

Two new 12V tools from Bosch

Derek Jones takes a look at the new Bosch GKF 12V-8 router and GHO 12V-20 planer



As battery power and motor technology get ever more sophisticated we're likely to see more cordless machines like these on the market. I said that or words similar five or six years ago in a review about a cordless circular saw. To be honest, it didn't take a large pair of crystal balls to make that prediction and we shouldn't be too surprised that things are indeed heading in that direction. After all, a cordless tool will generally allow you to roam around doing the things you've always done but not tethered to a lead. But just because you can do it doesn't mean you should and a lot of early cordless tools suffered from a combination of poor ergonomics and short



Bosch GHO 12V-20 Planer

run times. However, new technology means we're now seeing machines that do match results with expectations. Right now there are more cordless variants than we need, especially those fangled multi-tools, which in my experience have a tendency to over promise and under deliver. And as for cordless routers with their house brick Ni-Cad batteries, well, they were never going to catch on.

Strength in numbers

New from Bosch for 2018 are two machines that could easily go the same way; the GKF 12V-8 edge trim router and the GHO 12V-20 planer. Both items use Bosch's

12V 3.0Ah Li-ion cells, which have been used successfully throughout their range of cordless drills and drivers for a number of years. Both machines join the Professional range in their respective L-Boxx's, bringing the total number of 12V tools in their catalogue up to around 20, which includes everything from reciprocating saws and angle grinders to thermal imaging cameras. With such a wide range Bosch are obviously hoping to attract the single-system customer. Both machines are undoubtedly entry-level versions of corded machines with regards to what they are capable of and this is where customers need to be very clear about what they want the machines for.

Bosch GKF 12V-8

Let's start with the GKF-12V router. While it shares the same nomenclature and some of the functions of an ordinary corded router, a router in the general sense it is not and here's the main reason why: there's no means by which a fence can be attached. On the face of it you might consider this a tad limiting but sometimes a really great one-trick pony is all you need. Similar to the GKF-600 series corded router, it shares the same tooling, 6mm, 8mm and 1/4in shank bits, the latter being the standard collet supplied.

I've had the 600 series machine for a few years now and it's invaluable for certain tasks in short bursts such as edge profiling, laminate trimming and the odd hinge mortise. I've even done a little freehand routing with it for inlay work and I can see this 12V machine being similarly deployed. To minimise vibration routers typically have their motors mounted in line with the tooling, i.e. directly above but the GKF 12V-8 brushless motor is positioned to one side and uses a ribbed belt to drive the cutter head. It's a clever design that makes the unit more compact and perhaps more ergonomic for large hands.

It has all the features that enable quick and accurate setups like a spindle lock, a fine adjuster, a lockable depth setting and a quick release button. Combining these into a small machine cannot have been easy and they all work well. Running at a maximum speed of 13,000rpm the machine is much quieter than a regular router of a comparable size and having the motor set to one side may explain the smooth start. For the most part router cutters are generally at their most efficient when they work at high speed, somewhere around 20,000 rpm, although large diameter cutters need to be run slower. This is a general rule of course and it's relative to the feed rate, nature of the material and the condition of the cutter. The GKF 12v, however, appears to buck that trend. The 13,000rpm figure stated in the handbook is a 'no load' rating so presumably the operating speed is closer to 10,000rpm. I found that a slow feed rate resulted in better results when using a large cutter. To put that in perspective a 9.6mm radius round over was the largest I used and a 4mm bevel trim the smallest.



Power levels are recorded in a neat little LED display



A quick release button makes cutter changes easier



The fine adjuster is a bit fiddly to use but better than not having one



Depth lock allows you to save settings



Great access to the collet for cutter changes



No trim router is complete without a selection of these



A 9.6mm radius cutter is on the limit but quite possible



Bosch GKF 12V-8 Router

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAHIL STALEGER-JONES UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED

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Nicely balanced

In use the GKF 12V-8 is well balanced and with the large baseplate there is a lot of it registering with the face of the board compared to other trim routers (GKF-600 series included) reducing the risk of overcutting. The base itself has convenient wells that encourage you to apply pressure to avoid such nasties. Aside from not being

able to use non-bearing cutters to knock out a few hinge mortises there's not much to complain about really unless you take offence at not being able to attach extraction. You should of course but it's something that affects all trim routers and for that reason I'm not entirely comfortable with the Professional rating. Professional could

mean using this machine for a couple of hours every day and while the manual recommends the use of a P2 filter respirator, that's a lot of dust to have hanging in the air for anyone not similarly equipped. And by the way, two batteries and charger will keep you going all day if all you're doing is trimming laminate.



The large baseplate allows great stability ...



...compared to the GHO 600



Hold low and press firm for best results

GHO 12V-20

A perfect companion to the GFK 12V, the GHO 12V-20 planer is every bit as compact and portable. It also has all the main features you would find on a larger corded machine and they too work extremely well. For reasons similar to the trim router this planer achieves better results when the feed rate is relatively slow. The user manual suggests a maximum cutting depth of 2mm; I managed to register something closer to 1.4mm, which in reality is quite adequate. The depth of cut is dialled in via the front knob up to a Max marker. Grasp it tight and there's a tendency to make adjustments as you're working which you'll either find annoying or learn to use it to

your advantage. The on/off trigger is fitted with a safety button that needs to be pressed before the machine will run. It can be operated from either side of the machine. Squirrelled away at the rear of the body in a tiny drawer there's capacity to store a spare double-sided tungsten carbide blade but not the hex key to enable the changeover! The single blade is housed in a robust block that when not under load spins at 14,500rpm. Given the diameter of the block, the blade is passing over the workpiece a lot quicker than the router cutters in the GKO 12V which should give an indication of its performance.



Not quite the 2mm mentioned in the handbook, but more than adequate



Thick, wide shavings could block the exhaust when used with the extraction bag



On-board storage for a spare blade



Move slowly and the single blade will leave behind a great finish

Fine finish

On a fine setting and moving slowly, it's possible to end up with a surface without machine marks. The maximum width of cut is 56mm and it will rebate to a depth of 17mm. Unlike the router there are options to set this machine up for dust collection either by an on-board bag or via a port that connects to a 35mm dia hose. Both are accessories and, in my opinion, they shouldn't be.

It took some doing but eventually I was able to square up a board of oak before applying a chamfer all the way round, which, while I'm sure will appeal to some readers, will have me excommunicated by others. You can usually tell when someone is using a power planer in your neighbourhood because coffee cups move across the table and windows start to rattle but not with this 12V version. An excellent tool with exceptionally good manners.

Verdict

When summing up these tools it's important to recognise their capabilities and not their shortcomings. Yes, both have limits to what they can or can't do but for what they are designed for they probably represent the pinnacle of useful cordless technology in 2018. Both tools use brushless motors and are compatible with the Bosch 10.8V battery. Battery power may not be the most environmentally friendly solution to solving a problem but perhaps this is where manufacturers should focus their attention in the future. Who knows, in five years time I might get to tell you they've solved that as well. *F&C*



Shoot shavings left or right, your choice



Maybe not as much fun as using a block plane but a heck of a lot quicker



Worth checking the power levels before starting a job

The numbers

GKF 12V-8

Price: Expect to pay around £200 for a two-battery kit with L-Boxx case and around £115 for a body-only tool

GHO 12V-20

Price: Expect to pay around £290 for a two-battery kit with L-Boxx and around £165 for a body-only tool

From: www.bosch-professional.com



Dial M for maximum



The trigger has a safety switch that can be operated from both sides of the machine

