

Product Reviews

More Goodies from SWAT • Part 2

by Kurt Hertzog

In the last issue, I reviewed items which were displayed at the SWAT Symposium in Texas that I found to be very interesting. There were far too many great items to fit into one issue, so the review is extended to this issue—we'll look at the new *Kallenshaan Woods* kits, have a go at tool rests from Robust Tools, explore the possibilities of the latest *Escoulen* eccentric chuck, and take a peek at a clever vacuum mounting system from JT Turning Tools.

KALLENSHAAN WOODS

In the previous issue, I ran out of space when covering the latest kit additions to the *Kallenshaan Woods* product line. Ken Nelson always has a booth at SWAT and brings his laser to personalize pens for the attendees. Adding to the extensive line of kits, ranging from state flags to animals, the additions that came out at SWAT were a new dog series and an expanded fish series. I covered the new dog kits last time, so here I've included a look at some of the new fish kits. Over the years, I've made a number of Ken's kits and have always found them to be top shelf (see Fig. 1). They are well designed, always well cut and packaged, and are complete with comprehensive instructions. Take a look at the latest ones I've made (see Fig. 2). The salmon, rainbow trout, and largemouth bass kits flesh out the continually expanding fish series. If you want a gift idea, make and give a personalized *Pisces* pen to those special fishermen on your list complete with their name,

date, and weight of their special catch. Not only will it be on the trophy wall, but it will also be in their pocket every day (see Fig. 3). If fish or dogs aren't your thing, visit the *Kallenshaan Woods* website (www.kallenshaanwoods.com) to peruse all their offerings; I'm certain you'll find something that will fit your interests. *Kallenshaan Woods* laser-cut kits are also available through many retail outlets, woodturning catalogs, and on the web.

ROBUST TOOLS

You may be familiar with the *Robust Tools* lathes (www.turnrobust.com), which include the Sweet 16, Independence, Liberty, and American Beauty series. You can enjoy a Behind the Scenes at Robust Tools on page 54 in this issue. In addition to their lathes, Robust produces an extensive line of tool rests. The line includes replacement rests for nearly every lathe made, current and past, and if it isn't available, they will custom make rests for you. The rests are a once-in-a-lifetime purchase, since they are nearly indestructible. They are not only made of welded steel (as opposed to a casting), but they also sport a top bar of hardened steel. This hardened top rod not only adds strength to the rest, but it is also key in the "smoothness" of the tool movement (see Fig. 4). They don't get damaged or dinged as the softer rests will do after a catch, so there is no filing, smoothing, or waxing needed to provide that easy tool glide over the rest. As Henry Ford



Fig. 1

There is a wide variety of subjects available in the *Kallenshaan Woods* family of kits, and I've always had quality cuts, precision fits, and great instructions with the kits I've used.



Fig. 2

I just finished a few of the latest additions to the fish series—the salmon, rainbow trout, and largemouth bass are the newest fish in the collection.



Fig. 3

What a great gift for fishermen: Create a pen with the species of their favorite or trophy fish, and then personalize it with their name, date, and the weight.



Fig. 4

The toughness of the *Robust Tools* tool rest is based on materials. There are no castings in the construction; the steel is shaped cold formed and topped off with a hardened steel rod.



Fig. 5

The rests are available in a wide variety of sizes, shapes, and tool post diameters. If you don't find one for your lathe, they will custom build.

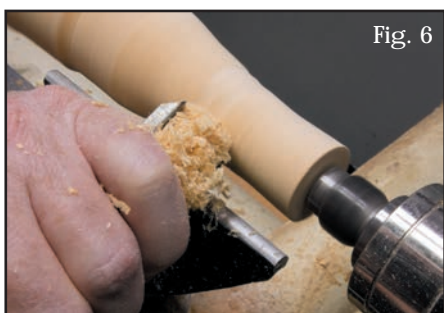


Fig. 6

The *Robust Tools* tool rest is extremely user-friendly and fits nearly any size hands without hanging up.

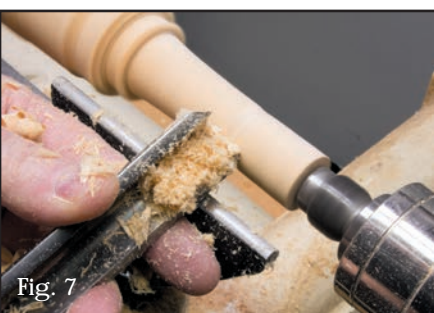


Fig. 7

The tool rest is equally as friendly for the “finger under the tool” type of turner.



Fig. 8

The *Escoulen* eccentric chuck comes with instructions and hardware, and has an assortment of accessory fittings.

once told us, you can get them in any color you want, as long as it is black. The tool rests are painted black (Brent might custom-paint one, depending on the circumstance) except for the top rod and tool post (see Fig. 5). The sizes and shapes that are available truly span the spectrum. Many of the rests made today are cumbersome because you can't fit your fingers or the back of your hand in the position that you would like—they are too small, too sharp, or otherwise not user-friendly. The *Robust* tool rest that I tested was easy to use with a variety of hand positions (see Figs. 6 and 7). I think that feature is key, because depending on the turning at hand, I'll use different positions in my contact with the rest. Give the *Robust Tools* tool rest a try. I think you'll find it a valuable addition to whichever lathe you use. *Robust Tools* tool rests are available from Craft Supplies, Packard Woodworks, and the Woodcraft website. They can also be obtained directly through the *Robust Tools* website and their network of woodturning professionals.

ESCOULEN ECCENTRIC CHUCK

One of the most unique workholding devices available to the woodturner is the *Escoulen* Eccentric Chuck. This most recent addition to the family of chucks designed by Jean-François Escoulen is both a multicenter and eccentric chuck that is manufactured by Vicmarc and sold in the United States through Woodworker's Emporium (www.woodworkersemporium.com) in Nevada.

I saw this chuck in Christian and Jeri's booth at SWAT, and never found enough time to try it out. Christian was kind enough to loan me one so that I could test it. While I had the chuck and accessories to work with, I also had the chance to spend a bit of time with Jean-François—when he was teaching an eccentric turning class at Arrowmont during the same week I was teaching a class on turning ornaments. We didn't have a great deal of shop time together, since we both had full classes of students, but we did get a few nights to spend on the porch with a glass of wine. If you are not familiar with



Fig. 9

Designed by Jean-François Escoulen and manufactured by Vicmarc, the chuck will allow both off-center and eccentric turning, individually or combined.

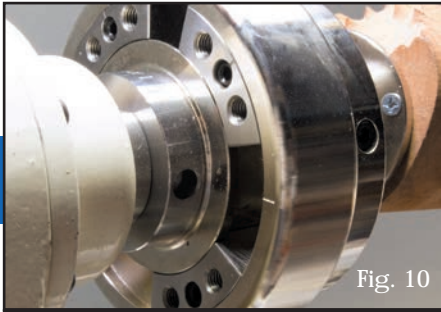


Fig. 10

There are three adjustable position weights in a channel on the back of the chuck; once you've selected the offsets and eccentricity, you adjust their position to help to balance.



Fig. 11

These are some examples of students' work from a recent eccentric turning class that Jean-François taught at the Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts.

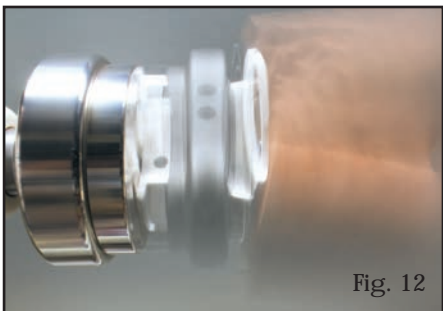


Fig. 12

Though a bit unnerving for the newcomer to eccentric turning, the Escoulen chuck will allow you to explore this very unique aspect of woodturning.



Fig. 13

The JT Turning Tools vacuum hub is made with the desired thread to match your lathe, and has a channel with an O-ring to receive and seal the PVC pipe adapter.



Fig. 14

If you need all the pieces, the handwheel, vacuum adapter, and vacuum hub will allow you to get PVC adapters from a big-box store and you can be on the way to a vacuum system.

Jean-François Escoulen, he is Mr. Eccentric Turning and is world famous for his eccentric turnings, teaching, and equipment design. The latest Escoulen chuck allows the user to execute eccentric turning in every possible way of which I am aware. The chuck is massively built, superbly designed and machined, and comes complete with a host of accessories, including the necessary wrenches (see Fig. 8). I had the chuck equipped for my 1" x 8 lathe (see Fig. 9). The chuck has three counterbalances in the channel on the back that can be positioned as needed to balance things out when you adjust the chuck to the desired off-center and eccentricity (see Fig. 10). My eccentric turnings leave plenty to be desired through no fault of the chuck—the shortcomings are more of operator error. I've included a photo of some of the pieces made by the students in Jean-François' class at Arrowmont (see Fig. 11). If you want to venture into the world of either multicenter or eccentric turning, I don't think you can go wrong by getting the Vicmarc eccentric

chuck; you'll open up a lifetime of exploration in woodturning if you do (see Fig. 12).

JT TURNING TOOLS

In the previous issue, I included the JT Turning Tools Gizmo hollowing system and steady rest. In this issue, I'll cover the vacuum system that you can build with offerings from JT Turning Tools. They offer a family of vacuum hubs suited to the various headstock threads. This aluminum machining will make a vacuum chuck, using the hub and an industry standard PVC pipe coupling. The hub is machined with an O-ring in the channel to seal against the PVC with set screws to hold the coupling in position for the seal (see Fig. 13). You can now buy the hub with the threading for your lathe and create an entire family of vacuum chucks by using whatever size PVC coupling you need. Put that together with one of their handwheels and their vacuum adapter (rotary union) and you are in business (see Fig. 14). The handwheels are available threaded for the



Fig. 15

The vacuum hub accepts your choice of PVC adapter and seals against its O-ring that is being held in place by the set screws around the perimeter.

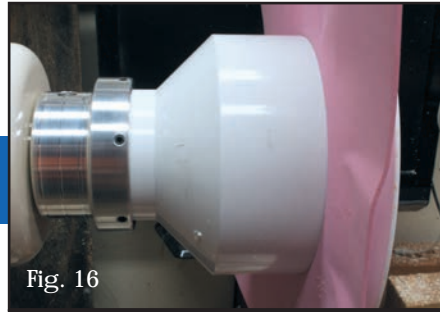


Fig. 16

I found that using the vacuum to align and seal the PVC before tightening the set screws gave me a perfect alignment.



Fig. 17

The *JT Turning Tools* vacuum hub, handwheel, and vacuum adapter along with your own vacuum pump gets you the vacuum system capability for your lathe.

various lathes on the market, are machined from aluminum, and bored to accept the vacuum adapter. This rotary adapter has two O-rings to provide the seal inside the handwheel. It is easily inserted and removed, yet stays in place during operation. The entire system is precisely made (see Fig. 15). The beauty is the flexibility of the PVC adapters, which are inexpensive and readily available at your local hardware or building supply store. They can be used to create solutions to your specific needs. Need something long? Bond PVC pipe to the adapter in any length you need. Need a flat platform? Cut your platform with a groove to receive the PVC adapter lip and glue it in place. PVC is easy to work with using only hand tools, and provides nearly limitless combinations and permutations. Having only one hub will let you insert any of the vacuum chuck creations you might have, and an Allen wrench is all that is needed to quickly change from one vacuum chuck to another.

The *JT Turning Tools* vacuum system is comprised of a

few of their products. Mix and match as you need. If you only want to make vacuum chucks because you have your own rotary union and handwheel, buy the hub and you are ready to go. If you already have vacuum chucks, buy the vacuum adapter if your handwheel will accept their shaft and O-rings, or get the handwheel too.

A trick I found helpful is to use the vacuum to align the PVC in the hub. Trying to align it, get it compressed to seal, and then tightening the set screws was a bit difficult. I didn't want to "true" the PVC at the work end, so I used my gasket material and a plate. With the lathe off, I used the vacuum to pull the PVC fitting into the channel to seal on the O-ring (see Fig. 16). Once it was properly aligned, all I needed to do was tighten the set screws. I was extremely impressed with the system (see Fig. 17). It is not only well made and flawlessly functional, but it is also incredibly clever. Can it get much simpler than this? All the *JT Turning Tools* products are available directly from their website at www.jtturningtools.com.



Woodturning Design

For new projects, woodturning events, reader's forum, brag board, contact information and subscription information, log onto: www.woodturningdesign.com

Editor's Notes on Woodturning Safety

There are as many different ways to turn as there are turners. Techniques presented by individual authors represent those methods that work best for them. *Woodturning Design* magazine does not certify any particular method as the "best and only way" to complete any specific turning task and will strive to offer different alternatives. You should always choose the method that you feel comfortable with, the one that works for you, and the one that is safe.

Woodturning can be a dangerous activity. Always wear the proper eye and ear protection, and take the necessary precautions to eliminate nuisance dust. Read and understand the manuals that come with your tools, and never use a tool in a way that endangers you or anyone around you. If you are not comfortable performing any operation or technique presented in *Woodturning Design*, DON'T!