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The Ferrari of Vertical Panel Saws?

Cabinetmaker Norm Franzle says he can't call his Striebig Optisaw 2 the Ferrari of panel saws because it was not too expensive and never breaks down.

"When it comes to performance, Striebig is the best", says the California cabinetmaker. He and his employees at Franzle Custom Home Specialties in Sun Valley, California, rely on the 7.5HP vertical Optisaw for unflinching accuracy in the cutting of panels for their "frameless" European-style cabinets with hidden hinges and clean, elegant lines.

It would be difficult to find a more satisfied Striebig customer. "How many times in your life have you made a major purchase and been completely happy five years later?" Franzle asks. "It doesn't happen very often, but that is just the situation here."

It was a different story six years ago, when Franzle was still using a quirky sliding table saw he calls "a piece of junk."

"There was one problem after another, which meant downtime and lots of service calls, and I ended up completely dissatisfied," Franzle recalls. "I even tried to return it, but the manufacturer wouldn't take it back."

In the market for something different, he started looking at vertical panel saws. **Friends at a blade-sharpening shop told him the best of them all - the "Ferrari," they called it - is made in Switzerland by Striebig.**

Striebig saws were the first to feature pivoting saw heads that allow horizontal ripping as well as vertical cutting. They are nearly legendary for their smooth-cutting dependability, and their sturdy precise support rollers permit the positioning of multiple heavy panels (up to 1200 lbs.) with minimal effort.

Even salesmen for a competing brand privately acknowledged the superiority of Striebig saws, but quickly dismissed them as financially out of reach. When Franzle learned from Louis and Company, a regional distributor, that the Optisaw 2 was only a bit more expensive than the competitor's equivalent model, he decided to buy it. Striebig saws commonly run true for 20 plus years making the slightly higher investment easy to justify.

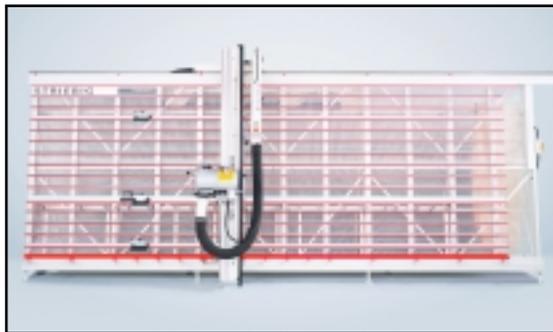
It was the mid-level model, but Franzle was pleased to learn it had a built-in dust control system and a template bar with six stops for repeat horizontal cuts. Today he is considering adding digital-readout stops, which are easily installed.

Because the saw blade moves while the material is locked squarely in place, a vertical panel saw has several advantages over a table saw. In addition to efficiency and ease of use, it is safer because the blade is enclosed. And because his shop is small (he has just two employees), Franzle is glad the Optisaw 2 takes up so little space. Striebig now makes even smaller models - the Compact and Compact Plus.

"I've been told this saw could be at the heart of a 50-man shop," he says, "so you can imagine how beneficial it has been for us. There's no way to calculate the savings in productivity, but I know they've been tremendous. It has saved me a lot of aggravation, too."

Striebig saws are also known for their durability. "It's the only panel saw I'll ever have," says Franzle. Colonial Saw Co., the exclusive North American importer of Striebig saws for more than 25 years, has an extensive dealer network, complete parts inventories on both coasts, and five full-time Striebig technicians. Not that Striebig saws require much maintenance;

Franzle's Optisaw has needed only one adjustment in five years, and he says the Colonial Saw service technician, who gave the saw a thorough "tune-up" on that visit, "was so good it wasn't even funny."



"The main thing is the quality of the cutting, and that's where this saw is second to none," he says. "The Optisaw sure has made my end product nicer. The sheets I buy aren't usually square to begin with, but I can be sure my panels are square, and I can be sure every cut is chip-free."

In addition to wood, Striebig saws cut melamine, particle board, plastics, composites, and nonferrous metals. Their fully welded, heavy-duty frames stay square over time. The controls are simple and logical. Each saw is tested at the factory to ensure its accuracy to .004". Striebig engineers are focused on vertical panel saws because the company produces no other products.

Striebig panel saws are now available with performance-enhancing options such as digital measuring, split-blade scoring, programmable electronic positioning, angle cutting, dado cutting, V-grooving, and a two-speed motor. Striebig's new TRK dust-extraction system keeps dust to an absolute minimum, and a new vacuum system allows bottom-edge trimming without flipping the panel.

Striebig's new 7.5HP Evolution (manual) and Control (automatic) models carry out many procedures with just the push of a button. For example, locking and releasing the saw beam, setting the horizontal cutting height, plunging and swiveling the motor, and locking the support rollers during sawing are fully automatic.