

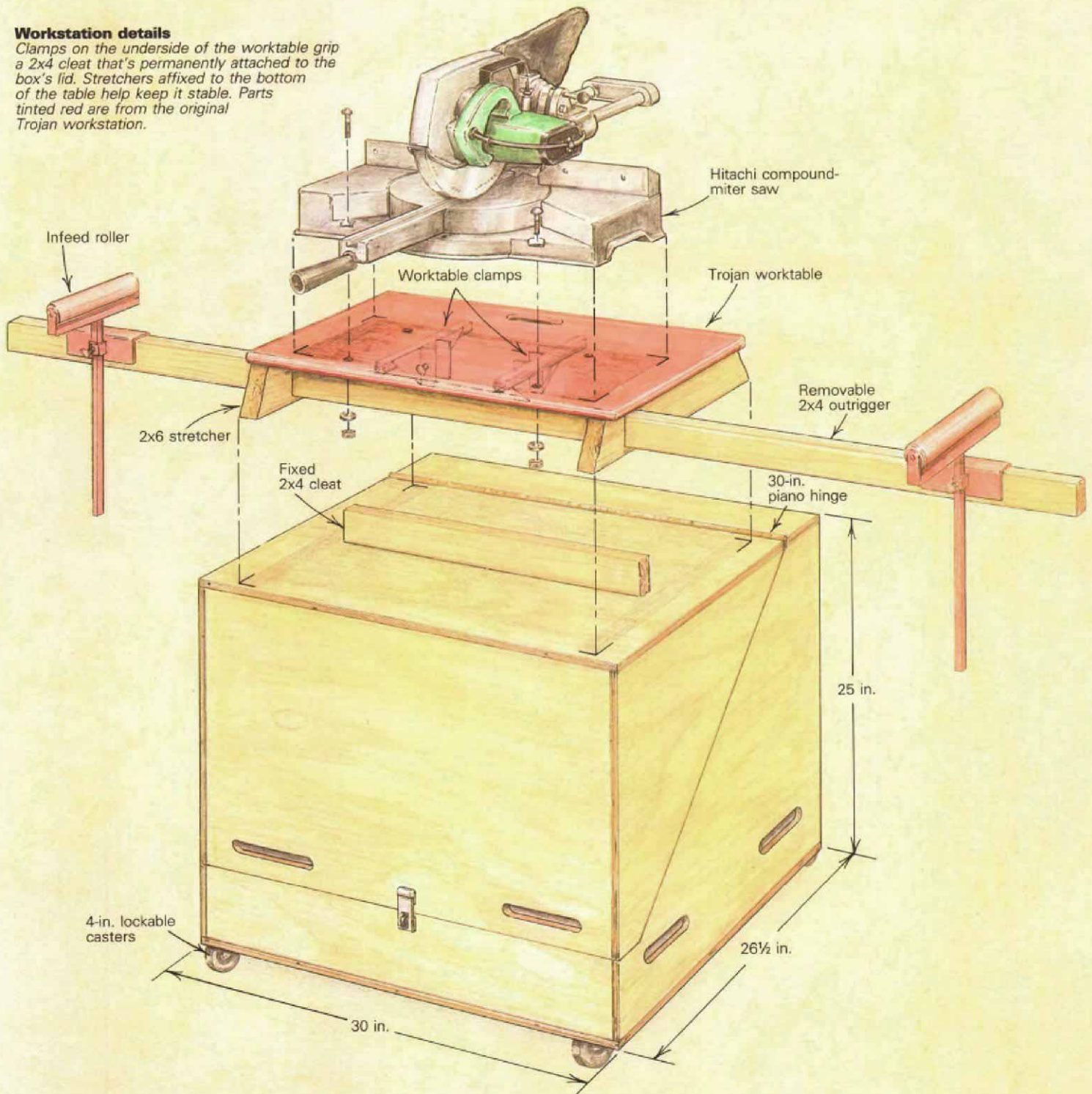
# A Chop-Saw Workstation

A movable table for the compound-miter saw

by Scott King

## Workstation details

Clamps on the underside of the worktable grip a 2x4 cleat that's permanently attached to the box's lid. Stretchers affixed to the bottom of the table help keep it stable. Parts tinted red are from the original Trojan workstation.



We've all been there. Nobody likes to use a chop saw on the floor, so the handiest thing around usually gets pressed into service for support duty. Sometimes it's a cabinet waiting to be installed; often, here in Bermuda, it's two barrels with a plank in between. Whatever you come up with, it usually doesn't move around much, so you end up bringing the work to it like a sacrifice to some ancient, immovable god.

When I bought Hitachi's compound-miter saw (see *FHB* #57, pp. 58-62), I was determined to break away from this mindless cycle

and to build a portable work center (drawing facing page) that would take advantage of the saw's many features. As good as the saw is, in order to fully utilize it you'll need to bolt it down and provide some sort of infeed system to handle the long stuff. If you use the saw for long periods at a time, having it at a comfortable working height is also important. The ability to move the whole system around as work progresses and to provide secure storage when the saw isn't in use are the final criteria.

When I bought the saw I also bought a Trojan "Workcenter": a saw table and two adjust-

able rollers that clamp to the edge of a 2x6 and mount on a pair of metal sawhorse legs (Trojan Mfg., P. O. Box 15114, Portland, Ore. 97215; 503-285-2120). I thought it might work well with the Hitachi. I tried it out, but the Hitachi exerts quite a bit of leverage, and the table wobbled. For better results, I bolted a 2x6 base to the bottom of the Trojan table so it could sit on a flat surface. I then notched two holes in the base, just large enough to let a 2x4 pass through. The 2x4 acts as an outrigger for the adjustable-height rollers. Varying the length of the 2x4 or changing the placement of the rollers provides enough flexibility to handle most of the baseboard or molding we work with.

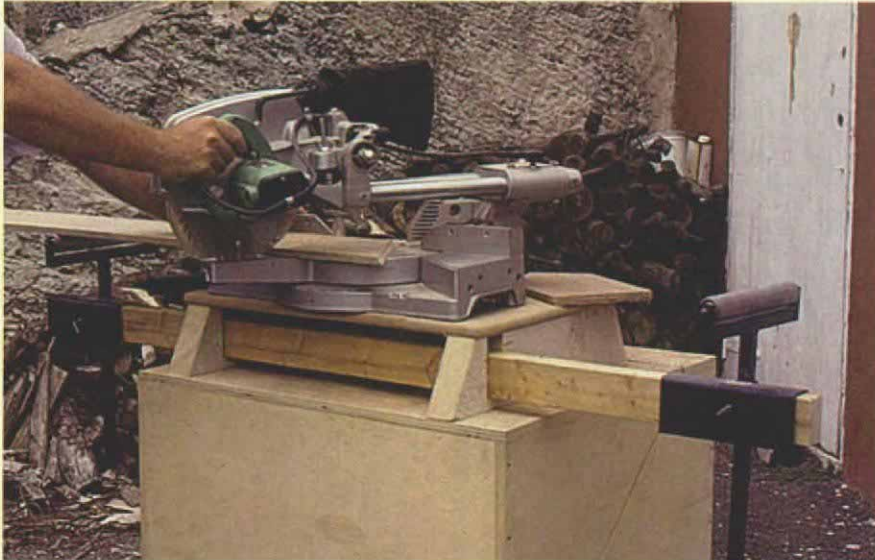
The portable job boxes everyone has and some leftover 3/4-in. plywood were all the inspiration I needed for the next step. I started by making a box 30 in. wide by 25 in. high by 26 1/2 in. deep. Drywall screws and construction adhesive are all that hold it together, but after completing the box I belt-sanded the joints flush so it looked as if I spent a lot more time on assembly than I really did.

I cut the lid out of the completed and sanded box, remounted it with a 30-in. heavy-duty piano hinge, then added a heavy-duty hasp and a solid padlock to the front. The saw table is clamped to a 2x4 cleat that's permanently fixed to the lid (drawing facing page). If I need to get inside the box while the saw is on top, I just raise the lid, and the saw, table and outrigger assembly pivot up out of the way. Inside the box, two dividers create three bins for storage. When the saw is stored inside, these dividers raise it to the upper portion of the box, leaving ample room below for support rollers, extension cords and some additional tools (drawing left). The dividers also keep tools from shifting around during transit. I cut handholds in the sides of the box for lifting it in and out of the truck, and in the front for opening the lid. The latter is much appreciated when the saw and table are clamped to the top.

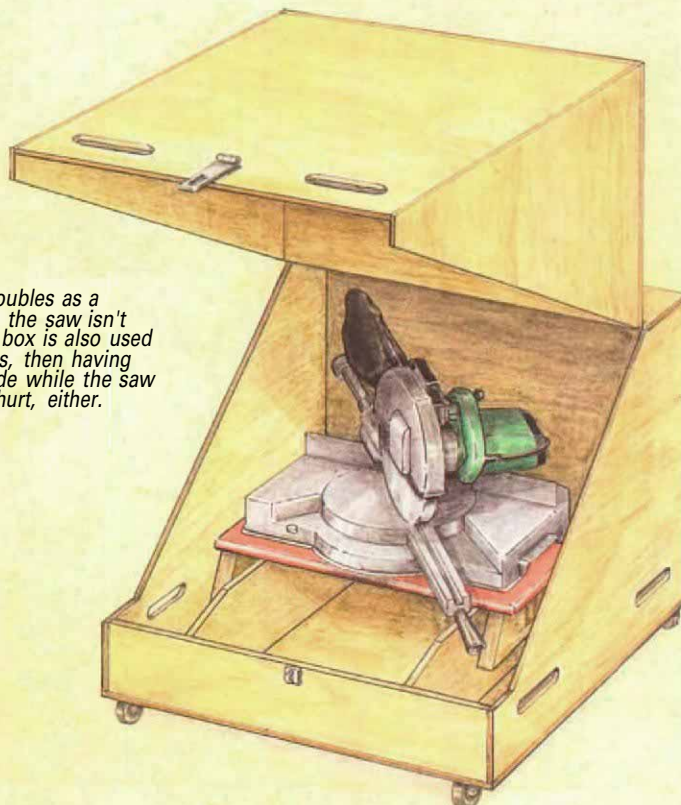
The box is mounted on heavy-duty, 4-in. lockable casters. The saw, table, base, box and casters reach a comfortable working height of about 35 in. I used movable casters on all four corners for maximum mobility and have never regretted it. Don't go cheap on this part because the ability to move the whole system smoothly around a tight job site littered with screws, scraps of wood and electrical cords really adds to its versatility and productivity. In hindsight, 5-in. or even 6-in. casters might have been worth the additional cost.

Bermuda has its own distinctive style of building, but when other carpenters or contractors see our rig, they are impressed with its convenience, mobility and versatility. Even the guys who have been doing this stuff longer than I've been alive admit that it would be nice to have "one of those fancy setups." And once they've used it, they never want to go back to a plank supported by two barrels. □

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**A movable beast.** As good as the Hitachi compound miter is, it's better when hooked up to a bench with an infeed system.



*The workbench doubles as a storage box when the saw isn't being used. If the box is also used to store other tools, then having access to the inside while the saw is on top doesn't hurt, either.*