Introduced to fill the gap between the very popular BS350 and the larger BS500, *the BS400 is well suited for a workshop with limited space but which still requires some respectable cutting capacity. So when the opportunity arose to try it out I jumped at the chance*

Record BS400 bandsaw

£799.95

The BS 400 is surprisingly well finished, the whole thing being contained within a relatively small footprint, but the most noticeable feature is the size of the table. An extension to the left-hand side neatly fills the usual gap between the table and the frame, producing a decent-sized working area and also allowing you to park the rip fence well out of the way.

The table itself is heavy cast iron, polished to a fine surface finish, and contains left and right hand slots for the mitre guide. The two halves of the table either side of the blade slot are kept level with the usual strap arrangement, but on this machine you can change the blade easily without having to remove the rip fence rail.

Ripping and mitring

The rip fence itself is equally good, being fitted to a heavy cast iron mount which slides freely on the front rail, but it would benefit from having a bigger locking knob or, even better, a Bristol-type lever. Unlike some of the other machines in the BS range, you can also remove the fence without having to tilt the table.

The mitre guide is as good as you get at this price – good enough for basic angle cutting and tenoning anyway – but a bandsaw is not really the machine for making precise angle cuts.

Heavyweight parts

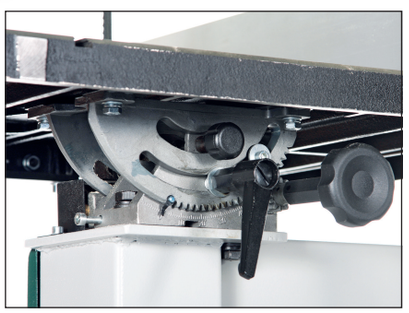
What is always impressive on the Record bandsaws is the sheer weight and quality of the trunnion for tilting the table. Despite the massive weight of the table, you can still tilt it one-handed using the rack and pinion knob; it then locks securely with no trace of play – something you can't always say, even on some of the higher-priced machines! Maximum tilt is 45°, with the option to tilt up to 10° the other way, though I'm not quite sure why you would want this.

The band wheels are substantial cast iron affairs, and they've been drilled on the back to ensure perfect dynamic balance and to reduce vibration. These are coupled to an equally robust tension mechanism, with a massive spring to make it all work. Sadly the tension indicator is pretty useless, but they usually are!.

Good guides

The guide system is pretty conventional, with the standard arrangement of two side bearings and the rear thrust roller. Although

You can remove the rip fence without having to tilt the table



Note the weight and quality of the trunnion for tilting the table

The cast iron band wheels are coupled to a robust tensioning mechanism

If access for blade changing is difficult, simply lift off the doors

A two-step pulley on the bottom wheel controls the blade speed

these are easy to adjust, they're a bit too well hidden behind the vertical blade guard. I'm sure this amount of guarding is necessary to comply with current regulations, but if it were my machine I would probably cut a couple of inches off the bottom to improve the visibility. The alternative is to work from the back, but it is still difficult to view the thrust roller.

The guides rise and fall easily on a rack and pinion operated by the side handle, and I was delighted to find that they actually stayed parallel to the blade over the full height range, which makes a pleasant change!

The bottom guides are equally inaccessible due to more rather overzealous guarding, but again the unofficial view is that if you're working in your own workshop and not employing people, this can soon be remedied.

Blade benefits

The machine has two blade speeds, 460 and 980m/min, controlled by a two-step pulley on the bottom bandwheel. For 99 per cent of my work I never use anything other than the top speed, but something slower would maybe help with very abrasive timbers or non-ferrous metals.

To facilitate blade changing, the BS400 is fitted with the cam lock tension release system now featured on most of the Record range. Once the tension has initially been set with the handwheel, this cam lock allows you to release and reset it back with just the flick of a lever – a real advantage. If access is difficult for blade changing, it can be made a whole lot easier by lifting off the doors. Incidentally, these have substantial electrical interlocks to prevent you starting the machine if the doors are not shut correctly.

Dust extraction is well catered for with an additional small pipe extracting from just below the bottom blade guides. However, totally efficient dust collection is always difficult on any bandsaw as the wheels tend to waft the dust away from the collection points.

TESTED BY ALAN HOLTHAM

SPECIFICATION

MOTOR	1500W
CUTTING SPEEDS	460 or 980m/min
TABLE SIZE	535 x 480mm
TABLE TILT	10° to -45°
HEIGHT UNDER GUIDES	305mm
MAX CUTTING WIDTH	416mm
BLADE LENGTH	3378mm
BLADE WIDTHS	6 to 25mm

VERDICT

This is a very well specified and finished machine producing a performance that belies its relatively modest price tag.

PROS ■ Sheer weight of construction
■ Rack-and-pinion table lift

CONS ■ Awkward blade guide access

VALUE FOR MONEY

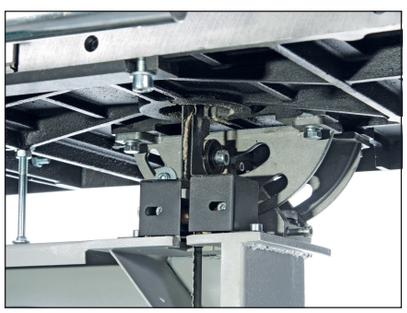
PERFORMANCE

FURTHER INFORMATION

■ Record Power
■ 0870 770 1777
■ www.recordpower.co.uk

Massive performance

All this serious weight makes for a bandsaw that's a very smooth machine to use, and the flywheel effect of those massive cast iron band wheels coupled to a powerful 1500W motor means that the machine will happily cut through material near the maximum depth of 305mm. Of course this is dependent on having a decent blade in the machine, and on the test model there was an acceptable ¾in 4tpi skip blade fitted. I'm not sure if this was the standard issue, but I would normally recommend changing the supplied blade for a better-quality one anyway to maximise the performance potential.



The bottom guides are virtually inaccessible due to some over-zealous guarding

The cam lock release system allows easy resetting of the blade tension

An extra pipe extracts dust from just below the bottom blade guides