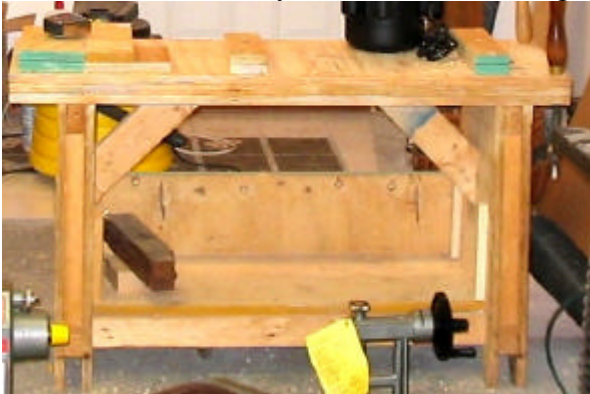


Well, if you read my previous article about my new lathe purchase, you know that I chose the Nova 3000 with a 1.5 HP motor. This is the standard belt driven machine without an electronic variable speed system (more on that later). This article will describe my first impressions of the lathe with a little comparison to my previous lathe (a vintage Shop Smith 10ER (SS)).

I decided to pick up the lathe rather than having it delivered. I figure that I saved about \$100 in shipping and another \$50 in taxes (I bought it in Delaware). This was not too difficult for me because the ride was only about an hour, but the guys at Woodcraft were patient with my late arrival.

My initial impression is that it is rather heavy. It all came in one box (the motor was in a box of its own, but packed in a larger box with the lathe. With that said, I was able to get it out of the truck and onto the stand alone, but I will not be doing that again.

The lathe does not come with a stand (one is offered but separately), so I chose to use the stand that I had for my SS for the time being.



The stand is made from plywood and has room for 200 pounds of sand on the shelf. It is at a good height for me (I am short) and is relatively solid. As I become more comfortable with the lathe and know what I want in a stand, I will be rebuilding it. I do know that I need to incorporate storage for chucks, centers, and other tools into the stand.

Assembly of the lathe went well and only took about an hour and a half. The most complicated part is mounting the motor and aligning the pulleys. In fact, I do not think that they are perfectly aligned yet. I will be working with that until I have it right.



You may notice in the picture that the lathe was elevated above the surface of the stand. This was done to accomplish two problems, make the height of the spindle more suitable to my height and provide room to clear shavings from between the ways. I am really glad that I did this and will incorporate it into my permanent stand design when that happens.

I have not had much time to turn on the lathe yet, but the little that I have done has gone well. My old SS used to rattle and shake, and I found it very difficult to get a nice cut off of the gouge. The tool rest required an allen wrench (and usually a hammer) to adjust, and the carriage was usually in the way. Overall, the tool rest was a poor design, and made it difficult, and sometimes unsafe, to turn. With that said, I did get used to those “features”, and am having a difficult time adjusting to the more modern machine. But, over time, I will surely benefit from the easy adjusting features of the Nova.

Another flaw of the old SS was that I did not have the capability to turn between centers. Even though I feel the tailstock on the Nova is its weakest point, it could have been built heavier and the quill could have been encased, I like the ability to use it. I feel much safer when I mount a heavy, wet, out of balance log on the lathe. With that said, I think I will be upgrading the centers (spur and tail) soon. The tapers are short, and there are very good tailstock center systems out there.

Vibration is just about non-existent (barring a little fine tuning of the pulleys mentioned above). I am getting a much better cut off of the gouge, and am able to take a much bigger cut in general. I have not had the stand move at all even with an out of balance blank. The 1.5 HP motor is a lot smoother than the old .5 horse motor on the SS. The motor mount for the SS was also a very weak point in the design that induced a lot of vibration. However, I do plan to upgrade to a three-phase VFD drive motor in the near future. I know that I can get a system for less than \$400 that will greatly improve my turning experience.

As I put this machine through its paces, I am sure to develop some new impressions. For this reason, I plan to right a more comprehensive review of the lathe at that time. I imagine that I will have a better idea of its strengths and weaknesses by the end of the winter, so look for an update then.