



Kansas City Woodworkers' Guild

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Wood River #6 Foreplane Review

At our February 2009, Kansas City Woodworkers' Guild Bench Plane Tune-Up Clinic, we had the opportunity to test out the new Wood River #6 Foreplane that is being sold at Woodcraft Supply. Charlie Wilson, the manager at Lenexa, Kansas Woodcraft store, allowed us to take this plane and put it through its paces and give him a review.

Boy, were we pleasantly surprised! The first impression comes when you open a nice wooden box and remove the plane. It has some weight and is certainly impressive when you see how well-machined every part is in the plane. We proceeded to disassemble the plane to examine all the machined surfaces. Since we had a similar Stanley Bedrock at the clinic (the Bedrock being the standard to which all planes are made), we were able to compare the two tools side by side.

With only a few minor dimensional differences between the two planes, we wanted to see how Wood River was able to cut corners to keep the price where it is at. The only glaring difference was under the frog where it mounts to the body of the plane. The old Bedrock has two races machined into the body that the frog mounts into, thus making the frog "self-align" and prevents the frog from getting twisted or out of alignment to the mouth. The new Wood River doesn't have the races machined into the body, but that didn't seem to affect the frog positioning. In fact, the frog is adjustable with one adjustment screw just as the Bedrock and all of the other more pricey hand planes on the market.

The other thing that impressed us was the blade. When one considers the price that you are paying for this plane, the blade is typical of a pricier plane. Out of the box, we were able to pull some pretty thin shavings with the factory honed blade. Once we honed the factory blade to final 8000 grit polish, we pulled shavings as thin as .001 of an inch, planing pine, walnut and curly hard rock maple. Since we didn't have the opportunity to keep the plane for an extended period of time to test the ability of the blade to hold that edge, we can't give you a review on the blade's steel quality. Even if the blade steel is a poor quality, the price of the plane would still allow you to upgrade to Hock blade and still not have a lot of money invested in the tool.

The lever cap was also quite substantial and is engineered using the new design used on newer plane lever caps (also called a chipper). Cosmetically, this plane is a very nice looking tool. The handle and knob are made of rosewood, and the depth adjusting knob is knurled brass.

In the final analysis, if someone is considering buying any size plane for a particular job, we would suggest you look seriously at investing in a Wood River before paying 3 to 4 times more for a Lie-Nielsen or a Veritas. We think Woodcraft and Wood River have really hit a homerun with this new line by giving great quality at a terrific price. If this is any indication of the direction Woodcraft is going with their Wood River line, keep your eyes open for other hand tools hitting your local Woodcraft store. Way to go Woodcraft!

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with Mac Dressler**