

The Knewer Concepts

Reluctant to forgo a favourite old fretsaw, Bill Ratcliffe is amazed by those made by Knew Concepts

Based usually on size, the terms coping saw and fret saw are often applied incorrectly. The distinction is however, more about the blade type and use. Fretsaws are also referred to as jeweller's saws and are often smaller than coping saws. They tend to use shorter unpinned blades that are intended for fast turns and manoeuvrability, and using the correct blade type they can be used for metalwork or woodwork.

Knew Concepts' fret and coping saws have been around for a little while now and there are various marks/models. They are made in the USA and were developed by Lee Marshall and Brian Meek. Their challenging goal was to improve the design of an iconic tool that had previously remained largely unchanged for around a century. The first Knew Concepts products were launched around 10 years ago and since then there has been continuous development of the products and range.

There is a reason I was late to the party. I loved the one I was at already and I suppose I am a traditionalist at heart. I was happy with my trusty Eclipse. I used one at school, at university and in my workshop. Friends and colleagues bought Knew Concept saws, and some tried to convince me to do the same, but I resisted. I was loyal to my Eclipse, after all it has served me well for many years. Then came the day in 2021 when I spotted a Knew Concepts saw on offer and could hold off no longer. I wish I had bought one much earlier. There are many design features so I would advise you to check out the various models for yourself and consider the type of work you do. However, these are the main reasons I like this saw.

1 Weight makes such a difference when working on a number of rows of dovetails. The MKIII 3in with lever tensioner weighs just 117.6gms, the 5in version is 140gms but my Eclipse coping saw is around 250gms and has 4 1/2in capacity.

2 Blade thickness. Ability to hold a finer blade that fits down a thin kerf cut, allows easier and more efficient cutting of waste from joints. I am comparing a coping saw with a fretsaw but this is fair as the size is similar and the structure of the KC allows it to be used for many tasks normally done with a coping saw. I tend to use all my coping and fretsaws with the blade in pull-cut for consistency, as for cutting marquetry I must have it that way.



3 Balance and stability. They are lightweight but rigid due to their unique design and material choice, either aircraft grade aluminium or titanium. The result is a beautifully balanced tool.

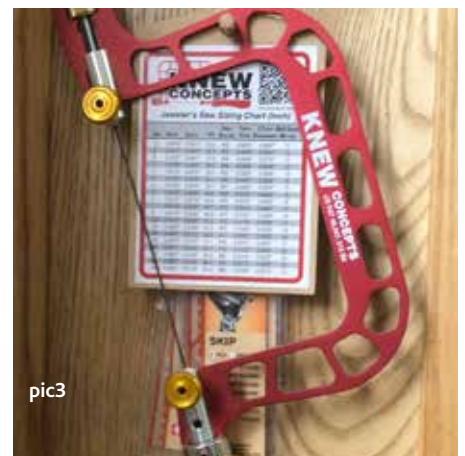
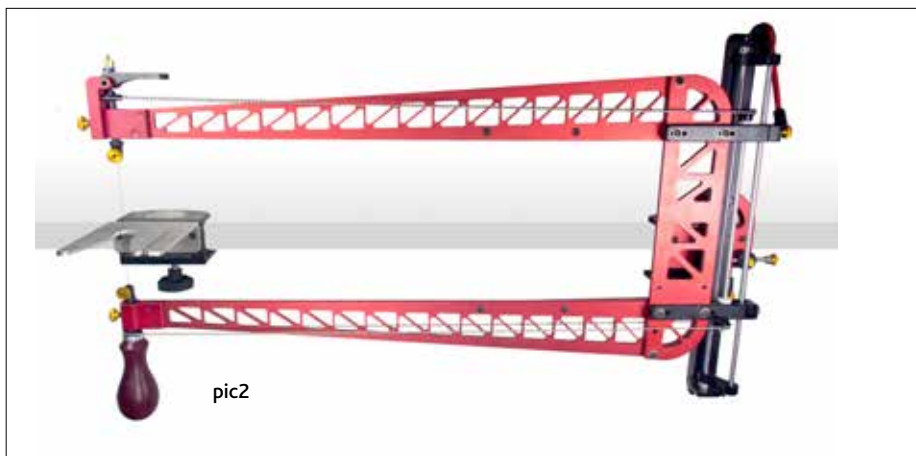
4 It cuts very well - this may seem pretty obvious but sometimes when you see a radical new design, you find that the effort has gone into looks at the expense of function. Not in this case.

5 Looks great - stylish design, simple as that.

6 Hangs up easily - the frame has handy holes which although I am sure are for structure and weight control, also allow it to hang up easily. We woodworkers like these little things.

7 My saws came with handy stickers displaying the blade options/spec, so I made a simple card hanger to store them and with the saw.

I now look at my Eclipse, which has been ousted from my tool chest and is hanging on the tool board. I feel the odd pang of guilt, but we do dance every now and then for old time's sake, however I must state: "There was no party and all rules were followed."





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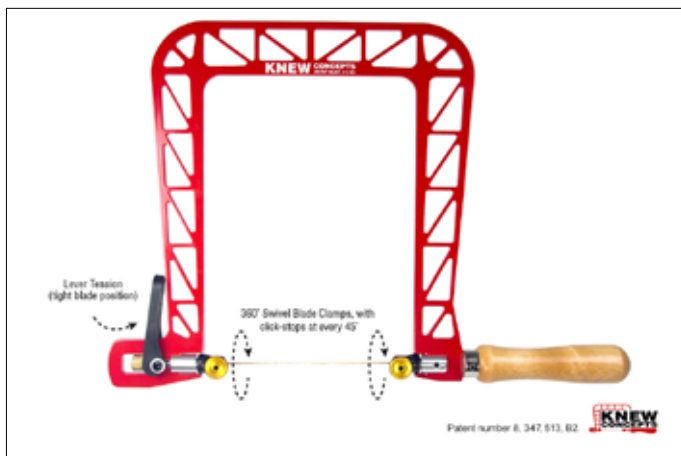
I wrote about my tool chest in QM10 and that is my filter to keep my toolkit disciplined. I try to keep a consistent set of tools and the Knew Concepts MKIII passed the two tests I set, does it improve my woodworking accuracy and/or efficiency? Does it make my woodworking more enjoyable or fun? The answer was yes on both counts, so it gets into the tool chest.

I also bought additional MKIII saws for students to try, and the feedback is very good. They generally took a little time to get used to the Eclipse, but the Knew Concepts is much quicker and more intuitive.

My models of MKIII do not have the blade swivel option to allow you to rotate the blade 45°, to cut off axis. Therefore, if you are cutting on wide boards where throat capacity becomes an issue, one of the deluxe models will suit you better.

I will be adding a Mark IV model with blade swivel, very soon or even a titanium birdcage fret or coping saw. However, I am sure many of you have been at that non-party for a while now.

Bill Ratcliffe runs courses near Ely, and can be followed on Instagram @cravenconservation, or you can visit his website cravenconservation.co.uk.



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It all started when I began discussing cutting dovetails with fretsaws with Lee Marshall, the designer of Knew Concepts. I had read a post on his fretsaw on one of the forums, and they promised to be a possibly end for my search for a stiff yet light fretsaw.