



Portable Table Saw Stands

by David Frane

At one time, the only table saws on site were 10-inch contractor models. These work well, but they're too large and heavy to haul between small jobs, especially if you work alone. In the early 1980s, Makita introduced an 8¹/₄-inch table saw for the contractor market, and other companies soon followed suit. These lightweight machines solve the portability problem, but they have some serious shortcomings.

For the last few months I have been using two different stands designed to improve the performance of portable table saws. They do this by lifting the saw to a comfortable working height and increasing its rip capacity.

Problems with Portables

Most portable table saws come without legs. While many carpenters put them on sawhorses, the horses are often too high, so ripping is neither safe nor particularly easy. Also, sawhorses take up valuable truck space and have a way of ending up under piles of lumber. The next thing you know, your table saw's on the floor and you have to kneel down every time you make a cut.

You can buy optional legs for your portable saw, but these won't fix the saw's most serious shortcoming: limited rip capacity. Most portables have the power to cut two-by lumber, but they don't have a table wide enough to rip pieces wider than 12 inches. While the fences on most 10-inch contractor saws are nothing to brag about, the ones on portables are even worse. They work okay when they're new, but after a while they become hard to slide and won't align with the blade. And the large graduations and flimsy pointers on their rip scales aren't accurate enough for precise work.

Trojan Ripmaster

The first stand I tried was Trojan Manufacturing's *Ripmaster* RM2708, a model designed to fit an 8¹/₄-inch Makita saw. This stand consists of a steel frame with a pair of wheels on one end and an extension wing on the other. You bolt the saw to the frame and leave it there. A pair of legs fit into sleeves on the underside of the stand and are held in place by thumbscrews. The Ripmaster supports your saw at a comfortable working

height of 36 inches. With a saw bolted to it, the stand weighs about 75 pounds. However it's easy to transport, because you can take the legs off and roll it around like a dolly, even up and down stairs.

To improve the saw's ripping performance, Trojan has upgraded the fence. The Ripmaster fence works like a miniature version of the Biesemeyer fences commonly used in cabinet shops. It's a steel T-square that rides on a bar bolted across the front of the stand. The Ripmaster's fence slides easily and stays aligned to the blade better than any standard saw fence. The rip scale has an adjustable hairline that rides over a finely graduated ruler. It speeds production by allowing you to accurately set up rips without using a tape. Trojan's stand increased the rip capacity of my saw from 12 inches to over 28 inches. This allowed me to cut full sheets of plywood, though I still needed help because I didn't get the optional outfeed table. The Ripmaster is stable under light loads, but will tip if you push too hard when ripping.

Trojan recently redesigned the Ripmaster. By the time you read this, a single model will work with almost every brand of portable saw.

Rousseau Portamax

The second stand I tried was Rousseau's *Mini-Saw Portamax*, model PM 2700D. This unit consists of a heavy tube steel frame with folding legs and a melamine table extension. The saw drops into an opening in the top and is held in position by adjustable cams. When it's time to go, the saw comes out and the stand folds flat. The Portamax doesn't have wheels, but it only weighs 45 pounds, so transporting it wasn't a big deal. When folded flat and stood on edge, the Portamax took up very little room in the back of my truck. The T-square fence is similar to Trojan's, only larger and beefier. It increased the rip capacity of my saw to



Trojan's folding table saw stand holds an 8¹/₄-inch table saw at a comfortable 36-inch working height and increases the rip capacity from 12 inches to 28 inches (left). The rugged frame, which supports an upgraded fence, can accommodate a handy site-made shelf (below).





The optional outfeed table for the Rousseau Portamax provides useful support for long stock (left). Like the Trojan, Rousseau's stand has an accurate rip scale with a hairline indicator (below).



27¹/₂ inches. The rip scale made it possible to set up cuts quickly and accurately. I had no trouble getting rips to come out exactly the width I wanted.

Rousseau also sent me a folding outfeed table, a pricey but worthwhile option. It made ripping long stock much easier. Ripping plywood by myself was tougher, since it involved balancing 48-inch sheets on an 18x45-inch out-

feed table. However, I discovered one unexpected bonus of using the outfeed table: The extension made it nearly impossible to tip the saw stand over.

Cost

Trojan's Ripmaster retails for around \$200, and the optional outfeed table sells for an additional \$90. Rousseau's Portamax goes for \$225, and its out-

feed costs around \$100. If you're someone who bought a portable because you couldn't afford a larger contractor's saw, these stands aren't for you. For the cost of a stand, an outfeed table, and a portable saw, you could get a 10-inch contractor's saw. But if you bought a portable table saw because you need to travel light and don't want to give up big saw performance, these stands are worth considering. ■

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