

Proxxon AH80 Surface Planer

Ian Wilkie is an independent reviewer and journalist; many of Ian's articles are published in *The Woodworker* magazine.

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Front of AH80 Planer showing NVR switch

This new planer is an addition to the Proxxon range of small-scale precision machines and it is designed to plane timber up to 80mm wide.

The body is constructed from machined alloy with a nylon reinforced polyamide casing and measures (length) 410mm x (width) 290mm and (height) 200mm. The in-feed and out-feed tables are made from cast aluminium with a fine ground finish on the top surfaces and measure 80mm wide x 190mm long. The 2 x 82mm long double-sided HSS blades are fitted to a precision balanced drum which is mounted in quality ball races at each end. Replacement blades cost £16 a pair.

The 200W motor is connected to the drum by a tooth-belt and gives a speed rotation of 6000rpm. The NVR on/off switch ensures that, if there is a break in the power supply, the on button has to be pressed to start up the motor again. The planer can be connected to an extractor hose via its 35mm extractor port.

The maximum depth of cut is 0.8mm and a clear calibrated indicator shows the setting from 0 to 0.8mm. The 400mm long side fence has a height of 55mm and can be tilted 45 degrees. The substantial blade guard is supported on a spring loaded arm.

This is a machine that must be treated with great respect and the guard should always be covering the unused part of the blade on the left hand side of the wood being planed.

A push-stick is essential to guide the wood along the table and a large, strong plastic one is provided with a place to store it on the side of the casing. In addition, I made a push-pad with coarse abrasive glued on the underside for added grip. The body has four drilled holes so that the machine can either be secured to the bench or screwed on a piece of thick MDF which in turn is clamped to the bench.

Using the thicknesser

Check that the wood you are going to plane has no hidden nails or screws because this will write the blades off immediately. Before commencing to plane the wood, set the cutting depth to 0.4mm. This is done by turning a knob under the in-feed table and looking at the depth gauge on the side of the table which is clear and easy to see. The knob is quite stiff and stays in position so a locking device is not needed. Set the fence 90 degrees to the table using the calibrated setting device and tightening the large knob to set the position. The fence can be set at 90 degrees or up to 45 degrees left or right. Set the blade guard so that it covers the exposed blade on the left hand side which is not covered by the wood.

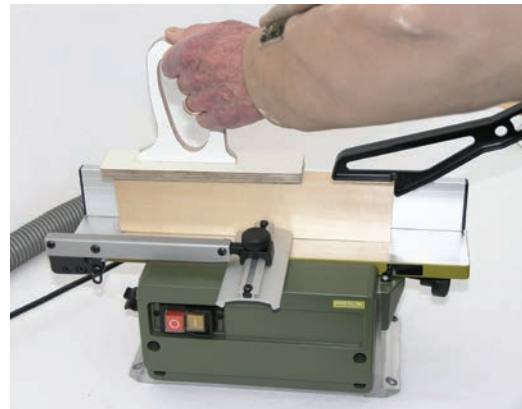
Equip yourself with ear defenders, eye protection and a mask. Planers are noisy machines and this one is no exception. Link the machine up to an extractor. During the test the dust/shaving extraction was very good. A dust/chip extractor designed for woodworkers is far preferable to a domestic vacuum cleaner which quickly clogs up. Start the machine and push the wood along the in-feed table using the push stick. The blades will start to cut. The planed wood moves on to the out-feed table which is 4mm above the in-feed table. **The key is to keep the wood flat on the table and not allow it to rock around, but the hands must be kept well-away from the blades.** Repeat the passes as necessary. A nicely planed piece of timber is a joy to behold and to run your fingers over, but beware - the edges can be sharp!

The HSS blades are double-sided and can be reversed. They are changed through the slot and the screws removed using the hex key provided and this proved to be an easy task. I now magnetise my hex keys for this sort of operation to reduce the risk of dropping the screws and losing them on the workshop floor amongst the shavings. I tested the Wiha magnetiser/de-magnetiser in 2010 and it has proved to be very useful (£5.58 from Axminster). **All blades are hazardous even if they are blunt and at long last I have invested in a pair of Kevlar gloves to protect my hands.** I now use them when changing bandsaw blades and thicknesser blades and wish I had bought them a long time ago; they are tough and inexpensive.

A Proxxon product is always going to cost you more and there are probably cheaper planers around. What you are paying for is good design, and quality engineering and build. Most full sized machines are heavy, take up room in the workshop and are not easily moved, so if you only undertake small scale work it is useful to have something more tailored to your requirements. This machine is solid, well built and accurate and at 5.2 kilos it is light enough to pick up and put away. **This latest addition to the Proxxon range of precision machines is ideal to use with the Proxxon FET saw and the thicknesser which you may be lucky enough to already have. With this combination you should be able to produce a wide range of accurately dimensioned soft and hardwood for small woodworking and woodturning projects.**



Changing blades could not be easier

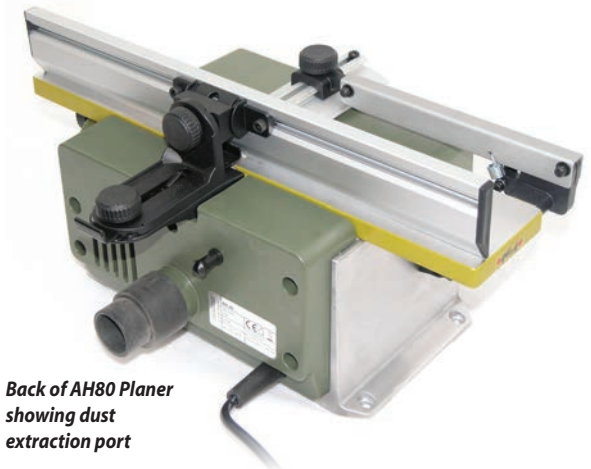


Push stick and Ian's homemade push pad



Micro adjustment on fence

"A nicely planed piece of timber is a joy to behold and to run your fingers over, but beware – the edges can be sharp!"



Back of AH80 Planer showing dust extraction port

ON TEST
with Ian Wilkie

Performance	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★