

Mill Your Own Mouldings

Every time a stick of wood gets fed into a moulding machine in a big sawmill somewhere, its commercial value jumps hundreds of percent. That's why ready-



made moulding and trim costs so much, though you've got to wonder why. Truth is, the quality of trim you'll find in lumberyard racks is rarely more than average. Even when the wood itself is superb, the milling job usually isn't. Profiles are typically less than crisp and surfaces often reveal ugly mill marks after staining. But then again, what can you expect from industrial moulding machines that are built primarily for volume, not quality?

Want to vault your cabinet-making and trim work to the next level?

Small-run, router milled trim and moulding lets you do that. It beats the quality and variety of ready-made stuff hands down because routers cut wood at extremely high speeds – some greater than 500 cuts per second. Then there's the creative advantage, too. The range of router bit moulding profiles includes unique styles that simply aren't available to people building with off-the-rack trim.



Key developments in router bit performance and router table design are why milling your own mouldings makes so much sense these days. The trick is understanding two techniques that make the milling process safer and more efficient.

If you're making more than a couple of pieces of trim, you need to configure your router table with a good fence, featherboards and dust collection. The

closer the fence faces are to the router bit, the cleaner the moulding you'll produce.

Besides boosting safety, featherboards increase the quality of moulding you make by applying consistent pressure to the wood as it passes across spinning



cutters. With two people working together, you can mill as much as 1500 lineal feet of trim per hour. Even if you factor in journeymen's wages, the economics still work out nicely.

Preparation of wood before milling is another key detail. The more consistent the size of your

trim blanks, and the more square the corners, the better your trim turns out. You'll get best results if you rough-cut wood to size on a tablesaw, then bring the strips down to final dimensions by running them through a thickness planer as a group. This attention to detail pays off when it comes time to match the corners of trim profiles as they come together with mitre joints.

Recent advances in matched router bit design now allow very wide mouldings to be produced on a router table. Even with a 2 1/4 hp router you can produce crown moulding up to 5 1/2" wide.

If you've never experienced the advantages of router-milled trim, then you're in for a treat. It won't take long before you've saved enough money to pay for the bits. After that, you get to pocket all the cash you'd normally layout for that ho-hum, store-bought trim you used to think was so good.

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