



Select Models 3620 and 4221

Is there a thin-kerf, double-cut, high-production band mill that is truly portable? BY BILL GOVE

The description above would be a tough fit for most people's concept of a portable sawmill. However, there is a high-production, truly portable band mill on the market, and it is ideal for custom work on a commercial basis. This sawmill is made by the Select Sawmill Company of Plantagenet, Ontario, Canada.

To observe a large, portable sawmill that can be set up with ease and within a short time produce 1,200 board feet per hour, I recently traveled into the interior of the French-speaking province of Quebec. Arriving at a village with the strange English name of Crabtree, I had the opportunity to spend some time with Eric Rivest, a custom sawmiller well-known in the area, who operates under the name of Scierie Mobile Rivest.

Model 3620

Eric owns the smaller of the two models made by Select Sawmill Company, the Model 3620, but it is by no means a small machine. He transports the mill behind his pickup truck and can set it up in about 30 minutes. Leveling the mill by eye is sufficient for accurate cutting. Eric usually requires a minimum of 3,000 feet for a custom job.

Watching the production of the Select sawmill, one has to be impressed. Slicing the 4-inch blade through the cedar and pine logs at speeds of up to 2 feet per second and being able to cut in both directions, Eric spent scarcely any time between cuts. The mill is powered by a 68-hp John Deere diesel engine, but it can be equipped with a 40-hp electric motor.

The blade turns on 32-inch-diam-

eter wheels. The spacing of the swage teeth is 1-3/4 inches, wider than what is often considered conventional, but it is claimed that the spacing improves the cutting speed. The wider gullet facilitates sawdust removal.

The computerized networks on the 3620 has eight thickness presets and two hold-and-recall memories. The hold-and-recall memory feature will allow the operator, after sawing two sides of the log, to automatically return to a programmed position that was originally set in the memory. Eric was obviously quite relaxed and competent with the controls. He's had the Select mill for a year and a half and sawn over a million board feet.

A feature that helps to improve the sawing rate is the double pump on the continual flow hydraulic system, which enables the machine to perform two different motions at the same time. For example, while the cutting head carriage is in the return

motion, the saw can be raised or lowered at the same time—if necessary. With a double-cut band saw, of course, the saw carriage normally makes the next cut on the return trip.

When asked to compare his Select sawmill with his former mill of a popular brand, he stated that the Select ranks quite favorably. He said, “The blade on my old mill seemed to max out and wouldn’t cut any faster.” On this particular job, Eric had two lumber handlers supplied by the wood-working shop that he was sawing for, and with the helpers, Eric was sawing well over 1,000 feet of softwood per hour. He claims to have sawn as much as 6,000 board feet in a day even while working alone.

Eric was adept at the technique of leaving the boards stacked on top of the log as he sawed them, a technique possible with a double-cut, horizontal band saw. He left the boards on top of the cant as he advanced downward, running the saw back and forth. After sawing the last board on the bottom, the stack of sawn boards was dumped off onto the lumber deck in one bundle.

Sawmill productivity is an admittedly difficult standard to use when comparing different mills because in this business there really is no ideal. The Select Sawmill Company sales representative Luc Tourangeau spent some time with me discussing the problem with comparisons. He said, “I truly dislike it when companies overstate the production capability of their sawmills.” He was careful not to make inflated production claims, but it would be hard for anyone with a



A large pine log being squared up before cutting boards.

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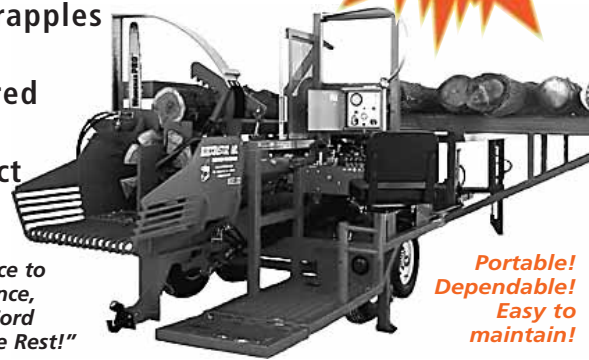
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SPECS



Production from the entire log is being dumped simultaneously onto the lumber deck after being sawn.

portable sawmill to eclipse the production that Eric Rivest was able to demonstrate!

The 24-foot-long deck of the Model 3620 can handle logs up to 20 feet in length and 36 inches in diameter. As an option, a kerf or streak debarker can be installed.

As with most portable sawmills on the market, the Select mill has a rugged frame; the portable capability requires it. The frame is made of 2 inch x 8 inch x 3/16 inch tubing. The four-post cutting head seemed to be quite solid when grasped.

Model 4221

The other sawmill manufactured by Select, the Model 4221, is larger and uses a 115-hp John Deere diesel. It can cut logs up to 42 inches in diameter and 22 feet in length. The double-cut blade on this mill is 6 inches wide.

A few months ago, I located a sawmiller in Manchester, Vermont, named Richard Sweeney who was using the Select Model 4221. His is a family operation sawing about 7,000 feet of white pine daily when in operation.

Richard had purchased the Select sawmill three years ago to replace one of the common brands of portable mills that he had used for a few years. He stated that buying his present mill was definitely the right move for his operation.

Richard Sweeney has set up his Select mill as a stationary sawmill under cover. However, both the 4221 and the 3620 can be set up as either a portable or a stationary operation.

SELECT 3620

Total length	30 ft. (32 ft. with tongue)
Frame length	26 ft.
Width	head closed: 7 ft. 8 in. head open: 8 ft. 3 in.
Height	8 ft. 6 in.
Weight	7,000 lbs.
Frame	2 in. x 8 in. x 3/16 in. thick tubing
Space between guides	29 in.
Throat	13 in.
Maximum log size	36 in. diameter x 20 ft. length
Band saw wheels	32 in.
Blade	4 in. double-cut blades (cuts in both directions)
Cutting speed	up to 2 ft. per sec.
Motor	68-hp John Deere diesel or 40-hp electric
Ball required for coupler	2-5/16 in.
Setworks	computerized
Hydraulics	log turner, 2 back posts, 2 dogs, 2 tapers, blade tensioning, blade guide, head lift, carriage feed
Price ...	\$74,900 complete package
Options	trailer package, hydraulic log loader, live deck, hydraulic roller on tapers, setworks programmer, lumber off-loading platform

SELECT 4221

Total length	34 ft. (38 ft. with tongue)
Frame length	30 ft.
Width	head closed: 8 ft. 5 in. head open: 9 ft. 3 in.
Height	10 ft.
Weight	Approx. 10,000 lbs. (depends on options)
Frame	2 in. x 8 in. x 1/4 in. thick tubing
Space between guides	34 in.
Throat	14 in.
Maximum log size	42 in. diameter x 22 ft. length
Band saw wheels	36 in. band wheels with double-tapered bearings
Blade	6 in. double-cut blades (cuts in both directions)
Cutting speed	up to 3 ft. per sec.
Motor	115-hp John Deere turbo diesel engine or 75-hp electric
Ball required for coupler	2-5/16 in.
Setworks	computerized
Hydraulics	log turner, 2 back posts, 2 dogs, 2 tapers, blade tensioning, blade guide, head lift, carriage feed
Price	\$89,900 US complete package
Options	hydraulic rollers on tapers, loader, live deck, lumber off-loading ramp, trailer package, setworks programmer

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Richard built a plywood booth with comfortable seating at the end of the sawing deck, but mentioned that it does restrict his view of some of the work areas. Having observed Eric Rivest operate his 3620 mill while seated out in the open at the end of the sawing deck, and even standing on occasion for a view along the top of the log being processed, I would have to conclude that Eric's is the more preferable setup. He had full view of the mill action, as well as the movements of the workers on either side of the machinery. Production rate is potentially better, and the safety factor is certainly improved.

The Select sawmill is one of the more costly mills in the large selection of portable sawmills, but as is often the case, the buyer is getting what he pays for. So, to return to our opening question, it IS possible to have a truly portable, high-production, rugged sawmill with a double-cut band—and one that should satisfy any lumberman. ■

Bill Gove is retired from a forestry career with private industry and with state government as a wood utilization specialist and lives in Williamstown, Vermont. He is a regular contributor and is the author of several books on the history of railroading and logging.