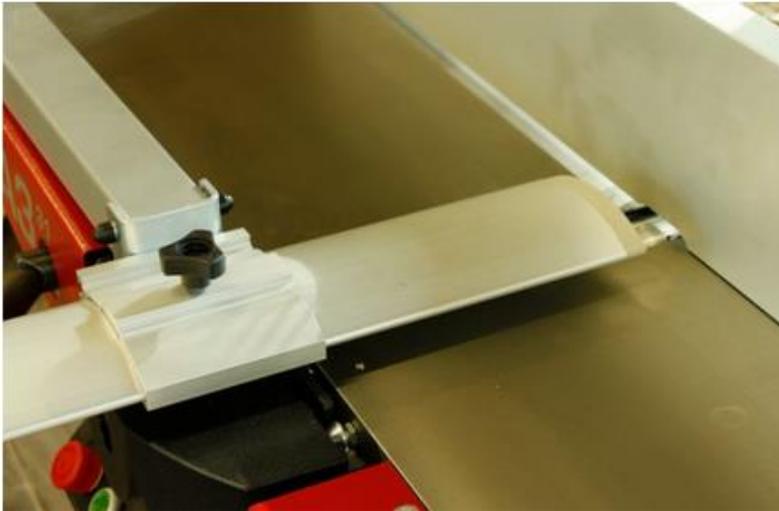


Hammer A-31 Planer/Thicknesser



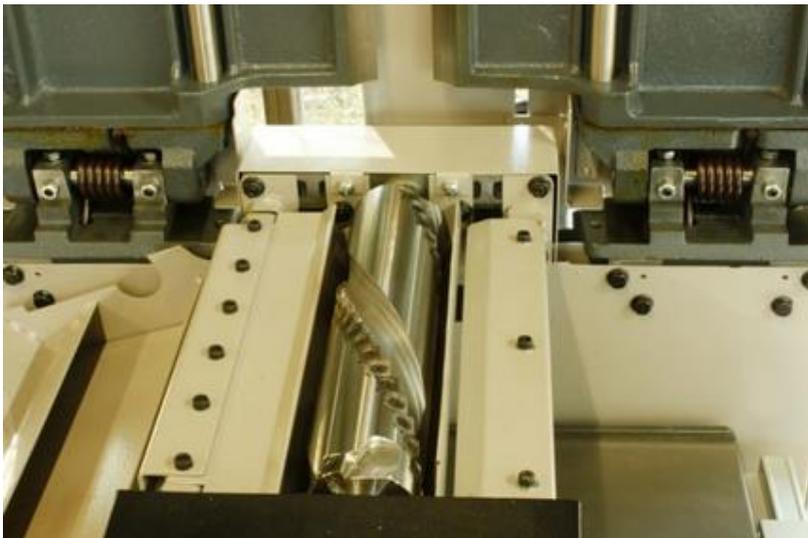
Review and photos: Raf Nathan

Made in Austria, the Hammer planer/ thicknesser comes in 410 and 310mm widths, but this review looks at the 310mm wide model. Three phase is standard but a no cost extra is the single phase with an impressive 4hp motor. Apparently Hammer and Felder machinery are made on the same production line and there are to my eye many similarities in design and build.



Showing the European style guard.

The body of the machine is strong and refined, and machining of table surfaces is clean and accurate. At a weight of 290kg this is not a toy. The overall finish and detailing is excellent. Controls are good, although the handwheel for the thicknesser seems a tad light duty. Planing height adjustment is via a simple lever.



The Silent-Power spiral cutterhead gives superior surfacing and much less noise.

The Hammer is available with straight cutters, or as reviewed here, with the proprietary Silent-Power system, a spiral head with 47 cutters. The spiral head handled gnarly grained wood well and is much quieter in use than straight cutters.

The machine arrived with the planer tables aligned perfectly so out of the box I could achieve straight planed board faces and edge joints. The fence is an aluminium extrusion supported by a pressed metal and box section assembly. I was able to easily set the fence at 90° and moving it along the table is smooth and quick.



The fence can be angled to suit.

The fence is long enough at 1100mm and very rigid, although I felt it could be positioned more forward on the infeed table in relation to the cutters.

A major point worth noting is that the machine is installed and set up by a Hammer technician so there are no headaches with delivery or set-up. The only downside is the machine arrives without a power plug, which means you need to get an electrician in to wire a wall plug so as not to void the warranty.

Change-over from planing to thicknessing, a key point, is reasonable. Both tables and the fence lift together, which is excellent – it's fast and easy. The design of the dust hood means a rather slow wind of the handwheel down to 180mm to flip the hood over and set it up for thicknessing.

Thicknessing speed is a good six metres per minute which gave clean results. The spiral head gives a great finish to almost all woods with a lot less noise.

Initially I had minor issues with sniping at one end of thicknessed boards. Adjustment for this is quite straightforward, just wind up or down the springloaded bolts to increase or decrease feed- and out-feed rollers.



The digital handwheel for thicknesser height adjustment is a recommended option.

Thicknessing height capacity is up to 225mm which is ample for pretty well all furniture making and the A-31 will also thickness right down to 4mm which is excellent for small components.

After a few weeks of use I found the machine was easy to use and giving good results on pretty well all wood fed to it.

The spiral head cutter is a highly recommended option, in fact don't even consider getting straight cutters if you are buying a new machine.

The Hammer A-31 is a strong and accurate machine that will suit pretty well any workshop.

More information at www.felder-group.com/au-en

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