

Bosch GTS1031 10-Inch Table Saw

by Tom O'Brien

Most of my tools are state-of-the-art, with one prominent exception — the Makita 2708 portable table saw I bought in the 80s. I'm still using this dinosaur because I've got a bad back, I generally work alone, and it weighs only 37 pounds. I'd love to upgrade, but all I have to do is pick up one of the new, improved models to know it isn't for me.

If Bosch's new GTS1031 job-site table saw is any indication, though, it could be that manufacturers have finally decided to pay as much attention to portability as they do to performance.

Roll Cage

The GTS1031's most distinctive feature is its base. Instead of a molded plastic or stamped metal undercarriage, the saw has a rigid steel roll cage that you can carry like a suitcase or prop on edge to save space during transport. Although the tool weighs over 50 pounds — not exactly a featherweight — I didn't find it difficult to lug around. I used two hands, grasping the grips on either side of the table. There's also a rubber handle on the side of the cage for carrying it one-

handed. That method wasn't as easy for me, but I was still glad to have the option, especially when I had to navigate through narrow doorways and up or down staircases.

Another big advantage of the roll cage is that it accommodates a lot of storage. Each of the standard accessories — wrenches, a push



A rubber handle on the side of the steel roll cage makes it easier to maneuver the GTS1031 through tight spaces.

GTS1031 Specs

Weight (by mfr): 52 pounds
Blade: 10 inches, $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch arbor
Table size: 22½ inches by 20 inches
Cutting depth at 90 degrees: 3⅛ inches
Cutting depth at 45 degrees: 2¼ inches
Maximum rip: 18 inches
Amps: 15
No-load speed: 5,000 rpm
Price: \$400 (GTA500 folding stand: \$100).

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stick, a miter gauge, even the blade guard and fence — has a secure parking space within its borders. (There's also a handy cord holder.) With my Makita saw, wrenches were constantly tumbling out onto the ground if I wasn't careful, and it seemed that I could never find the miter gauge when I needed it. Not so with the Bosch. In transport mode, this saw is a compact, well-balanced cube with nothing sticking out, rattling around, or at risk of being left behind.

Setup

Most of the tools I've bought or tested in recent years have been accurate right out of the box. That wasn't the case with the GTS1031. Although the blade was square to the table, I had to fiddle with all of the other settings before I could cut a board cleanly: The table insert was too high;

Toolbox | Bosch GTS1031 10-Inch Table Saw

the angle stops weren't engaged; the rip fence was not square to the blade or tight to the table; and the pointers for the rip scale were off. I had to spend more than an hour wrenching and squaring — and referring back to the manual — before I could get to work.

Smart Guard. The GTS1031 uses the

same blade-guard configuration as the Bosch 4100 table saw (a tool I've never tried, though it's been around for a while). The Smart Guard System — as Bosch calls it — has three parts: a permanently installed riving knife, removable anti-kickback pawls, and a removable guard assembly. It took another half hour of trial

and error before I figured out how to adjust and assemble the pieces. But it was worth it. I've never liked table-saw guards, but these turned out to be remarkably unobtrusive. When I needed clear access to the blade, I simply tilted the guard assembly up and out of the way. For even more freedom, the guard and anti-kickback pawls could be removed with the push of a button.



During transport, all of the accessories stow neatly under the tabletop.



Each half of the plastic blade guard operates independently. One side or both sides can be tilted up and out of the way. For tricky operations, the entire assembly removes with the flip of a lever.



Securing the fence lock (above) and cranking the elevation wheel (right) can be hazardous to your knuckles.



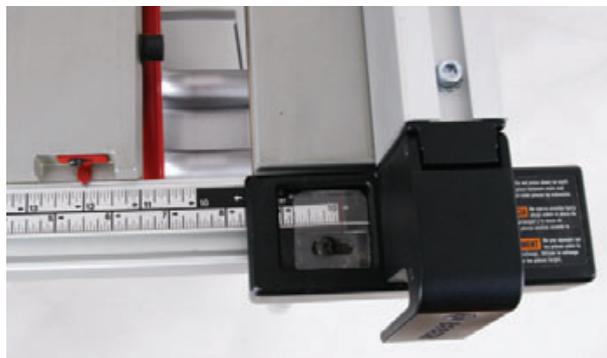
Performance

The GTS1031 arrived with a standard 24-tooth blade already installed. Using this blade, the saw effortlessly chewed its way through 2-by stock as well as 1-by and 5/4 samples of oak and tropical hardwoods. It chattered a bit when ripping 2-bys at 45 degrees, but in all cases the outcome was straight, smooth cuts with slight swirl marks. Switching to a 60-tooth fine-cutting blade brought even smoother results but required a slower, steadier feed rate.

Rip fence. Bosch claims that the fence is self-squaring, and I did find that to be the case — but not until I had adjusted it square to the blade and tightened the rear clamp-adjustment screw to prevent it from wiggling. At first the fence didn't slide smoothly, but a spray of silicon eliminated the stickiness.

Knuckle-busters. I found that moving the fence-locking lever required a surprising amount of force, and then it would slam shut with a start and jam my fingers into the table. I'm hoping that this action loosens up over time. The elevation wheel seemed to have it in for my fingers, too: When set up for 90-degree cuts, it's located hard against the power-switch housing, which made it tricky to crank without some knuckle-scraping. I learned quickly to handle these parts with care.

Table extension. The GTS1031's two-piece tabletop extends to afford a maximum rip capacity of 18 inches. Once I got the pointers dialed in, I really appreciated the two-tiered rip-fence scale, which practically eliminates the need to stretch



To avoid reaching for a tape measure when using the extension table, lock the fence at the 10-inch mark and extend the table until the desired measurement (on the inner ruler) aligns with the red pointer.

a tape measure between the blade and the fence. To measure for a wide cut, you simply clamp the fence on the 10-inch mark and slide the extension table until the table pointer reads the correct dimension.

Miter gauge. If your standard practice is to set up a cutting station that includes a miter saw, you probably don't care about the quality of a miter gauge. But I do a lot of small jobs, and sometimes I need to make a crosscut on a table saw — so I expect a miter gauge to be more than an afterthought. This one has a T-groove, which prevents the gauge from falling if it's drawn back too far, but the fit between the gauge and the slot is loose. This, I assumed, was why I could never achieve a perfectly square cut no matter how precisely I squared up the gauge or how carefully I ran it through the groove. Then I noticed that the face of the gauge was not perfectly flat. When I added an auxiliary wood fence, my results improved significantly.

Dust collection. Since the underside of the blade is entirely shrouded in plastic, the vast majority of sawdust is expelled through the dust port, which is compatible with a 2¼-inch vacuum hose. With my Festool vacuum attached, the dust collection was surprisingly effective. Hardly any sawdust escaped when I cut solid lumber and even many manufactured woods. When I ran a few sheets of MDF through the saw, however, I did notice a lot of fine dust in the air.

Accessories. Along with the saw I

received a 14-pound folding stand (GTA500). This optional accessory (sold separately) was designed specifically for the GTS1031. It looks chintzy because it opens and closes like a tray table; but it's made of heavy-duty steel and proved to be a perfectly acceptable platform. I particularly liked the tool-free attachment feature (two clips secure the rear of the saw and a wire clamp holds down the front).

Conclusions

Even though setting up and squaring the saw was a frustrating experience, I suspect that I simply received a model that escaped from the factory without having been properly scrutinized. Once I got everything dialed in, the tool worked fine and all of the cuts remained spot-on throughout the weeks I used it.

Everything considered, the Bosch GTS1031 represents the best compromise between performance and portability that I've found to date. It was a nice change to use a saw that neatly stores all the accessories and doesn't take up too much space in a crowded pickup. And as a veteran of too many close encounters with a spinning saw blade, I was happy to find an effective blade-guard setup and an extra-large push stick that's always within reach.

Still, I will continue to hope for someone to invent a table saw that's made entirely of carbon fiber.

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