

# In-Line Jigsaw

by Clayton DeKorne



**B**osch recently introduced the model B4050 Sabre Plus In-Line Jigsaw — a streamlined cutter that can fit in spaces too tight for conventional reciprocating saws. This new jigsaw can reach into a wall cavity, narrow plumbing chase, or small cabinet to cut free a piece of blocking, BX cable, or pipe. It's lightweight (only 3.2 pounds), and has a large paddle switch that affords good control with one hand, even at an arm's length.

While this saw is configured like a recip saw, it's sold expressly as a "jigsaw" primarily because it accepts any Bosch-shank jigsaw blade, rather than the larger recip-saw blades. I was curious how this hybrid tool compares with larger recip saws and with its conventional sister, the Bosch 1587VS jigsaw. Here's what I found:

## Performance

The new In-Line Jigsaw shares many of the same features as the well-acclaimed Bosch 1587VS jigsaw. It offers a variable-speed dial and three orbital settings for increased cutting power. It also offers the "clic" blade changing system you'll find on the newer Bosch jigsaws. This system allows you to change the blade by lifting and spinning a knob, eliminating the need for a special screwdriver or hex key.

However, the In-Line Jigsaw does not offer the same power and control as the conventional Bosch jigsaw and most professional-grade recip saws.

**Power.** The In-Line saw has only a 3.6-amp motor and a  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch stroke, whereas the 1587VS jigsaw has a 5-amp motor and a 1-inch stroke. To understand what this means in real terms, I ran some cutting races. With new blades, it took me about 15 seconds to cut through a spruce 2x6 with the In-Line saw, compared with about 7 seconds with the 1587VS. The In-Line saw cut across 12 inches of  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch AC plywood in about 20 seconds; the

1587 did the same task in about 12 seconds. The Porter-Cable Tiger Cub recip saw, which has a 1-inch stroke and a 4.8-amp motor, cut through the 2x6 in 8 seconds, and the plywood in about 14 seconds. The Milwaukee Super Sawzall, with a  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch stroke and an 8-amp motor, zipped through the 2x6 in 5 seconds and the plywood in about 10 seconds.



**Specialty cutter.** Though slightly less powerful than most other reciprocating saws, the new Bosch In-Line Jigsaw will fit where most other saws cannot.

**Control.** Vibration proved to be a bigger concern, however. With a short  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch stroke, the new saw vibrates much more than any of the other saws I compared it with. This means it's much harder to control when cutting at full speed. To ensure a straight cut, you have to slow it down, and even then, the In-Line saw is more likely to grab onto a piece of wood and shake it loose. Some of the vibration can be reduced by pressing the shoe tight against the work, and the In-Line saw has an adjustable-depth shoe that gives you about an inch of play.

I spent considerable time plunge cutting and cutting curves in  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood with all the tools. As you might expect, I could cut the tightest curve (about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch radius without

backing up) with the conventional Bosch jigsaw. I cut nearly as tight a curve with the In-Line saw, but it was much easier to hold to a line with the conventional Bosch jigsaw. The conventional recip saws, of course, were the hardest to control around close curves, and the wider blades made it difficult to cut any curve with less than a 1 1/2-inch radius.

When plunge cutting with the In-Line saw, I found it works best to use a short (3- or 4-inch) blade, instead of the 6-inch blade that comes with the saw. The conventional recip saws, equipped with stiff bi-metal blades, proved the fastest at plunge cutting, though I felt like I had the best control pivoting off the front of the shoe on the 1587. If I had to make a finish plunge cut, I'd grab a conventional jigsaw with a short blade, provided I had the room to use it.

### The Bottom Line

The new In-Line Jigsaw is clearly not just a reconfigured Bosch jigsaw. It lacks the impeccable quality you may have come to expect if you own the Bosch 1587 or 1584. And it lacks the power of a full-sized recip saw. The beauty of the In-Line saw lies in the fact that it will fit where most other saws cannot. If you can appreciate this difference, you'll appreciate the In-Line saw. You'll also appreciate its price.

The new In-Line Jigsaw sells for \$125 to \$135. Though priced about the same as the Porter-Cable Tiger Cub, it is considerably cheaper than the deluxe Bosch 1587VS, which sells for about \$200. It's priced below the regular Sawzall or Tiger saw (each at about \$150), the larger Bosch recip saw (\$160), and the Milwaukee Super Sawzall (\$175).

Even though the In-Line Jigsaw is not quite as powerful as any of these saws, I think Bosch made the right decision introducing a slightly lower-quality tool for the lower price. This is without doubt a specialty saw. You won't be using this saw everyday, so why pay a premium for it?

### Accessories

The In-Line Jigsaw has a few accessories you might not expect with a small recip saw. These include a rasp (an extra \$28), a wire brush (about



*Bosch includes a rasp among the many accessories available for the In-Line Jigsaw. Here it is used to widen the hole in a wall plate for a plumbing line.*

\$18), and a fiber scrub brush (about \$17). While I suspect Bosch is trying to appeal to the homeowner/hobbyist who will use the rasp for wood-carving projects and the brushes for buffing up the wire wheels on his roadster and refinishing antiques, these accessories might also be useful to some remodelers. For example, the wire brush might speed the job of prepping rusted metal railings for a new coat of paint. The fiber scrub brush can quickly clean the mildew from tile before regrouting, and it will fit all those crevices and corners you encounter when stripping the paint off ornate moldings and stair parts. The rasp might be used to adjust the hole in a wall plate that's been drilled out for a plumbing stack. It also works well for cleaning up and fine-tuning the back cut when coping any profiled trim, but it's hardly essential.

Bosch includes a 6-inch wood-cutting blade (6 teeth per inch) with each saw. Though touted as suitable for nail-embedded wood, the teeth don't hold up to nails as well as a Lenox bi-metal reciprocating saw blade. While the In-Line saw does accept any Bosch-shank blade, I found the long 6-inch blade most useful for demolition cuts. Hopefully Bosch will produce 6-inch blades with other tooth patterns, such as a 20- or 24-tooth-per-inch metal cutter, to make snipping nails, BX cable, old metal straps, and other materials easier.

For more information, contact S-B Power Tool Co., 4300 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60646; 312/286-7330. ■