

Bridge City HP-6v2 Multi-plane

Cut ready-to-finish profiles and joinery with this modern multi-plane.

When the electric router took control of the modern workshop, legend has it that cabinetmakers burned their defunct moulding planes in their shop stoves for heat.

Routers made it simple to produce miles of moulding in a day, but there's a downside to the tools that's rarely discussed. When you're cutting just a few feet of moulding for a cabinet that's going to bear close scrutiny, you have to invest a good deal of time both setting up the tool and cleaning up the mouldings. In contrast, a moulding plane cuts a ready-to-finish profile.

Now Bridge City Tool Works has developed a multi-plane that is part router and part moulding plane. Like with a router, you can choose from a lot of profiles. And like a moulding plane, the result needs no further work.

The HP-6v2 is essentially a brass and aluminum plane that accepts a wide variety of different soles, cutters and fences to make different profiles and joints. Though it looks like there are a lot of moving parts, the plane

is as simple to set up and use as a block plane, and changing profiles takes just five minutes.

You simply remove the cutter, turn two brass knobs (no tools needed) and slide the brass soles off their dovetailed ways. Then you reverse the process with the new profile.

Some of the details of the HP-6v2 are very smart. The cutter has its profile ground on both ends, so you always have a spare edge that can be ready if one gets dull. The cutter rides in a narrow channel in the frog, which makes setting a new profile in place a snap (literally). There is still a little wiggle in the channel to allow you to line up the cutter right where you need it. The cutters are thick ($\frac{3}{16}$ "), which makes them easy to sharpen and unlikely to chatter. And finally, the cutters are bedded in the HP-6v2 at 55° – this high angle greatly reduces the potential for tear-out on your work.

There are some downsides to the tool in comparison to a router or traditional moulding plane. Many of the corner profiles require you to first plane a small chamfer on the corner before planing the final moulding profile. That's an extra step.

Also, the depth stop on the HP-6v2 has a bit of a learning curve. It's a narrow rail of aluminum that attaches to the sidewall of the plane. If you don't keep the plane vertical, the depth stop won't work as intended. It doesn't take long to master, but it's something you don't have to do with a traditional moulding plane that makes one profile at one depth.

I used the HP-6v2 with a few different pro-

files during my test drive. All made perfect lengths of moulding with little effort. The corner cove profile required the most skill because you need to use a 45° fence and must plane a chamfer before you begin. The V-groove profile was great fun and created crisp details that needed no further refinement.

The dado profile was a surprise. It made narrow trenches that would be nice shadow lines in a project, but you also could use the dado cutter to make crisp tenon shoulders.

Bridge City says that dozens of profiles are in the works for the plane, so watch the company's web site for details.

The HP-6v2 is sold in a variety of configurations. A starter kit with everything you need to get started with a base profile is \$489.

— Christopher Schwarz



HP-6v2 Multi-plane

Bridge City ■ 800-253-3332
or bridgcitytools.com

Street price ■ \$489 for a starter kit

For more information, circle #162 on Free Information Card.



Innovative. The dado sole of the HP-6v2 has a remarkable slitter in front of the cutter that slices the cross-grain, eliminating chip-out.