

# Tool Preview



## Onboard Sharpening with the NOVA Comet II

*The innovative Versaturn® system brings slow-speed sharpening convenience to Teknatool's latest benchtop lathe — and more Versaturn goodies are on the way. Here's a midi-lathe with maximum flexibility.*



**Master controls on the Comet II include a sealed On/Off switch, the electronic variable speed dial with illustrated speed ranges and a forward/reverse toggle for switching the motor's spin direction.**

*“Teknatool's Comet II puts sharpening convenience right where the action is — on the lathe.”*

Turning and sharpening go hand in hand. For most turners, that means frequent round trips from the lathe to the bench grinder and back again to touch up those ever-dulling edges — at least until recently. A little over a year ago, Teknatool turned the midi-lathe world on its ear when it unveiled the NOVA™ Comet II Midi.

It's the first small lathe with a spindle that accepts a grinder attachment. Their reason was simple: put sharpening convenience closer than ever before, right where the action is — on the lathe. Brilliant!

In case you're unfamiliar with this newish model (retail price of about \$529.99), it comes well-equipped. The Comet II sports a cast-iron headstock, bed and tailstock for rugged durability and vibration dampening. It offers

enough capacity over bed for turning 12" bowls or 16.5" spindles. A handwheel, spur drive and live centers and a 6" tool-rest come standard, as does a 3" faceplate and knockout bar. The headstock spindle also has 12-point indexing, for embellishing turnings with carved or routed details.

Hit the power switch, and you'll have three speed ranges at your disposal — up to an impressive 4,000 rpm — delivered through an electronic variable speed dial and by shifting a poly V-belt between three pulley clusters. Speed ranges step out at 250 to 680; 530 to 1,420; and 1,380 to 4,000 rpm. To make things even better, you can flip the 3/4hp DC motor into reverse and use full variable speed. That allows you to sand in reverse when needed, which helps smooth

interlocked or unruly end grain areas.

But unlike other midi-lathes, variable speed benefits on the Comet II don't stop here. If you bolt on a NOVA Versaturn Coupler, the lathe will accept a 3/4" x 6"-dia. Versaturn Grinding Wheel Accessory with 60-grit aluminum oxide wheel. About a quarter twist of the coupler locks or unlocks the grinder from the lathe. Once it's in place, just dial the wheel's speed down to simulate a slow-speed dedicated grinder. That should put an end to burned tool edges during sharpening.

### Other Accessory Options

Teknatool offers a Finger Jig Sharpening Accessory to maintain curved-edge turning chisels and gouges. It was made for use with a bench grinder, but with a plate fitted for the Comet II, you can



*A bed extension accessory (top) can stretch this midi-lathe's "reach" to full-size lathe capacity. Its spindle has 12-stop indexing (right) for stepping off 30-degree increments on your turnings.*



*Swiveling the Versaturn Coupler (top) locks or unlocks accessories, such as the Grinding Wheel (left). Teknatool's Finger Jig (right) can be installed below the grinder for sharpening curved-edge turning tools.*



*Another accessory to consider is the NOVA G3 four-jawed scroll chuck, sized especially for the Comet II. It comes with a screw chuck insert and an auto-locking feature that keeps it secured when sanding in reverse.*

install it below the lathe's grinder to complete the onboard sharpening system.

As with most midi-lathe brands these days, Teknatool also sells a bed extension. It stretches the Comet's bed span to around 41", for turning table legs, balusters and other long spindle parts. A Versaturn Wire Wheel Accessory is also available now. Other Versaturn add-ons for the Comet II are currently in development. Within the next six months, the company plans to launch a wet stone attachment, 6" sanding disk, 4" x 36" belt sander and a flex shaft for power carving.

Teknatool has also engineered a smaller four-jaw scroll chuck — the NOVA G3 — exclusively for the Comet

II. It comes with a screw chuck and a setscrew that seats in a groove on the lathe's spindle to prevent the chuck from unthreading when the motor is in reverse.

### General Impressions

After a long session of turning spindles and bowls, I found the Comet II's motor offered ample power, and variable speed control made moving from roughing out to finish-sanding stages convenient. That says nothing for how handy it is to have onboard sharpening. After dressing the grinding wheel, it ran smoothly, and sharpening chisels was as easy as with my usual grinder setup. Initially, fitting the grinder on the coupler was a bit finicky, but

once installed, all was solid.

I noticed that chips collect on top of the speed control box when turning spindles. A chip deflector would help. And, while the tool's 80 lbs. keeps it planted pretty well on four adjustable feet, bolting down a midi-lathe just makes sense, especially for turning out-of-round bowl blanks.

As a lathe alone, the Comet II is sturdy and feature-rich. But pair it with the sharpener, and you'll wonder why such an elegantly simple solution didn't come much sooner.

### At a Glance:

- 3/4hp (110-volt) DC motor
- Electronic variable speed
- Cast-iron construction
- Distance between centers: 16.5"
  - Swing over bed: 12"
- Comes with 6" tool-rest, 3" faceplate, spur and live centers
- Available at [Rockler.com](http://Rockler.com)

