. Box 1686, Parkersburg, WV 26102-1686. Tel: 800-225-1153. www.woodcraft.com

The National Router Academy, 2900 Argentia Road, Unit 11, Mississauga, ON, L5N 7X9. Tel: 800-370-3834 or 905-826-4720. www.nationalrouteracademy.com