



Although ideal for converting sheets it's perfect for door fitting as well

First class rail

Bosch is right on track with this plunge saw and guide rail system

Bosch enters the plunge saw arena with a model that looks very similar to the superb Mafell saw, and indeed it uses an identical rail system, sitting on a thin milled upstand on the rail rather than a pressed wide extrusion.

The aluminium base plate has two plastic wear strip inserts that are used to adjust the fit to the rail to allow free movement as well as ensuring a parallel cut. These are adjusted with the knobs on the upper surface of the baseplate.

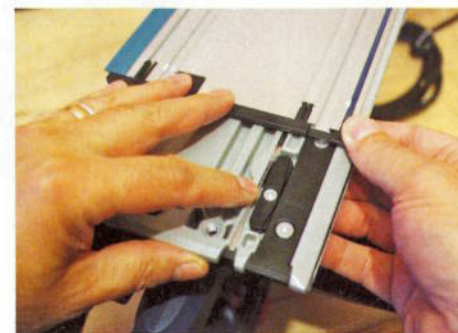
Alongside is a full-length insert that can be slid out to allow the saw to fit on other extruded-type rails such as the Festool version. The rail allows the saw to move freely along the surface; the underside has full-length round rubber inserts to grip the work surface,



▲ Plunge depths are set on this scale; the cursor rotates to indicate the depth on or off the rail



▲ The base can be adjusted to fit the rail for a perfect fit using the dials on the top of the base



▲ They alter these small wedges on the underside to toe in on the rail for a perfectly aligned fit

Bosch GKT 55 GCE Pro plunge saw



▲ To connect the rails the wide flat plate keeps them perfectly aligned; the plate holds can be nipped up with a coin and can stay on board when not required



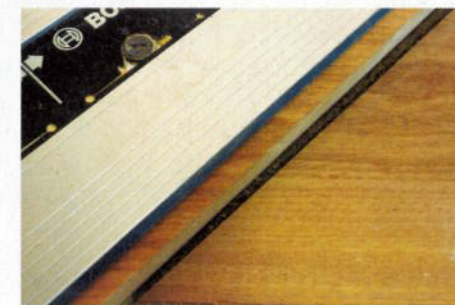
▲ These replaceable round rubber inserts work like a charm to hold the rail



▲ You can override the standard bevel settings with the small buttons on the protractor scales



▲ The saw operates smoothly on bevel cuts using the bevel setter



▲ The finish on crosscut veneer stock is unbelievably clean with no feathering



▲ Working with melamine-faced stock is an area where the saw excels



▲ Blade changing is a cinch; lifting this lever engages a locking pin...



▲ ...which sets the blade at the correct position to gain access to the blade-retaining flange

compressing and bonding to it as you push the saw through the work, holding securely without the need for clamps, even when cutting dusty MDF where slipping can occur.

Freud blade

The saw can also work other materials and, with aluminium-faced sheets, plastic composites and laminates being commonplace, having stepless speed control to gain the best cut to suit the material, along with a 48-tooth Freud blade, are great advantages. In fact this resin-filled blade, with heat-reduction slots, is ideally suited for crosscutting timber and working sheet stock derivatives, and putting that to the test on some veneered ply the resulting cuts were exceptionally clean with no grain tearout.

I also used the saw to run a waterbar groove into an external door.

As the rails can be bought in various lengths and connected using the flat connector plate, it's very easy to lay the rail tight to the edge of the door and tilt the saw by a couple of degrees and run it up the door on both edges giving both a closing and a hinge clearance bevel in a

matter of a minute or so.

The saw tilts to 45° in its normal tilt setting but this can be overridden by an additional 2° if you need to gain that bit more and there's also a negative 1° undercut. Both these functions are set using the small buttons on the baseplate protractor scales.

To set the cutting depth on the saw a sliding adjuster is positioned against the scale; a rotating cursor allows for the depth of the rail so you can accurately set it either on or off the rail, useful for through plunge cuts and decorative scoring features.

The connector plate is better than any I've seen on other rails as its wide, flat profile keeps the rails aligned very well when connected. It also stores on board without obstructing the saw in use, and you don't need to carry a screwdriver to set it, just a coin.

It's also very easy to change blades: a lever on top of the handle is lifted and the blade plunged, locking the blade at the correct position to access the flange nut. Re-engage the lever and the lock is released. Like the other parts where the user needs to interact with the tool, the lever is picked out in red.

It certainly bumps out some dust when it's not hooked up to the dust control, but when it's connected extraction is excellent.

To aid this even more there's a small clear sliding window at the front of the saw that drops down to the work to help gain a better vacuum seal.

Conclusion

If there is a negative with the Bosch it's the protrusion of the dust outlet. Festool recently redesigned its own model to allow it to sit flush to trim against an adjacent surface but the Bosch isn't able to do this because of its design.

Aside from this, though, the Bosch is certainly a very user-friendly saw, easy to get to grips with and a great all-round performer.

As good a plunge saw as Festool's, the Bosch rail system is where it really hits the mark, especially when connecting two rails together or using them without clamps.

Look out for this saw in use in next month's storage unit project

The Good Woodworking Verdict

+ Smooth plunge; good dust control; multi-fit baseplate; great rail connectors
- Dust port protrusion prevents flat-to-a-surface cuts

Rating ★★★★★

Typical price: £399.99 with one 1.6m rail

Motor: 1400W

Speeds: 3600-6250rpm

Max cut @ 90°: 57mm

Max cut @ 45°: 42mm

Weight: 4.7kg

Web: www.bosch.co.uk