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SuperMax 37-Inch Drum Sander

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Posted: Oct.02.09



George's review of the Performax 22-44 was so popular we thought it might interest our readers to hear about the advantages a larger machine offers.

This is a review of the SuperMax 37; a machine that shares a lot of great features with the Performax 22-44 including variable speed feed rate, a non-slip conveyor belt, automatic belt tensioner, and a hard drum and conveyor that produce a dead flat finish.

This review will concentrate on the advantages a larger machine has to offer. Like George, I've used this machine in my own shop for over two years without a complaint from me or the machine. I have also logged in countless hours on a dual drum SuperMax 37x2 in another shop. Based on my experience with the dual drum, I knew this machine was a must have for my shop despite the \$5,000 price tag. The reason is simple: this machine can sand, surface and joint boards or slabs with better results and in a fraction of the time it would take with hand held tools. As a professional, time is money and I've never regretted spending the money up front on this machine.

The dual head is a nice feature especially for a production shop. But for my one-man custom shop where I'm changing grits all the time anyhow, the single drum saved me some money.

More Than Extra Width

So why spend the extra money on a big machine like the SuperMax 37? I build custom furniture and tables are a big part of my business. I like being able to sand almost everything I build without having the telltale hump in the middle left by open-end sanders like the 22-44.

The 37-in. width capacity means I can sand just about anything I glue up. The only exception is large tabletops over 37-in. For those, I make the top in two halves; sand them smooth with the drum sander, then join the two halves. Because there's only one joint to deal with, there's only a little finish sanding left to do.



Besides width capacity, the SuperMax has an incredible 12-in. depth capacity allowing me to sand drawers, jewelry boxes, etc. (Photo 1)

Photo 1. Width isn't the only capacity increase you'll find on the 37-inch SuperMax. This sander can handle stock up to 12-in thick. That allows me to sand drawers and other boxes.

The SuperMax isn't just for big stuff, though. In fact, this machine can handle



incredibly small stock. You can safely sand pieces as short as 2-1/2-in. and take it down to a thickness of 1/32-in. I've used the SuperMax 37 countless times to make my own veneer. I resaw on the bandsaw first, then clean up the veneer on the drum sander. (Photo 2)

Photo 2. Don't sweat the small stuff. Despite its large capacities, the SuperMax can take your wood down to veneer thickness.



The extra width helps me get the most out of my belts, too. When I get a burn mark it doesn't mean the end of the belt. There's still plenty of capacity left to sand most stock. (Photo 3)

A Skewed Look at Capacity

I think the thing I like most about the increased capacity is that it allows me to skew feed the stock. The optimal skew angle for feeding stock is approximately 60-degrees. Skewing offers a couple of big advantages over running the stock with the grain at 90-degrees to the drum. The skew reduces belt loading because it keeps glue lines and mineral streaks moving across the drum. At 90-degrees, glue lines and mineral streaks contact the belt at one narrow point on the drum. This can lead to overheating at that point and result in a nasty burn streak that can ruin the belt.

Photo 3. Even with a burn streak on the paper, the wide drum has enough left over capacity to sand most objects without having to trash the whole belt.



Skewing the stock means I never have to scrape glue from a glue-up. Instead I use 36-grit belt, take very light passes and feed the stock at a fast rate. The globs of glue are ground off without any of the nasty tear out I used to get with a scraper. (Photo 4)

Photo 4. No more scraping glue and tearing wood. 36-grit paper, a skewed feed angle and light passes grinds off the glue globs.

A skew cut results in more efficient stock removal because of the shear cut it produces. This reduces the load on the motor and allows feed rates to be

increased.

When I've sanded down to the final grit, I'll run the stock straight through with the grain, taking light cuts until the cross grain scratches are removed

Other Considerations

Make sure your dust collection system can handle the 1200 minimum CFM requirement for this machine. Remember, many dust collectors have inflated CFM ratings. A pant leg fitting works well to connect a main line to the two 4-in ports on the hood. (Photo 5)

You will need a dedicated 30-amp / 220 Volt circuit to handle the 5 HP Baldor motor.



Photo 5. I recommend having a "pant leg" fitting made for the dust collection hood. You can also fabricate your own with a wye fitting and 45-degree elbows to connect to the two 4-inch ports.



Photo 6. A set of casters mobilizes the sander for easy storage and locks tight to provide a stable platform.

The SuperMax comes with a rock solid stand mounted on high quality casters that allow me to roll the sander out of the way when not in use. The casters hold the sander steady when in use. I've never had it creep or move on me. (Photo 6)

Great Accessories to Consider

There are some great accessories available as add-ons. I highly recommend the infeed/outfeed extension tables (\$285). (Photo 7)

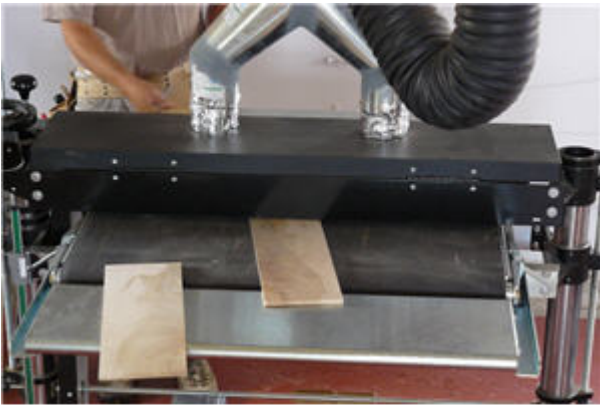


Photo 7. Infeed/outfeed table extensions provide increased support for large or long stock. These tables also allow you to feed multiple pieces without having to chase around and catch them before they fall.



Photo 8. The "Rack 'N Roll" accessory provides convenient under the table storage for sandpaper rolls.

The Rack N' Roll (\$38) adds convenient storage for belt rolls. (Photo 8). Two Rack N' Rolls will fit under the SuperMax 37.



Photo 9. The ProScale linear digital measuring system gives you accurate readings to 1/1000-in. If you ever have to duplicate a piece to an exact dimension, this can be a real lifesaver.

The ProScale (\$400) adds unprecedented accuracy to your sanding. It's not a must have add-on, but it sure is nice when you need to sand a board to fit a dado or replicate an exact thickness without the worry of a hit and miss approach. (Photo 9)

Last Thoughts

Drum sanders do cost a lot of money it's true. But then so does a high quality table saw. It's rare to find a woodshop without a table saw. At the same time, it's kind of rare to find one with a drum sander. Woodworkers would never think of saving money on a table saw and hand cutting wood. The same is true for sanding. My SuperMax saves me from countless hours of drudgery while giving me better results. I like the dead flat tabletops I get from a drum that's fixed at both ends. Also, the ability to skew the stock, make veneer and sand boxes makes the extra investment well worth it.

Sources

SuperMax Tools: 888-454-3401

SuperMax 37 Single Drum	\$5000
SuperMax 37 Dual Drum	\$5600
Rack N' Roll	\$ 38
Infeed/Outfeed Table Ext.	\$ 285
Proscale	\$ 400