

# The New Generation of Teknatool Chucks and Jaws

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The New Family

When Teknatool introduced their monster chuck, the Titan (see my review in More Woodturning 2/04 or get the pdf here: <http://www.fholder.com/Woodturning/lyn.html>), few knew it was only the flagship for what would be a whole new generation of chucks from the company who introduced the four jaw scroll chuck to woodturning. The classic Supernova is no more, as is the innovative but sometimes troubled Compac, and I do not expect the original Nova will linger much longer. What we now have is a family of new chucks that overlap in capability such that there is at least one high quality Teknatool chuck well suited to your lathe, whether it be a small "Mini" or a lathe of massive capacity. This new family is composed of the new Precision Midi, a completely revamped Supernova2, and the appropriately named Titan.

The accompanying photos and table will allow you to compare the new and old Teknatool chucks at a glance (I left out the lever action Nova as I did not have one to photograph or measure):

One of the nice aspects of the new chucks is that all can share between them the extensive variety of Teknatool jaws (with the sole exception of the gargantuan three hole Titan version of the PowerGrip jaws). This means that not only can you move your jaws between all the current models, but you can use any you might have previously obtained for the earlier Nova or SuperNova chucks (not to mention with a small modification, nearly all the jaw sets for the Talon and lever action Oneway chucks). And to further reward us, Teknatool has released several new jaw sets, two of which I will report on as part of this review. But first, let me describe some of the advantages of the new chucks, beginning with the smallest.

### Nova Precision Midi

The new Precision Midi will be considered by many to be an enhanced replacement for the inexpensive Compac chuck and original lever bar Nova. At this point, it will not replace the Nova

Chuck	Compac (discontinued)	Precision Midi	SuperNova (discontinued)	SuperNova 2	Titan
<b>Diameter</b>	3.10	3.45	3.88	3.91	5.0
<b>Height (without jaws)</b>	1.81	1.61	2.10	2.45	2.46
<b>Weight</b>	~3.0 lb.	~2.9 lb.	~6.3 lb.	~8 lb.	~8.6 lb.
<b>Jaw Attachment</b>	2 screws	2 screws	2 screws	2 screws	3 but can use all 2 screw jaw sets
<b>Key</b>	Tommy Bar Levers	Tommy Bar Levers	Gear end Swivel Shaft	Ball Head Hex Shaft	Ball Head Hex Shaft



Here you see the backs of the new Precision Midi Chuck and the Supernova2 compared to a Oneway Talon Chuck (center).



This view shows the same chucks from the front side. Note that the Talon is smaller than the Supernova2, but larger than the Precision Midi chuck.



A selection of handles. Top handle is the handle for the new Supernova2 and the Titan chucks. The next handle down is the handle for a SuperNova Chuck. The third handle is the handle for the Oneway Talon chuck. The remaining handles are rods or bars that might be used with the new Midi Chuck.

for medium and larger sized lathes and preclude one from carrying this chuck over in the case of a Mini lathe owner moving up to larger lathe (unless a spindle adapter is employed). This downside is counterbalanced by the cost

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for everyone, as the "Midi" is presently available only directly threaded (as was the Compac but not the Nova) in sizes of 1"x8tpi, 1"x10tpi, and 3/4"x16tpi. While these threadings will fit the most common spindle sizes found on smaller lathes of 12 inch or lesser swing, they prevent the current version of the Midi from serving as a low cost "extra" chuck



New Chucks from Teknatool: (Left to Right) Precision Midi Chuck, Super Nova2, and the Titan.

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savings of forgoing the added component of a spindle insert, removing a source of possible increased runout, and most significant of all, in allowing for a body of lower height. Indeed, it is this last characteristic which will endear many to the Precision Midi. The Precision Midi has the shallowest height of any quality chuck I have encountered. This may not mean much to those with 40 inch beds, but for those trying to maximize the possibilities of the 12 inch or less beds found on most Mini lathes, every fraction of an inch counts. In this case the directly threaded Precision Midi is almost a quarter inch shorter than the Compac and Oneway Talon, and over 3/4 of an inch shorter than the SuperNova 2. When trying to turn a vase or a tool handle on a Mini lathe, these fractions of an inch can add up and become very meaningful.

The Precision Midi is noticeably larger in diameter than the Compac (by about a third of an inch), though considerably smaller than the Nova, both versions of the SuperNova, and the Oneway Talon. I like to have one narrow bodied chuck for providing unrestricted access to the back side of miniature and small scale work, and the Compac has always served me well for this. Though slightly larger, the Precision Midi's compact size will still allow for this better than most other chucks. It is also notable that even at full travel, the jaw slides never extend past the body, unlike many chucks. This removes a source of possible snags, be they of flesh, clothing or tool.

One thing that is absent from the Precision Midi, perhaps in part as a byproduct of being direct threaded, is a set screw to lock the chuck to the lathe for reverse rotation operation and to prevent accidental unwinding from the spindle under sudden deceleration. Now I must admit that few Mini lathes offer the ability to reverse motor rotation (such as for sanding), fewer still (perhaps none) come with spindle lock grooves for such set screws, and even many full sized chucks lack this ability (e.g., the Vicmarks), but it still would have been a nice plus to have had this capability build into the chuck.

The Precision Midi, like the Compac, is a lever actuated chuck with gearing totally enclosed within the steel chuck body. Two bars actuate the mechanism, which I found to be exceptionally smooth in operation. Though little effort is required, the gearing is steep, resulting in fast action. It takes only one turn to move the jaws to full extension, though overall travel on these jaws is much less than is found on both old and new versions of the Supernova, or the Talon-even about an eighth of an inch less than the Compac. The majority of the time this short travel is inconsequential. Jaws grip best when they mate to the turning near full closure, thus one

should be attempting to prepare the recess or spigot to closely match the jaws selected. If this is done one doesn't need much jaw travel. Still there are times when a wide range of jaw travel is highly desirable, notably when using Mini or full sized Cole Jaws (or their Oneway counterparts) to hold a bowl for finishing the bottom. Here, you want a long range of slide travel to allow you to adjust for widely varying rim diameters. Thus, the Precision Midi is a poor choice for mounting Cole-like jaw sets. This is certainly not a reason to dismiss the Precision Midi from consideration as a chuck, particularly if you already have another chuck with a wider range of jaw slide extension or never intend to use Cole-like jaws, but it is a limitation that should be considered.

The Precision Midi usually comes packaged with a "Woodworm Screw" and a set of 50 mm jaws. The Woodworm Screw, when fitted in the closed center of the 50mm jaws transforms the chuck into a screw chuck-a handy feature, particularly for those wishing to keep expenditures down, though aficionados of screw mounting will likely prefer a dedicated Glaser screw chuck for its sharper threading and greater choice of seat size.

Though I miss the smaller 43 mm diameter jaws of the Compac, which I have found well suited for much of the small scale work these chucks are designed for, most new buyers will like the 50 mm jaws, which are the same as those already available in the standard configurations of the Nova and Supernovas. With the 50 mm jaws fitted, one can grip a spigot from approximately 1-11/16 to 2-1/16 inches, and expand into a recess from 2 to 2-13/32 inches (this is by actual measurement and differs from various listings in catalogs and the manual). Maximum holding power, as with most jaws, will be obtained when the recess or spigot is closely matched to the size of the closed jaws. Travel, by the way, is internally limited-a means which I find much nicer than pins protruding from jaws or small set screws that can work loose or be damaged-and (appropriately) this internal mechanism cannot be easily defeated.

For the small lathes for which it is intended, the Precision Midi is a great chuck, especially when you consider its low price relative to chucks from the other major manufacturers (Axminster, Oneway and Vicmark). Though slightly more expensive than the Compac it replaces, it is similarly compact in size, offers greater precision, is more versatile (by directly mating to the wide range of Teknatool jaw sets), is likely stronger, and almost surely will prove to be more reliable.

### SuperNova 2

First off I will note that though Teknatool likes to call this the

SuperNova 2 (squared), most of us are going to call it the SuperNova 2 (two), which even is how it is often written on their own Web site (and sure is a lot quicker to type). Whatever one calls it, this chuck is such an advancement over the original SuperNova that it hardly deserves carrying a derivative name. This is no sequel, it is a brand new production; more precisely, one is really purchasing a smaller Titan chuck, rather than an updated SuperNova. But before going too far into describing the new chuck, and comparing it to its predecessor, I want to declare my affection for the original. I have always liked the original SuperNova. Yes, it had some faults, mostly in its awkward to insert and manipulate adjustment handle, but I found the SuperNova to be a moderately priced chuck with a superior range of jaw sets available for it. The moderate price has allowed me to acquire seven of them, each fitted with a different jaw set (5 from Teknatool, two from Oneway). Indeed, even if I had preferred another brand of chuck (and I do have a few of them), I would have had to purchase at least one SuperNova to fit my favorite jaw set, the Teknatool PowerGrip jaws.

Now the new SuperNova 2 has replaced the SuperNova, which will no longer be manufactured. This is good. There is hardly an area, major or minor, in which the SuperNova 2 is not superior to its predecessor, and in a few subtle ways, it is even more refined than the

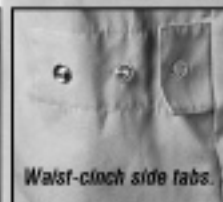
larger and more expensive Titan. I might as well get it out now, I really like this chuck. Here are some specifics of why:

The most visible change is that the pinion driving the jaws has been moved from the end of the external handle (as on the old SuperNova and similarly the Oneway Talon and Stronghold where it is integral to the handle) to being incorporated into the chuck body and actuated by an external hex handle. The old external pinion often was difficult to engage in the SuperNova body, and made the handle expensive to make and replace if it ever broke (usually at the swivel joint). This was probably the single greatest complaint about the original SuperNova. For the new SuperNova 2, Teknatool has developed what I find to be the most user friendly chuck actuating handle available from any manufacturer. It uses a hex shaft much like the well regarded Vicmark handles, but goes one step further by adding a hex sided ball end to the shaft. This ball end makes for fast, easy seating into the matching hex socket of the captured pinion even if perfect alignment is not initially achieved, and further allows the handle to be operated at a slight angle to the chuck body at those times when added clearance is needed for large, closely mounted work. This handle is T-shaped, being identical to that used with the Titan. The top of the T portion of the handle is encased with a large, comfortable plastic grip.

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In my appraisal, Teknatool has gone from having the worst handle to now offering the best. I wish all my chucks could be used with it.

The second most common area of complaint about the original Supernova was the direction of handle rotation required to open the jaws, with a counter-clockwise turn of the handle required to close the jaws (almost all chucks from other manufacturers—and other things in life—use the opposite rotation for closing). Those who did not like this characteristic before are not going to be any happier with the SuperNova 2, as it follows the same rotational direction as the original Supernova. However, I consider this to be a good decision on Teknatool's part as most of the large population of existing SuperNova users have adapted to its rotational peculiarity and would be even more confused if the new chuck did not follow the same rotational direction we have grown accustomed to. For those who are not already well adjusted to the Teknatool view of rotation direction, the new chuck (and also Titan) has an arrow at the pinion socket to remind folks of which way to turn the handle to tighten.



**This view of the Supernova2 with the new Long Nosed jaws shows the insertion point for the handle to tighten or open the chuck.**

Opening and closing is faster than on the earlier model SuperNova. Teknatool says the SuperNova 2 is 1/3 faster, and that matches with my subjective experience. Though the SuperNova 2 is reported to have faster gearing (32:10 compared to 35:7 for the older model), I suspect part of the reason why the SuperNova 2 feels faster is that maximum jaw travel is modestly reduced from that which was attainable with the original SuperNova. As with the Precision Midi, the new jaw slides do not extend past the body when maximally opened.

Opening and closing requires less effort and is smoother on the new model. I have two of the SuperNova 2 chucks, a very early production version and one of current production. There is a subtle difference in feel between the chucks, which reflects changes that have been made in the gearing. Some found the action of the early models of the Titan and SuperNova 2 to be rough and "ratchety." I never really noticed this in my Titan or my early production SuperNova 2 until getting the more re-



**Comparison of the new Precision Midi Chuck (left) and the new Supernova2 Chuck (right) with an old SuperNova chuck (center). The chucks are shown with the jaws open. The Supernova2 is fitted with the new 75mm heavy duty jaw set.**

cent version of the SuperNova 2 with its upgraded gearing. The new gearing is noticeably smoother and while I still do not find my early model chucks to be rough, they do seem to have a soft ratchet-like feel to them compared to the silky smoothness of the new gears. All the current production of the SuperNova 2 and Titan now use all hardened gears throughout, including the jaw slides (the older SuperNova did not have hardened slides). There is no key actuated chuck I have used that I can discern as operating any smoother or more precisely than my current production SuperNova 2.

Similar to the Precision Midi, the SuperNova 2 uses an internal jaw stop method which I find nicer and safer than the old SuperNova set screw stop, or the pin found on Oneway models. Not only is the jaw stop mechanism enclosed but so is the entire back of the body. This is a major departure from the original SuperNova which had an open back with exposed gearing (much the same as on the Oneway chucks).



**This view shows the backing plate of the Supernova2 and its 24 indexing points that allow indexing on lathes with no indexing head.**

Introduced with the Titan, and now extended to the SuperNova 2, Teknatool is closing the backs of all their chucks. On the SuperNova 2 the back is sealed with a plastic/glass fibre composite called Duracon 25. This is identified as a strong, long life material with self lubricating properties. This backing plate does an effective job of sealing the chuck from dust, and if cleaning is ever called for, Teknatool provides at its Web site an excellent four page color tutorial on disassembling and reassembling the chuck.

This backing plate, unlike that on my Titan, comes with 24 indexing holes built in, that brings indexing capabilities to those lathes that may not have them integrated into the headstock itself. I am sure a few turners will be pleased to have these added capabilities, but I have never found chuck based indexing to be important to my turning, or necessary for my lathe.

One thing which remains the same between the SuperNova 2 and the earlier SuperNova and Nova Chucks (and Titan also) is the Teknatool Chuck Insert System. This allows a vast array of lathe spindle sizes to be matched to a single chuck body by use of an intermediate insert. The insert comes in 26 different configurations to match with almost every conceivable lathe spindle with two notable exceptions, the large M33.5 x 5 spindle found on the big Oneway lathes and the even larger 1-1/2 inch spindles found on some Powermatic and Conover lathes (among others). These large sizes, or any rare size not included in the Teknatool insert system, can be accommodated by obtaining a direct threaded body, though this sometimes requires a special order direct from Teknatool. When possible, using an insert is actually preferable for several reasons. The most obvious is that the insert system will allow you to easily modify your chuck to fit most future lathes you might add or upgrade to. My favorite feature of the insert system, and a reason I am fond of using Teknatool chucks, is that the insert has hex sides such that the flats can be gripped by a thin wrench to safely and effectively remove a chuck that is reluctant to unscrew from the spindle. A modestly priced wrench from Teknatool or one purchased from an automotive tool supplier saves you from having to thread on strap wrenches or bend Tommy bars when removing a recalcitrant chuck. Finally, for the last couple of years, Teknatool inserts have had a set screw located in one of the hex sides that can be used to tighten into a spindle locking groove (such as found on Oneway, DVR some Delta lathes, and others) that will prevent the chuck from unwinding under sudden decelera-

tion or when operating the lathe in reverse to sand or hollow. This is not only a major safety feature that is not available on all brands of chucks, but will also expand your turning capabilities (such as reverse hollowing with a Derry or Clark restrained hollowing system).

On both versions of the SuperNova the insert is threaded into the body and tightened with a wrench on the flats at the end of the insert. It is then locked to the chuck body with a set screw which passes through one side of the body and presses a fiber washer against the insert screw. On most Teknatool chucks, there is only one set screw which locks the insert in place. Because of the greater loads that now can be generated in reverse rotation due to the earlier described spindle locking screw, and thus the greater possibility of unwinding the insert out of the body, the new SuperNova2 body is fitted with two insert locking set screws.

Like with all chucks that use spindle matching inserts, some care must be taken when attaching them to the chuck body. Here are my recommendations on how to go about mounting an insert on the SuperNova 2 and keeping it there.

- First clean off the shoulder and threads of both the chuck body and the insert.
- Insert the supplied fiber washer disks into the set screw holes from the inside bore of the body (to get better access) before installing the insert
- Hold the insert in a padded vise or with a strap wrench, and screw the insert as far as you can by hand. Be very careful not to cross thread the insert.
- Tighten using an open or close ended wrench that fits the insert faces. To avoid runout, make sure you have the insert fully seated against the bottom of the chuck body bore.
- Tighten the two insert locking set screws using a quality Allen wrench (an adequate one is supplied with the chuck, but a quality long reach T-handled one is preferable). Access to the set screws is through two holes on the outside of the body
- When removing the chuck, don't forget to loosen the spindle locking screw on the rim of the insert, if you have tightened it to retain the chuck on the spindle for reverse sanding or hollowing.
- Use a wrench on the hex flats of the insert to remove the chuck from the spindle if you encounter resistance when attempting to remove it after use. Use of a strap wrench or tugging on a large turning held in the jaws will increase the (still unlikely) possibility of loosening the insert.

Depending on the source, the SuperNova 2 may be available as a bare body, but can also come packaged with a "Woodworm Screw" and either a set of 50 mm jaws or a set of their new 75



Here the author's two Supernova2 chucks each fitted with one of the new jaw sets is compared to the old SuperNova chuck with the 50mm jaws. The chuck on the left has the new Long Nosed jaws and the chuck on the right has the new 75mm heavy duty jaws. All chucks are shown with the jaws closed.



Again the three chucks are shown for comparison but with the jaws fully opened.

mm jaws that I will describe a bit farther down. Just as with the Precision Midi, the Woodworm Screw when fitted in the closed center of the 50mm jaws transforms the chuck into a screw chuck. Compared to those offered for the original SuperNova, this Woodworm screw is of a new design that will now securely lock into place and cannot be pulled out once the jaws are tightened.

I have used my SuperNova 2s for several months now. As I said early on, I really like this chuck. It is far superior to the original SuperNova in every way, but one, that being that the original has greater jaw slide travel. The extended travel makes the original Supernova preferable for use with Cole Jaws (or the comparable Oneway Jumbo jaws), but that is about the only situation. If you really need or desire extended jaw travel, step up to the Titan and you will have lots of it.

It seems clear to me that Teknatool has looked carefully at what its competition have developed, built on their own advancements, and decided to offer a chuck that will be the leader in its price and size class. Time will tell if they have succeeded, but given my experience thus far, I at least can say they have not fallen short of the mark. The SuperNova 2 is very well suited for the majority of turning projects, and for nearly all turners with lathes of moderate size. For those who already have one or more Teknatool chucks and jaw sets, it will be a hard chuck to pass up. If you like your Nova or SuperNova I think I am safe in saying you are going to love a SuperNova 2.

#### Two New Jaw Sets

Not content with what was already one of the widest ranges of jaw options, Teknatool recently introduced three new jaw sets: the Mini Cole Jaws for lathes with a swing of at least 8 inches; a set of heavy walled 75mm jaws; and a set of Long Nosed jaws. I have obtained the latter two and presently have a set fitted on each of my SuperNova 2s.

The 75mm jaw set is not just a new size, but also a new design for a dovetailed jaw. With respect to size, its name reveals that it falls midway between the 50 mm jaws that are standard with most chucks and the high capacity 4 inch jaws that often are used for big bowls and platters. What is not revealed in the name is how massive the walls of this chuck are, over three times the thickness of the typical dovetail jaw. To further support these walls, the outer of the two screws on each jaw pass through the wall itself, securely seating the jaws right where the forces will be strongest. This makes for very stable, secure holding of larger bowls, particularly during taxing tasks like coring, and also makes the jaws suitable for holding moderate sized hollow forms. Oftentimes such capabilities come at the price of a grip that mars the wood at the point of contact and requires that area to be turned away. Not so with my early version of these jaws, as their relatively deep (10mm external, 8mm internal), smooth walled dovetail is gentle to the wood surface at the same time as offering exceptional

gripping power. My understanding is that the interior of the 75 mm jaws is going to be changed to a serrated PowerGrip style. This change will have advantages and disadvantages, for while the serrations will surely greatly increase holding power, it comes at the price of increased marking of the tenon. I would love to see the 75 mm jaws be offered with a choice of smooth dovetail or serrated PowerGrip internal surface.

The 75 mm jaw set will work adequately on any of the Teknatool family of chucks except the Compac, but are best matched to the new SuperNova 2 or as a "smaller" jaw set for the Titan. Particularly for turners who like to make medium to larger bowls, I think this jaw set will have a lot of appeal.

The Long Nose jaws are not only new, but Teknatool's first foray into making a jaw set of this sort. These jaws are almost 2-1/2 inches long in total length, and rise over 2 inches above their mounting base (compare this to standard 50mm jaws which rise approximately 3/4 and 7/16 inches, respectively). This added length is useful for a variety of projects including internal center holding of a roughed out bowl. Like with the 75 mm jaws, the external dovetails are deep (10mm) and the jaw sections are exceptionally thick walled. Again like the 75 mm jaws, one set of screws is mounted through the rising walls of the jaws (in this case it is the inner screws). These jaws are going to be capable of being used with a tremendous amount of force, if the circumstances require, limited more by their 45 mm external diameter when closed than by their strength.

The jaws are also appropriate for holding spigots, particularly when circumstances call for holding of smaller diameter or deeper spigots. Closed, the internal diameter is 10 mm which is a little over 3/8 of an inch (actually .4 inches). When fully opened, the jaws can take a spigot (tenon) of about 31 mm which is a little over 1-3/16 of an inch. Again, these are all actual measurements off my jaws and differ from some catalog specifications I have seen. The interior of my set of jaws is not smooth but lightly ribbed as if from course machining rather than from an attempt to form deep serrations. In use, this has proven to be a good compromise between adequate grip and marring of the wood surface. The bore is uniform for the entire depth of my early production jaws (current versions have added a small internal dovetail at the front). The internal gripping surfaces are considerable because of the depth of the bore and allow for about as secure a hold as is possible with spigots of the size which fit this jaw. If spigots require the chuck to be used at its larger internal diameters, the edges of the jaw arcs are going to dig into the tenon fairly deep, adding to the grip, but crushing into, and thus marring the tenon. Thus, even though

these jaws are deeper and stronger than the currently available Teknatool Spigot jaws, they are really best suited for smaller diameter tenons that can not be mounted in the 35 and 45 jaw sizes of the other Teknatool Spigot jaws.

While the Long Nose jaws can be mounted on any of the Teknatool chucks except the Compac, they are best suited for the SuperNova 2 and Titan. Where they are apt to prove most helpful is on the Titan to gain clearance from its very large 5 inch diameter body and thus improve access to the headstock side of smaller work pieces. A Titan with a set of 75 mm, Long Nose, and Titan PowerGrip jaws will be a very versatile chuck with tremendous gripping capabilities. For a SuperNova 2 or SuperNova, these jaws (and also the standard PowerGrip jaws if you do not already have them) will expand their capabilities and allow you to accomplish some things that simply are not possible, or at least not safe, with conventional dovetail jaws, even of the larger sizes.

#### A Focus on Chucking Systems

This last year has brought some major new members into the Teknatool family. Those who have already adopted the Teknatool chucking system are apt to feel vindicated in their choice and are likely to find it hard to resist adding to it. Newer turners have some solid performance reasons to start out with a Teknatool chuck and can be reassured that the Teknatool chucking system is both comprehensive and compatible enough to allow them to meet their future needs by adding to, rather than replacing their early purchases. For veterans of other chucking systems, the features of the new chucks and jaw sets may well entice even the most partisan to obtain a specific chuck and jaw set for its unique capabilities (say the Titan and its Titan PowerGrip jaws, or a SuperNova 2 with those very deep spigot Long Nose jaws).

I really think we are in a Golden Age with respect to workholding equipment for the wood lathe. Competition between the four major chuck manufacturers has greatly increased our choices and capabilities. Right now, it is going to be hard not to get a good chuck, if you purchase it from one of the major manufacturers. I think more and more purchase decisions are going to be based on which comprehensive chucking system has the most to offer, rather than the specific features or reputation of an individual chuck or manufacturer. Teknatool was one of the first manufacturers to make available a comprehensive system of chucking components, and with this new generation of products, they are making clear they intend to continue to advance that system, while ensuring that prior customers can integrate those new advances with the turner's existing components.