

Kurt's clinic

Kurt Hertzog answers readers' questions

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KURT HERTZOG



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1 Not only should your chosen lathe be capable of your needs now, but also what you reasonably expect to grow into **2** Your lathe manufacturer and dealer should be able to offer the options you need for your level of work. Choose wisely **3** Some manufacturers will let you come to pick up your lathe as it is being completed. Here, a few lathes nearing completion at the Robust factory in Wisconsin

I want to buy a heavy-duty lathe. I know the differences in size but which is the best quality full lathe? VB36, Oneway, Steinert, Vicmarc, Zebrano?

I understand your wish for a highest quality, heavy-duty lathe but wonder what you will be using it for. You haven't indicated your typical needs. For example, my experience with the VB36 (never owned one but turned quite a bit on the older ones) is that it is a very heavy-duty machine that is ideal for large bowl work. They have capability for spindle work but really excel at faceplate-type work. Now that they appear to be somewhat redesigned and manufactured by German company Drechselzentrum Erzgebirge Steinert, they may be different to what I experienced. My knowledge of the Steinert and Zebrano machines is only what I learn from internet searches. I see images of them that seem to show well designed and built machines, but I have zero personal experience with them. Please understand that my inability to offer anything constructive on them certainly shouldn't be considered detrimental. Only that without any first-hand knowledge, I'm unable to provide any meaningful comments on them.

On the premise that you have need for a general-use design, I can vouch for the Oneway and Vicmarc brands from personal experience. I have two full-size Oneway lathes (24-36 with outboard setup, 12-24) that I have owned for many years. Both are excellent machines. They are well used and have performed all I have put them to. I have had zero problems with either. I own one Vicmarc with nearly 20 years' ownership experience and it likewise has been a superb piece of equipment. From my years of personal experience and ownership of both Oneway and Vicmarc, I feel you can do well with either of those brands. On the Steinert or Zebrano, I suggest you continue your research. Don't be afraid to include others. There are many superb machines on the market. Track them down and try them out at a dealership, club, or through friends. You'll get your own feel for how they work and the overall design/construction. Remember that a good ownership experience will need to include your dealer support, optional equipment availability, and any potential warranty/service needs.

I wish you well on your selection and acquisition of your new lathe. Please keep me posted on what you decide and then how your experience has been.



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4 Properly aligned and tensioned, Poly-V belts provide excellent service and life. Here, the original belt, still serviceable with 20 years of use **5** One of the advantages of Poly-V belts is their ability to work well on much smaller pulleys than the traditional V belts **6** Quiet and requiring no real maintenance or adjustment after initial setting, proper-sized belts can easily transfer multiple horsepower to the spindle

I see some lathes have these multi-ribbed drive belts. Why do they use them and are they worth it?

The belts you speak of are Poly-V belts. They are flat, wider belts with many triangular ribs. Their aspect ratio creates reduced thickness, very flexible belts. These features allow for higher speeds and will work well in reduced diameter applications. Are they worth it? Poly-V belts are now used on everything from automobiles to nearly all equipment. All my lathes save one older one has poly-V belts. When adjusted properly, tensioned correctly and accurately aligned, they work marvelously. Other than classroom lathes where belts are often brutally misused and misaligned, I've never had to replace a worn-out poly-V belt. If you don't let them slip or tighten them into a bowstring, you'll get great service until they age and get brittle as all flexible belts will with time.

I read your Q&A each issue. You seem well versed and answer the question(s) but they always seem way too long winded. Do you ever have a short answer?

Yes.

(BTW... I select the questions used based on largest potential interest along with the chance to use each as a teaching opportunity. Education and learning are goals of *Woodturning* magazine. Most of my usual "long-winded answers" are an effort to add to the readers' knowledge base. If I can share enough so they understand and can then make their own informed decision rather than simply accept a "just do this" or "just buy this", I feel I have succeeded.)