

Cool Blue Warmth

by Bill Brockway



Some foam form manufacturers claim insulating values as high as R-35, with dubious scientific support. The *Blue Maxx* wall from AAB Building Systems, however, boasts what I think is a more believable R-25. With 2½ inches of expanded polystyrene on both the inside and outside of a 6½-inch concrete wall, the Blue Maxx wall will stop everything from cold and bugs to water and sound, according to the manufacturer. The basic block of this system measures 48 inches wide, 17 inches tall, 11½ inches thick, and weighs under 8 pounds. Other shapes include end caps, 90° corners, and adjustable corners. The blocks fit together like gigantic Legos. X-shaped plastic braces spanning the gap between the two foam sheets project through the foam to provide a nailing strip on both the interior and exterior walls. At the center of the X, in the middle of the wall cavity, C-shaped clips provide a place to run rebar.

Contact: AAB Building Systems, 840 Division St., Cobourg, ON K9A 4J9, Canada; 905/373-0004.

Low-VOC Adhesive

Most of the people I worked with viewed construction adhesive as a necessary evil. It's bad for you and bad for the environment, but it sure helps buildings stick together. The makers of the original Titebond



adhesive have introduced *Solvent-Free Titebond* construction adhesive and claim that the new glue works even better than old solvent-based glues. And if you've ever spent a Friday night trying to scrub adhesive off of your hands, you'll like this — it cleans up with water.

Contact: Franklin International, 2020 Bruck St., Columbus, OH 43207; 800/669-4583.

Ultra-Fine Filter



There are different schools of thought on how to limit the lung-damaging effects of drywall sanding dust. Some people invest in a good respirator and just let the dust fly, but

if you'd prefer to control the dust with a vacuum system, check out the *Cleanstream* filters from W.L. Gore. Drywall dust is as small as .6 microns — small enough to pass right through some cloth and paper filters — but Gore claims that the *Cleanstream* stops 99.7% of dust particles down to .3 microns. Several styles are available to fit most popular vacs.

Contact: W.L. Gore & Associates, 100 Airport Rd., Bldg. 1, Elkton, MD 21921; 800/758-6755.

No Shim Fastener



Next time you have to set a houseful of windows and doors, consider the *Top Star* fastener. It's an adjustable screw that can plumb window and door frames without shims. After carefully predrilling both jamb and stud, you use a special driver attached to your drill to spin the whole assembly in. Then, using a hex-tipped bit, you can change the distance between the stud and the part of the screw embedded in the jamb. Once it's set, you cover the screw head with a small plastic cap, available in several colors. A box of a hundred 2½-inch fasteners costs about \$100, and the special driver bit runs about \$7. Several larger sizes are also available.

Contact: GRK Canada, RR 1, 1499 Rosslyn Rd., Thunder Bay, ON P7C 4T9, Canada; 800/263-0463.

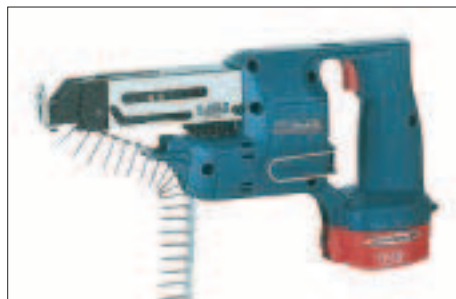
Cabinet Security



Most customers have something they need to lock up — liquor cabinets, gun cases — and this system from Northwind Industries is an easy way to provide that security. The *Universal Power Lock* is a low-cost, electronic, touchpad-controlled cabinet locking system. It probably wouldn't stand up long against a crowbar, but it will stop the curious. A builder-friendly installation kit with one touchpad and six locks costs about \$250.

Contact: Northwind Industries, 6300 Ridglea Pl., Suite 6000, Fort Worth, TX 76116; 817/737-6100.

Cordless Autofeed Screw Gun



For the past several months I've been testing Makita's *Autofeed Screwdriver* — a 12-volt cordless screw gun that feeds screws automatically. The fasteners come on plastic collations that hold 50 screws each and feed into the bottom of the gun.

The tool takes a bit of getting used to. It takes a little finesse to countersink consistently, but the mechanism has a good solid feel to it. Once I got the hang of it, I was able to zip screws through $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch drywall into wood studs with ease. A $1\frac{5}{8}$ -inch screw is the biggest the tool can handle, but the

company has also released a corded version that can shoot 2-inch screws. The *Autofeed Screwdriver* runs at 2,000 rpm and lists for \$418.

Contact: Makita USA, 14930 Northam St., La Mirada, CA 90638; 714/552-8088.

Crowning Achievement



In response to customer complaints, a lumberyard owner in Virginia started remilling the 2x6 pressure-treated deck boards he was selling to local contractors. He put a subtle $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch crown on top and two relief cuts on the bottom. The product was so popular that he's now offering *Supreme Decking* nationwide. It's made from pine, cedar, or redwood and will cost about 10% more than standard deck boards. By draining water off before it can soak in, however, the crowned boards should easily repay that investment with extended life.

Contact: Supreme Decking, 10125 Richmond Hwy., Lorton, VA 22079; 800/532-1323.

Breathable Fiberglass Covering

Insulating with batts is much more pleasant when the fiberglass is covered with something to keep particles from floating into your lungs, eyes, and skin. Unfortunately, the material used to encapsulate batts sometimes interferes with the flow of water vapor in a wall or ceiling. *Easy Handler* batts solve both problems with a breathable nonwoven fabric on three sides and Kraft paper on the fourth. The batts are available from R-13 to R-30. Unfaced R-25 rolls come in either 15- or 23-inch widths and are encapsulated with fabric on all four sides.

Contact: CertainTeed Corp., 750 E.

Swedesford Rd., Valley Forge, PA 19482; 800/523-7844.



Orange Peel in a Can



If you ever run into a situation where you have to “match an existing finish” and you're dealing with a textured wall or ceiling, this product might be an easy way to go. Homax's *Spray Texture* and *Knockdown Texture* come in 20-ounce aerosol cans (without CFCs). *Spray Texture* comes with three color-coded straws for fine, medium, and heavy textures, while *Knockdown Texture* comes with two — medium and heavy. The cans will retail for about \$13 each.

Contact: Homax Corp., 1610 Sixth St., Bellingham, WA 98225; 360/733-9029. ■