



# Flutemaster product review

Kurt Hertzog tests and reviews the Flutemaster

**The Flutemaster has been offered in different manufactured configurations in past years. As a product that is continually undergoing improvements in design and manufacture, it strives to provide its function at the most affordable cost. Developed many years ago by Dick Weber to add flutes to his favourite turnings, Grecian urns, it has been enhanced to work on a wide variety of lathe sizes and accept many different rotary cutting tools.**

## What would you flute?

There really isn't a limit to the types of turnings that might be enhanced with flutes added. Obviously, there are Grecian urns that drove the original development but add to that hollow forms of any type, furniture legs, bowls, vases, lidded boxes, ornaments, pens, and many others. Adding flutes will let you decorate nearly anything you turn. Don't overlook any work, even creative flat work, that might be fixtured in a lathe as a workholding device to bring the Flutemaster to bear.

## How does it work?

The Flutemaster, as delivered, works by accepting your rotary cutting tool and allowing you to present it to the work with any cutter your tool can accept. With the lathe headstock locked in rotation, either with the OEM indexing system or the included index wheel and lock system, the flute cut is executed between the length limits you've



The available tool holders are 3D printed parts. Fully functional yet less expensive than metal fabrications help moderate selling price

set with their included lathe bed stop blocks. The next rotary location is indexed, locked up, and the fluting cut process repeated. Depending on your design, your number of flutes, location, final depth of cut desired, and type of cut feature are all under your control. I've also experimented with it manually, rotating the work by hand with the Flutemaster clamped in place. This allows you to do 'interrupted' radial cut features that aren't possible with a woodturning tool in normal, powered turning mode in addition to the typical axial fluted work.

## Flexibility

The Flutemaster is adjustable to work with lathes ranging from 12-25in diameter and any length bed. Adjustable from the

benchtop mini to the full-size floor lathe, you can present your rotary tool mounted cutter to the work of your choice. The Flutemaster is available with a variety of tool mounts that will accept rotary tools from small die grinders, mid-sized rotary tools (Mastercarver, Foredom, Wecheer, etc.) to small palm routers (Trend, Ridgid, Bosch, etc.). With that range of rotary tool mounts available and the vast selection of cutting tools they can hold, your flute geometry is almost limitless.

## In Use

The Flutemaster is a hand operated tool with the user presenting the tool and controlling its motion sliding it through the range of cut desired. As such, using



The Flutemaster centerline cutter height can be adjusted from under 4in to over 12½in covering every lathe you'll likely use



The only tool required for changeover to another sized lathe is a single wrench. Only requires attention to set the cutter on the centerline axis



Longitudinal travel limits for fluting are easily set with the provided stop clamps on the lathe bed



The depth control resolution is marked off in .002in per tick mark. Easily set and locked in place for precise control and repeatability



The mini router tool holder works superbly with my Bosch Colt router. Plenty of available cutters and curve tracking nose with superb depth control



With the available indexing wheels (1in, 1½in, M33), you can select from up to 20 regular spacings and many more asymmetrical patterns

a foot switch to control the on/off of the rotary tools allows both hands to be used in the Flutemaster fluting operation. Like any router function, proper speeds and feeds are in order. Deep cuts are a repeated progressively deeper cut operation. The motion through the range is dictated by the cutter rotation, so most will require a left to right motion through the desired cutting range. Good router cutting practice such as with cutter depth, speed of rotation, and rate of linear movement is recommended. By design, the cutter depth can be precisely set and incremented in as fine a resolution as .002in. Because the depth of cut is precisely controlled and can follow the curves of your turning, you really have tremendous design freedom in your fluting. Don't overlook the capability of using the Flutemaster for creating flats, inlay pockets, drilling holes and patterns, and other artistic enhancements.

## Overall function

The Flutemaster does an excellent job of allowing you to present your chosen rotary tool to the work in a repeatable, controllable manner. Not only will it cut flutes as desired but, properly adjusted, it can cut flats in turned work. The included rotary indexing wheel and wheel pin holder is available for 1in, 1½in, and M33 spindles. You can select from 14, 36, 48 and 60-

hole patterns allowing for symmetrical, evenly spaced layout combinations, as well as hundreds of asymmetrical layout combinations. Personally, I like to use the pencil-holding clamp to mark up my turning to see the actual cutting positions. It makes it far easier to check the aesthetics before I actually perform the cutting. If I'm not pleased with the look, nothing is lost. A quick erasure or light sanding lets me try marking it up differently as many times as needed until I'm happy. Using the pencil marking process prior to any chips also makes setting the stop position clamps on the lathe bed as needed easy and accurate.

## Value

The Flutemaster has had the design refined over time. Many of the system components are 3D printed. Not only does this allow for change on the fly design improvements and added features, it avoids delays and high costs of tooling changes. All of the system parts are well designed and focused on performance. The 3D parts are well done but share many of the cosmetic issues that most 3D parts do. Fancy frills that don't add to functionality have been eliminated, allowing the folks at Flutemasters to offer their system at a very modest price. Can you make a system of your own to accomplish the same thing? Certainly. But you would be hard pressed

to save anything by spending the time and money to replicate the operability, flexibility, and problem solutions that the currently available Flutemaster system provides. The ability to work on every lathe I own from my mini Jets and Vicmars to my intermediate and full size Oneways is a plus for me. Other than a wrench to adjust the height to the centerline, there is no other time spent when using the unit on a different lathe for a different application.

## Conclusions

I've had the opportunity to use my Flutemaster for nearly a year. I have enjoyed using it on a host of different applications. It is easy to use, flexible and functional. In my opinion, it is a great value tool being delivered with your selection of tool holder, all the needed operational accessories, along with excellent instructions. I have the most experience with my mini router but have the mounts for all of the other tools it accepts. I'm sure any of your turnings, from small desktop lidded boxes to waist-high urns, will be enhanced by adding flutes or the other features that the Flutemaster can accomplish. I encourage you to consider adding one to your kit.

**Visit [flutemasters.com/](http://flutemasters.com/) or phone 405-840-3453 for more information or ordering.**