

Product Review

Easy Pen Turner and Easy Hollowers

by Kurt Hertzog



Fig. 1

The Easy Pen Turner (top) has a bubinga handle and radiused cutter, similar to the early version Mini-Rougher with its square cutter.



Fig. 2

The available small level, taped to the shaft, helps reinforce the proper horizontal position of the tool shaft with the cutter presented on center to the work.

I try and teach my students that the magic isn't in the tool, it's in the user; however, that said, it doesn't hurt to have great tools. I recently had the chance to evaluate the Easy Wood Tools mid-size hollower family and their pen tool, the Easy Pen Turner.

EASY PEN TURNER

You can make a pen using just about any tool in your box. A roughing gouge will work quite nicely, as will a parting tool or any of the tools in between. Easy Wood Tools (EWT) has created a pen tool to add to their family of carbide-tipped turning tools (see Fig. 1). This tool, the same as all EWT tools, frees the user from the task of sharpening and will perform all the tasks, from roughing a blank to finishing cuts. The R2 Carbide Cutter (that means the cutter curve follows a 2" radius curve) has four cutting edges. Once one edge has become too dull for the intended use, the user simply loosens the screw and rotates the cutter to a fresh edge. The carbide cutter can be replaced once all four edges have been spent; however, there is a host of tricks to maximizing the life of the cutters, and the EWT folks include helpful information on these techniques with their tools and on their website.

If you are new to the EWT concept, there is no "rubbing of the bevel." The tool shaft is presented to the work horizontally with the carbide tool cutting edge at the centerline of the work (see Fig. 2). Because the Easy Pen Turner



Fig. 3

The R2 Carbide Cutter has a 2" radius, providing for a gentle curvature bringing the cutter corners away from the work.

cutter has a radius grind, there are no corners to deal with, so the tool can slide in either direction with ease. Should a corner cut be desired, the tool can be easily positioned for that.

The Easy Pen Turner sports the now familiar EWT trademarked handle shape. Having a comfortably short 16"

length, it is very maneuverable. The pen turner tool also has an R2 cutter. This gentle sweep is much like bringing the corners back on a plane iron. No gouging of corners or scoring lines at the edges of the blade (see Fig. 3). I found the Easy Pen Turner easy to use and comfortable in the hand. It is a quality-built product that I'm sure you'd find useful for your penturning endeavors.



Fig. 4

The Pen Turner works nicely for pens, bottle stoppers, and a host of other small turnings, as well as some other duties.

For those in the know, you'll recognize that the images included here aren't of a pen; rather, they are the body of a shaving brush stand (see Fig. 4). Though I've turned pens with this tool and was very pleased with the results, I was turning shaving brush stands when I got around to this photo shoot. The point is that even though it is called a "pen tool," I find that it is also superb for bottle stoppers and a host of other applications. I used it to rough a blank for the hollowing tool evaluation and to cut the spigot for the chuck mounting of that blank—it is a versatile and user-friendly tool.

MID-SIZE EASY HOLLOWERS

Following in the footsteps of the other EWT products, the hollowers fall into the mid-size tool family. There is actually a mini-size in other styles, so perhaps that is destined for the hollowers as well. This family of three hollowing tools is simply numbered 1, 2, and 3 (see Fig. 5). The Mid-Size Easy Hollower #1 is a straight tool, and it is meant for working through the opening and for cutting in the areas that can be reached in a straight line. The hollowing tools are pre-



Fig. 5

The Mid-Size Easy Hollowers are available separately in straight, slightly hooked, and more aggressively hooked versions.

sented in a slightly different manner than other EWT tools. Usually the tool shaft is horizontal and the cutting edge is at the centerline. With the hollower's cutter edge being on the inside of the vessel, it is presented slightly above center with the shaft of the tool slightly tipped down.

Mid-Size Easy Hollower #2 has a wide shaft that lies flat on the tool rest for stability. It has a slight gooseneck to reach areas that the #1 tool can't easily reach, but uses the same tool presentation. Depending on the hollowform shape, this tool will reach most areas, except those with extreme undercuts. The Mid-Size Easy Hollower #3 is designed with a more extreme neck to reach even farther into undercut areas. Using the combination of all three tools will let you do a wide variety of medium-size hollowforms (see Fig. 6).

All three Mid-Size Easy Hollowers use the C15 carbide cutter. Every EWT tool is designed specifically for only one cutter. The tool has a machined pocket that matches the cutter precisely to provide support, and an Allen screw holds the cutter securely in this pocket. The cutter part number required for any EWT tool is machined into the tool shaft right near the ferrule (see Fig. 7).

I'm probably most known for my pens and pierced eggshell ornaments; however, I do turn almost everything, but certainly don't consider hollowforms my forte. My trying out the EWT Easy Hollowers was a good test of how easy they are to use. A block of madrone burl was chosen as the guinea pig for the hollowform. I couldn't resist using the Easy Pen Turner to rough the blank, and because it cut the madrone so nicely, I even used it to put the tenon on the blank for mounting (see Figs. 8 and 9).

I didn't bother predrilling an entrance hole, but had no difficulty getting one started to begin the hollowing process (see Fig. 10). The straight-shafted Easy Hollower #1 was easy to use and it made short work of going through the hole to excavate all the material that isn't undercut (see Fig. 11).

It is time to switch to the #2 when the access is constricted by the opening, and you can't continue to hollow with the #1. With its slightly gooseneck shaft, areas unreachable with the straight shaft can now be hollowed



Fig. 6

The shafts are different, but the cutters are identical, each nested into a machined pocket to provide support for the cutter.



Fig. 7

The carbide cutter part number is prominently marked on the tool shaft and is securely held in place in the machined pocket with an Allen-head screw.



Fig. 8

Shhh, don't tell anyone, but the Easy Pen Turner works quite nicely for other duties, such as roughing.



Fig. 9

The Easy Pen Turner worked quite nicely putting the spigot on the blank for mounting in the chuck as well.

(see Fig. 12). The instructions are very specific about keeping the wide, flat part of the shaft engaged with the tool rest to provide proper support when the tool is in the cutting position (see Fig. 13).

With hollowforms that don't have severe undercuts, the Easy Hollower #1 and #2 may be the only tools you need. However, if you create hollowforms with more severe undercuts, use Easy Hollower #3 with its extreme gooseneck to reach even farther under the "rim." With the flat part of the shaft in contact with the tool rest, the #2 and the #3 are extremely stable and neither has a tendency to twist or rotate. The aggressive hook on #3 allows you to not only reach into the far corners of the sides of the hollowform, but also nicely underneath the top surface from the hole outward (see Fig. 14).

Using the premise that the heavy lifting is done when you have maximum strength and support, I wait until the extreme cutting inside has been completed before I do the undercutting on the outside (see Fig. 15). Of course, this goes back to the age-old bowl discussion: Do you shape the outside to be pleasing and make the inside follow that? Or is it better to make the inside cuts while the outside is solid and make the outside conform to the inside once you've achieved the interior contours you desire? I can't say that I favor either one as an absolute for bowls, so I use both. It's the same with hollowforms: Do you shape the inside the way you want the outside to be while it is strong and more resistant to chatter, or vice versa?

How easy were the Easy Hollowers to use? Very easy. They are superbly constructed tools and are razor sharp (do you know how I know that?). They made the hollowing easy and fun to do.

Here is a look at the finished madrone burl hollowform after a quick swim in *Minwax Antique Oil* (see Fig. 16). The piece of madrone burl finished out at about 2" high x 4-1/2" across and was hollowed to a 1/16" wall thickness through a 3/4" hole—not bad for a pen guy, eh?

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Easy Pen Turner and the Easy Hollowers are indeed easy to use. All EWT tools are made in the United States and marketed through virtually all your favorite retailers, as



Fig. 10

The Easy Hollowers are presented with the cutter edge slightly above the centerline and the shaft tipped slightly down. Here, the hollowing is started.

well as on the EWT website at www.easywoodtools.com. The Easy Pen Turner tool is available exclusively through Craft Supplies USA at www.woodturnerscatalog.com and through Easy Wood Tools. I recommend these tools as

quality tools that you should consider adding to your tool selection. All Easy Wood Tools have a 100% satisfaction guarantee, so if you find that they don't please you, now or down the road, Craig Jackson will buy them back.



Fig. 11

The tool is easily maneuvered to clear the area inside the vessel in the line of sight through the hole.



Fig. 12

Once the area in the undercut needs to be hollowed, the Easy Hollower #2 with its slightly gooseneck shaft is used.



Fig. 13

It is important that the tool rest be under the flat part of the tool shaft when the cutter is engaged in cutting so that the proper support is provided.



Fig. 14

For further hollowing in the undercut area, the Easy Hollower #3 is engaged.



Fig. 15

Not only does the Easy Hollower #3 reach into the far corners, but it also does nicely on the underside of the top surface.



Fig. 16

After a few applications of *Minwax Antique Oil*, the piece is finished, capping off a fun time in the shop evaluating the Easy Wood Tools Mid-Size Easy Hollowers.