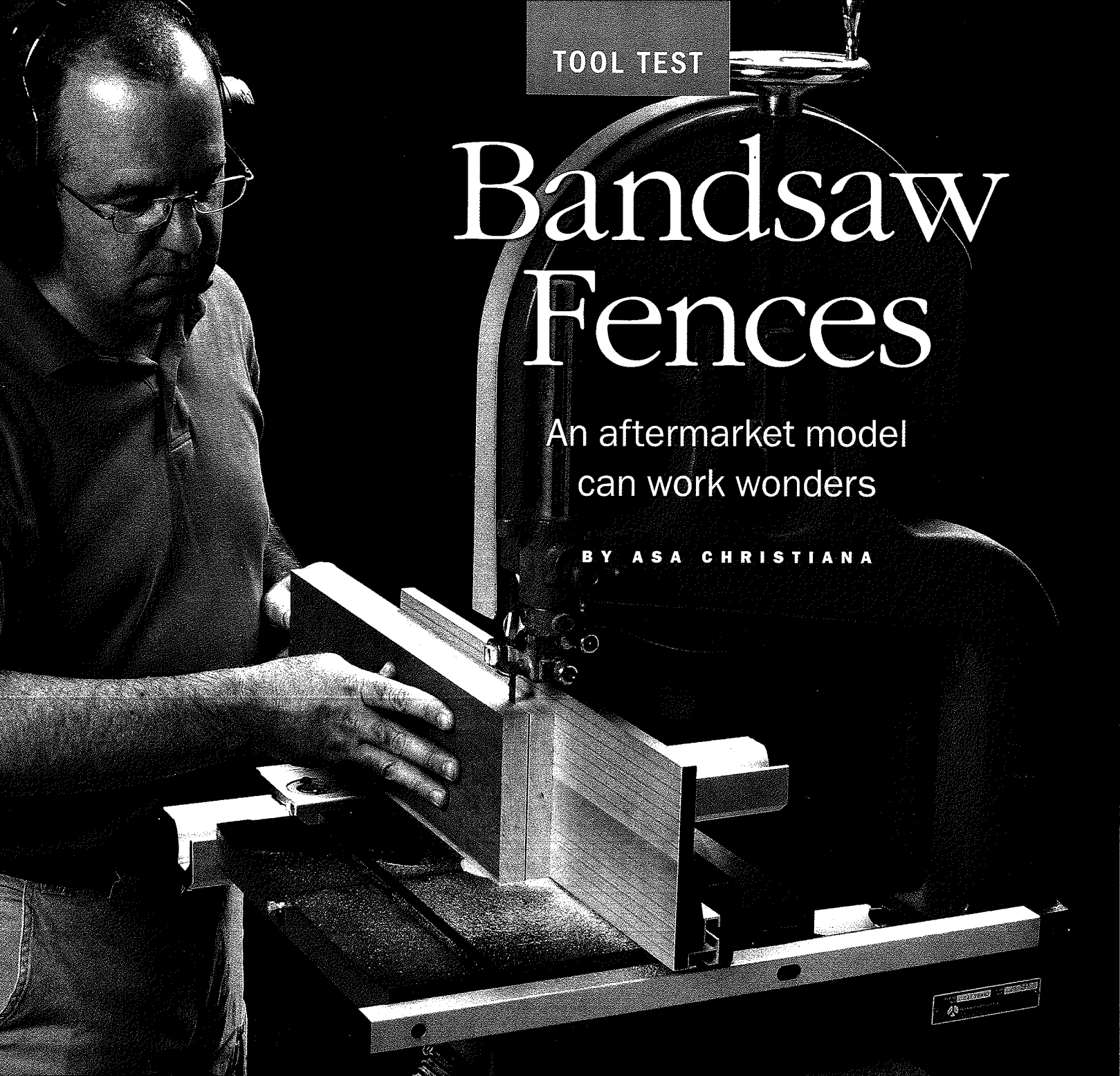


Bandsaw Fences

An aftermarket model
can work wonders

BY ASA CHRISTIANA



The bandsaw can be the most valuable tool in the shop, making a wider variety of cuts than a tablesaw can, and more safely. But most woodworkers struggle with theirs and never tap its true potential. For perfect resaw cuts, smooth curves, and precise joinery, start by reading Michael Fortune's articles on bandsaw setup and technique, beginning with "Five Tips for Better Bandsawing" (*FWW* #173).

And then check your bandsaw's rip fence. If your saw is equipped with a stock fence, see if it does all the things that the winning aftermarket fences on the following pages can do, and think about upgrading. Like tablesaw miter gauges, some stock

fences are an afterthought. Also, if you've been clamping a board to the table to act as a fence, it's time to burn it and buy a better one. There are plenty of solid aftermarket models out there.

For this review, I focused on systems that will mount onto a variety of 14-in. bandsaws. That's the size you'll find in most woodworkers' shops, and if you know how to set it up properly (see "The right way to beat drift," p. 59), it is plenty of machine for almost anyone. But many of these fences will also work on 16- or 18-in. saws and some are available in a larger size.

I attached everything except the big Laguna Driftmaster (see "Laguna Driftmaster is a different animal," p. 59) to our classic Delta

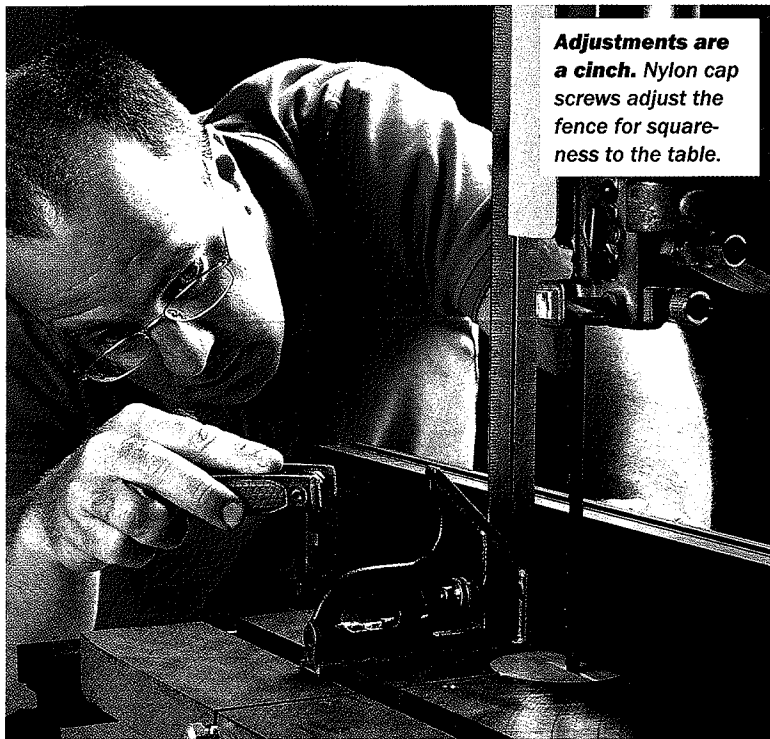
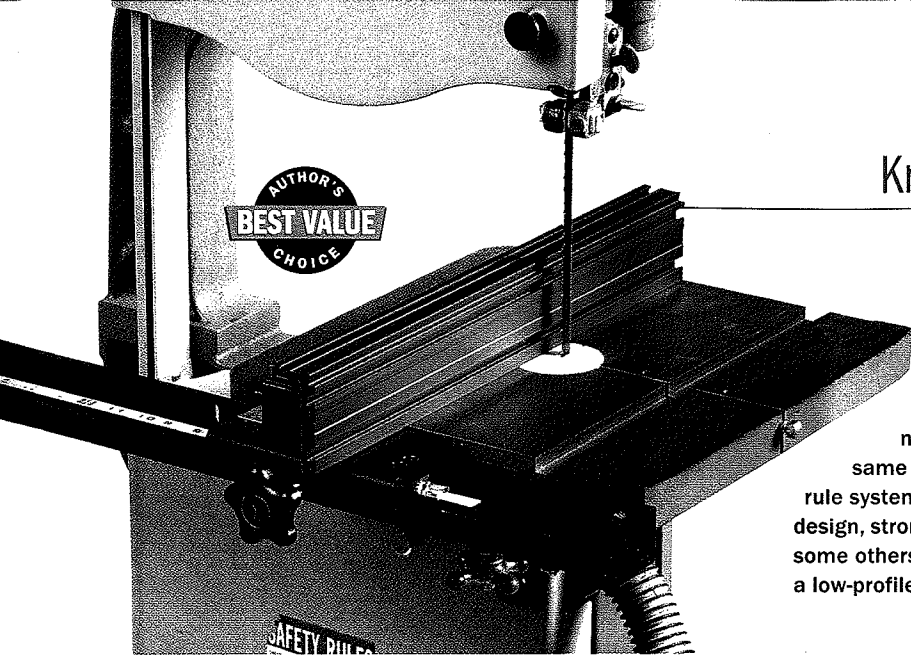
Kreg does the important things well

**Kreg Precision Bandsaw
Fence (KMS 7200)**

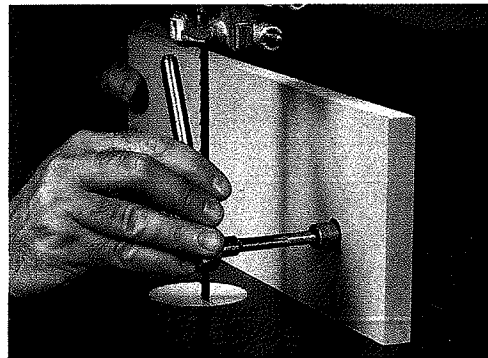
\$107

rockler.com

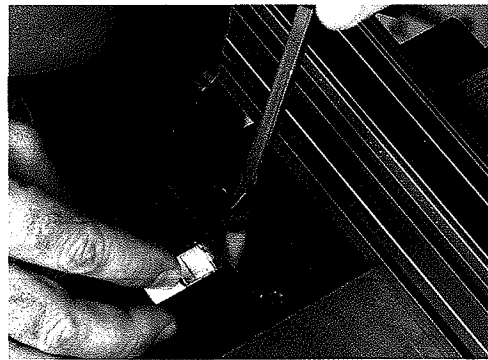
The Kreg fence system is an excellent value. It goes on any saw easily, even saws bigger than 14 in. It adjusts nicely in every direction, moves well, locks securely at the same angle every time, and has a very accurate and readable rule system. Its extruded aluminum fence is a clever right-angle design, strong yet thin, so it doesn't steal as much throat capacity as some others. It has two T-slots for solid attachment of a tall fence, and a low-profile position. It can also be slid backward for rough ripping.



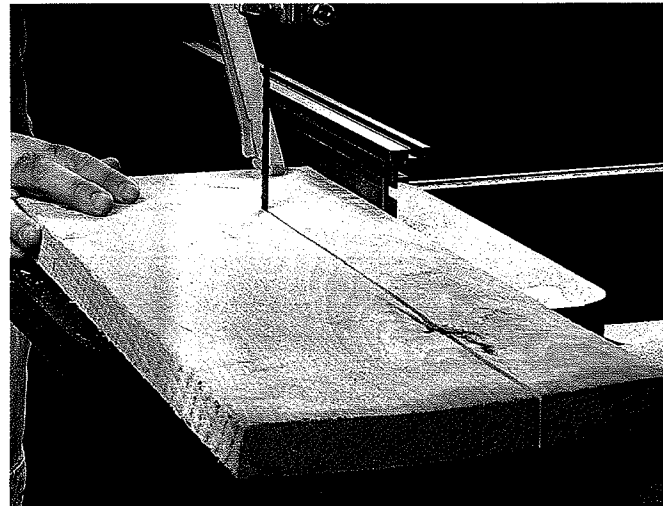
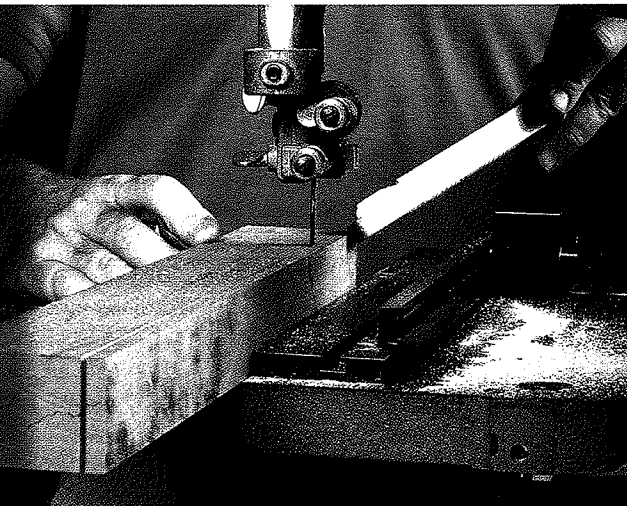
Adjustments are a cinch. Nylon cap screws adjust the fence for squareness to the table.



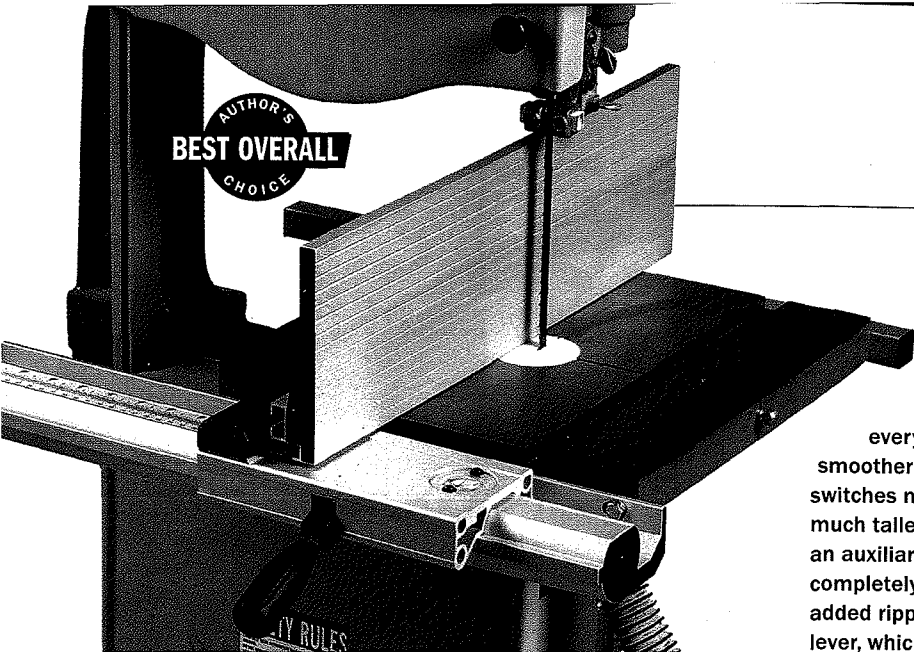
Slots for a tall fence. Two T-slots mean you can attach an auxiliary fence and it will stay aligned.



Built-in ruler. With a nicely adjustable and easily readable cursor, you can leave your tape measure in your pocket.



Versatile fence. The Kreg fence can be flipped easily to a low profile (left), which allows you to use a push stick on thin rips, and it can be pulled backward to let rough boards move without binding (right).

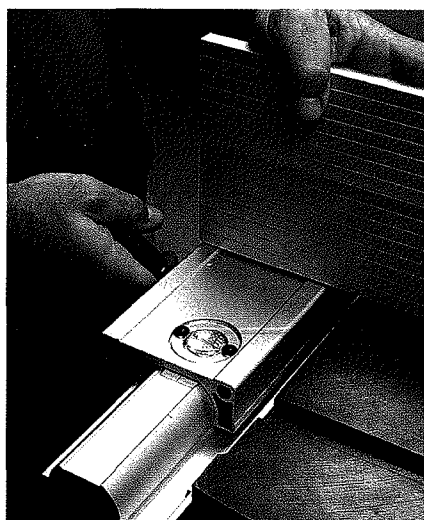


Grizzly does all that and more

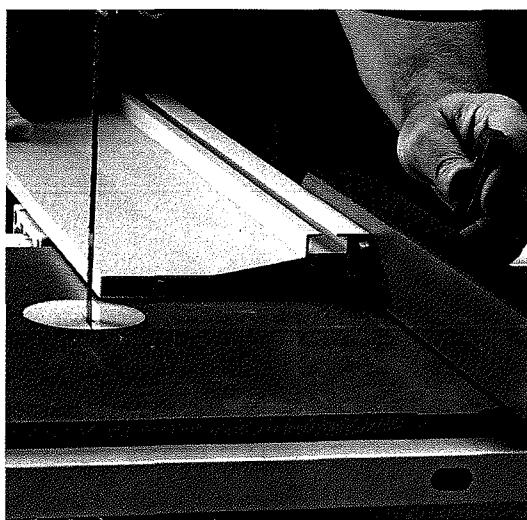
Grizzly Resaw Fence Complete
for 14-in. Bandsaws (H7587)

\$140
grizzly.com

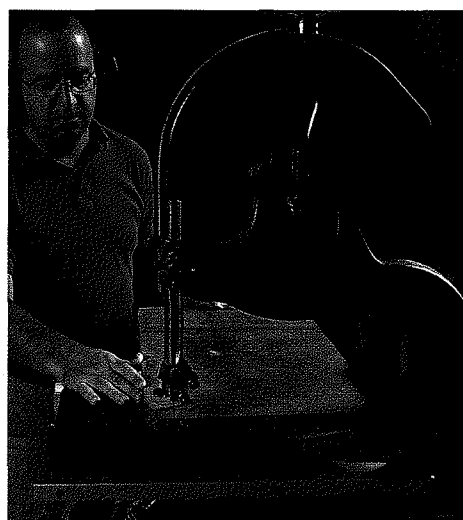
This Grizzly fence system, also designed to fit a wide variety of bandsaws, is easily the best in the lot. It does everything the Kreg does, but it one-ups the Kreg with even smoother sliding action and an even better fence. The extrusion switches more easily from tall to low-profile, and its tall side is much taller, nearly 6 in., meaning you won't have to bother adding an auxiliary fence for resawing. And the extrusion can be taken off completely, leaving only the narrow cast-iron part of the fence for added ripping capacity. My only quibble is the location of the lock lever, which made my hand bump into long workpieces sometimes.



Smooth slider. The sliding and locking action is great, and the cursor is precise.



Quick changeover. The fence extrusion switches in seconds to its low-profile mode (left), or comes off altogether (right) for added rip capacity.



14-in. saw, taking notes on how the fences would attach to other types of saws I know of. I also tested, but ultimately left out, the Jet and Delta aftermarket fences, which require significant metalwork to fit other makers' machines. However, they both are solid performers.

By the way, some systems include a single-point resaw attachment, but I ignored them (again, see "The right way to beat drift").

What can a fence do for you?

Resawing asks the most of your rip fence, so that is a good place to start. For an accurate cut, you'll need a taller fence than usual, at least half as tall as the board you are slicing. If your 14-in. bandsaw has a riser block, it will make a 12-in. resaw cut, so for all these rip fences except the 6-in.-tall Grizzly, you'll need an easy way to attach an auxiliary fence.

Of course, the fence must be parallel to the blade horizontally so it doesn't wander, and vertically so you get an even slice. And you need the fence to stay put, with no movement and very little flex as you press against it. It also should come off easily, either to make a cut that uses the full throat depth, or to move the fence to the right of the blade to align it with the miter slot.

And last, there are a few features that are just plain convenient. Although you can rely on your tape or ruler to position the fence each time, it is nice to have an accurate measuring system on the guide rail, with an adjustable, easy-to-read cursor.

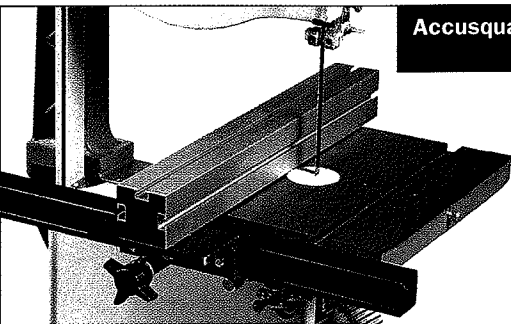
The best rip fences, for tablesaw and bandsaw, do two other cool things. One is switching to a low-profile orientation, which lets you fit a push stick between the blade and fence when making thin rips. Another is sliding toward you so the fence ends at the blade. This is great for ripping boards to rough size, where the two halves sometimes bow and bind against a full-length fence. And you thought a bandsaw's rip fence was just a glorified straightedge!

Two clear winners

Once I had set up and squared up all the fences, the standouts were obvious. The Kreg Precision Bandsaw Fence, at \$107, does everything you need, and the Grizzly Resaw Fence Complete, at \$140, adds a measure of convenience. Either one will make you a better and happier woodworker.

Asa Christiana is editor of Fine Woodworking.

Rest of the field



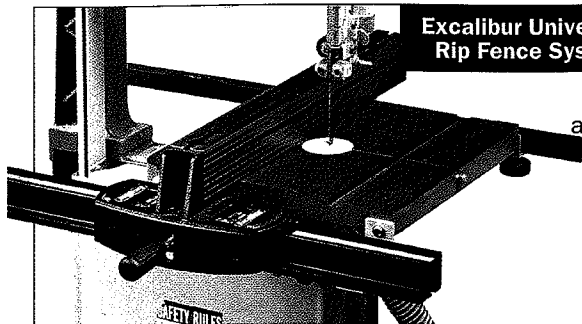
Accusquare MB Bandsaw Fence (415688)

\$150
woodcraft.com

With a design very similar to the EZ Square (below), this is a solid fence with a few design flaws. If the fence is to the left of the blade, it is impossible to take it off the saw without removing its guide rail completely, which is tedious. I could live with that, but I also found it difficult to lock the fence reliably in a vertical square position. This is because the center clamping bolt is set too low so the fence rocks on it rather than sitting solidly on its plastic guide disks.



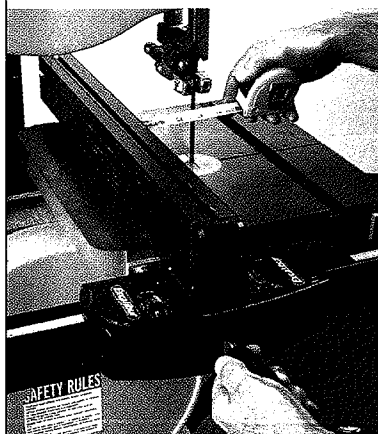
Not so vertical. Because it rocks on its guide rail, the fence doesn't always lock square to the table.



Excalibur Universal Bandsaw Rip Fence System (90-075)

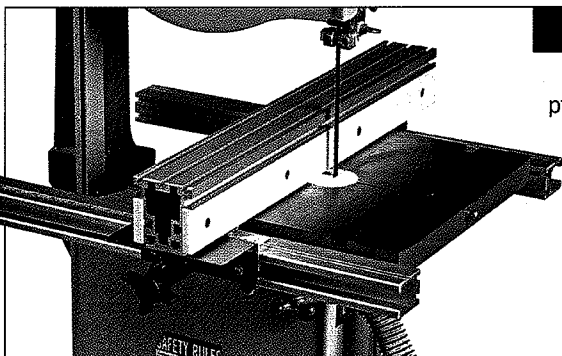
\$150
acmetools.com

The Excalibur, made by General International, is a very solid fence with some unique advantages. It is among the easiest to attach and adjust, comes in three sizes, and will fit any saw on the market. Also,



its ball-bearing rollers give it the slickest sliding action. But its guide mechanism has too much slack, and the fence pivots up to $\frac{1}{8}$ in. as you lock it in place, making it hard at times to align the blade with a mark on a workpiece or measuring tape.

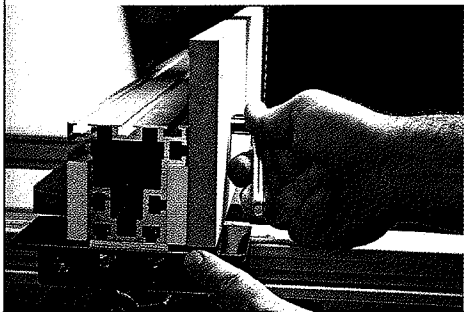
Setup can be tricky. The fence pivots as you lock it down, making it difficult to line up precisely.



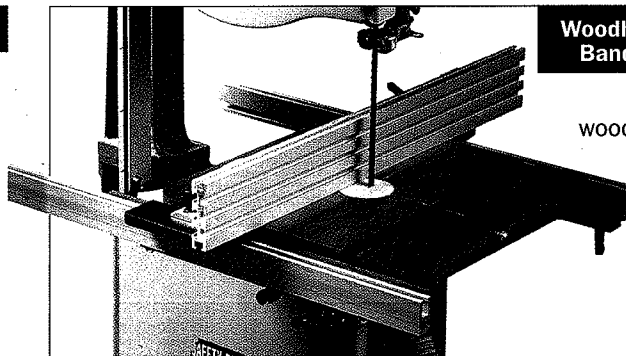
EZ Square

\$150
ptreeusa.com

Like the Accusquare (above), this fence locks solidly but is difficult to remove from the saw. You have to loosen the nuts that hold the guide rails in place in order to slide them over. Another problem is the low-friction plastic strip built into the fence. It sticks out a bit from the aluminum extrusion, lowering its effective height to 2 in., and at the same time making it difficult to add a tall fence. Also, the self-adhesive rule was printed in the wrong direction.



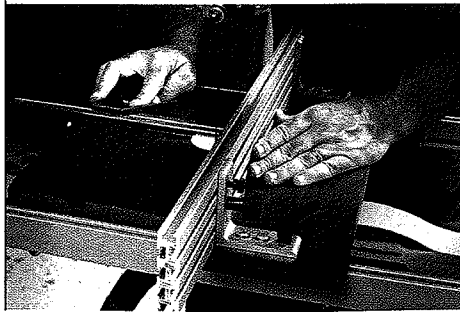
Something's askew. With its T-slot located just above a plastic insert that protrudes slightly, this fence pulls an auxiliary fence off vertical.



Woodhaven 7280 Bandsaw Fence

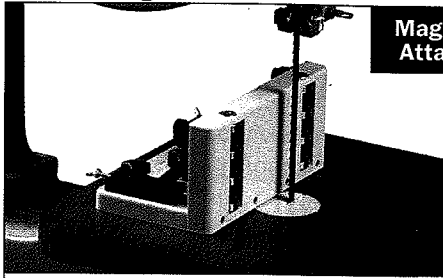
\$150
woodhaven.com

The Woodhaven's fence is the only one that locks in the back and front. This makes it the most solid of all, but is also the source of its main drawback: It does not lock at the same angle each time. Its movement is also herky-jerky as you adjust it, and depending on which way you happen to be pushing, the fence can lock down crooked enough to make the blade wander, ruining the cut. It also lacks a ruler system.



Lots of measuring. With clamping points front and back, movement is jerky and the fence won't lock square every time.

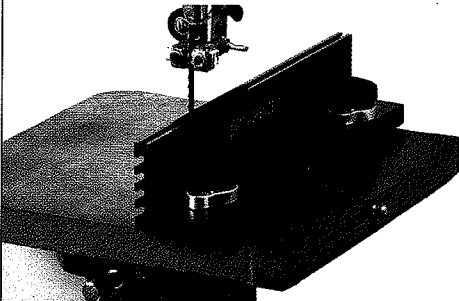
Two magnetic fences have same problem



Magswitch Dual-Roller Guide Attachment, plus Starter Kit

\$100
mag-tools.com

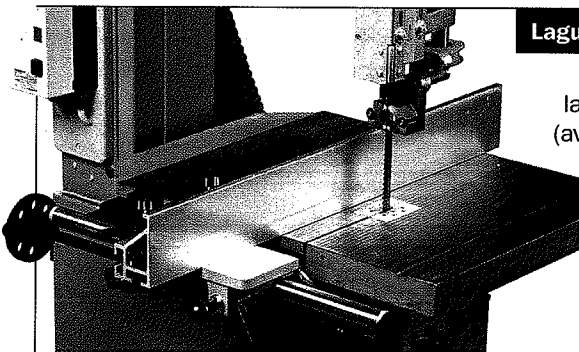
Although the Magswitch resaw system is assembled from components while the Carter is ready to go as is, the two fences are very similar in design, and their main asset—powerful magnets that lock them to the saw table with the turn of a knob—is also their undoing. With no way to keep the fence in proper alignment, you are forced to put a square on the front edge of the saw table each time you adjust the fence, or measure to the miter slot in two places.



Carter Magfence II

\$100
carterproducts.com

Laguna Driftmaster is a different animal



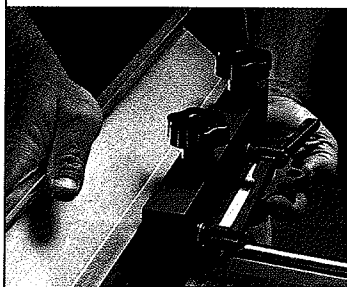
Laguna Driftmaster

\$495
lagunatools.com
(avail. Jan. 2013)

Laguna launched its first Driftmaster bandsaw fence five years ago. We tested an updated version, available in January 2013, which has improved components and features—easier attachment and setup, a beefier lead screw (acme threads), and no interference with a bandsaw's lower door. It is a big, industrial tool, with a large dial that swings the tall fence quickly to any drift angle and a long screw that micro-adjusts the fence (a knob disengages it for big fence moves). I change blades when mine dull and begin to drift, but if I

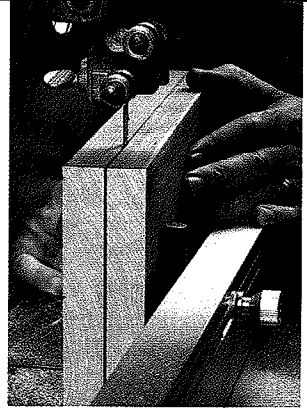
had an industrial shop, with a big bandsaw dedicated to resawing, the Driftmaster would let me run big blades longer even when the drift angle changes.

Dial in the drift. No fence makes it easier to adjust the fence for blade drift, even to an extreme angle.



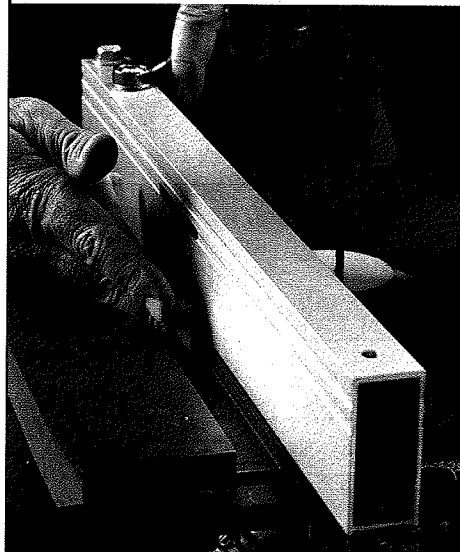
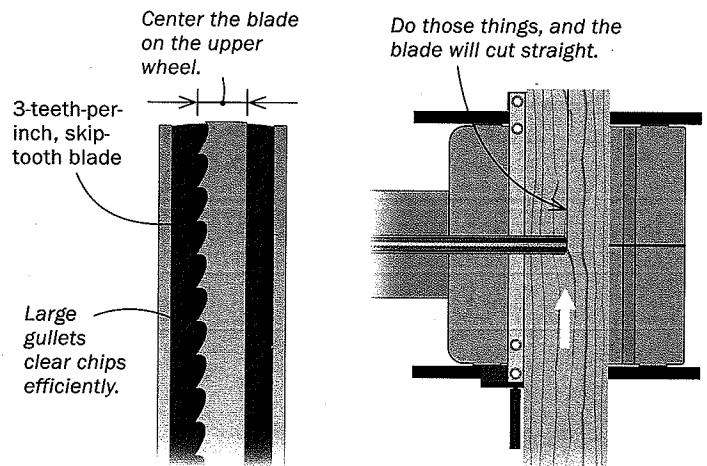
The best way to beat drift

The hot item on bandsaw fences these days is a single-point attachment for resawing. This pivot point lets you adjust a board's angle on the fly to match the blade's "drift." It is a bad fix for a series of misunderstandings about bandsaw setup. You don't want to have to guess at the drift angle, and you won't be able to get consistent cuts by constantly pivoting against a single point. The fact is, a bandsaw blade doesn't have to drift at all. Here's why so many do. For one, they have too many teeth, and therefore smaller gullets that can't effectively clear the chips from a tall resaw cut. Also, when blades dull, they tend to cut more on one side than the other. And last, the upper wheel on a bandsaw is crowned, so the key is to have the blade centered on it. I learned these tips from Michael Fortune, and they have worked on every bandsaw he and I have run across. Try them and you'll be amazed. By the way, you won't need that super-high blade tension that is so popular.



Single-point fence is a bad fix. It allows for drift adjustment on the fly, but cuts are inconsistent.

USE A COARSE BLADE AND CENTER IT



Alignment is easy. With the right blade and setup, you can just adjust the fence once, lining it up with the saw's miter slot, and leave it like that.