

Wrenchless Routers and Grinders

by Dave Crosby

Changing bits takes the fun right out of using a router, and it's all because of the wrenches. Even if you manage to avoid busting your knuckles, the whole process takes too long. If you added up all the time spent changing bits — including finding the last guy to use the router to ask where he left the wrenches — and multiply it by your labor cost...well, you get the picture.

To the rescue comes the Jacobs *PowerCollet*, which takes just a few minutes to swap for a standard collet, and completely eliminates the need for wrenches to change router bits (see Figure 1). Instead, you just pull up on the locking sleeve to open the collet, remove the old bit (which comes out easily, even after hard use), insert the new bit, and push down on the sleeve until you hear

a snap. That's it. No wrenches, no lost wrenches, no bruised knuckles.

To test the PowerCollet, we installed it on a DeWalt DW625 router and turned it over to four woodworkers, who used it for several weeks in their shop. Three of

them promptly forgot that they had their own routers (the fourth owned the DeWalt). About 20 bit changes later, the PowerCollet had lived up to its name, holding a 1/2-inch-shank, 1 1/4-inch roundover bit securely while cutting



Figure 1. The PowerCollet replaces the existing collet on four brands of routers, eliminating the need for wrenches to change bits.

TOOLBITS

Left-Handed Trowels

Ten models of 4 1/2x11-inch trowels with square, oval, and V- and U-notch blades are now available for left-handed tradespeople. The *Premier Line Left Handed Notched Trowels* (about \$15) feature a 10-degree angled front for getting closer to walls and into corners.

Contact: Marshalltown Trowel, P.O. Box 738, Marshalltown, IA 50158; 800/987-6935; www.marshalltown.com.



Improved Speed Square

A tool we've come to depend upon just got two new features. *The Diamond Speed Square* (\$6.99 to \$8.99) has a diamond-shaped hole at the 3 1/2-inch mark and notches at 1/4-inch increments for easy scribing.

Contact: Swanson Tool, 211 Ontario St., Frankfort, IL 60423; 815/469-9453.



Two-Directional Clamp

Because one lever controls clamping action and another lever controls incremental release, the *Quick-Jaw Bar Clamp* offers true one-handed operation. With the twist of a thumbscrew the jaws can be reversed, turning the clamp into a spreader. Available in sizes from 6 inches to 36 inches, suggested retail ranges between \$16.99 and \$27.99. A line of *Mini Bar Clamps* and *Micro Bar Clamps* is also available, priced from \$7.49 to \$24.99.

Contact: Wolfcraft, P.O. Box 687, Itasca, IL 60143; 630/773-4777; www.wolfcraft.com.





Figure 2. The PowerNut replaces the existing spindle nut for fast and easy wheel changes – no wrench required.

through poplar and maple. (We'll continue to run the PowerCollet to see how it does over the long haul.)

The PowerCollet adds 1 1/4 inches to the overall length of the spindle. This is not a problem for most bits and routers, but in some cases longer bits will extend past the lower adjustment limit of the router base, making it hard to take shallow cuts. To compensate, Jacobs provides router base spacers and longer screws; alternatively, with some routers you could install a facing on the base plate.

The PowerCollet, which accepts 1/2-inch-shank bits and includes an adapter for 1/4-inch-shank bits, is available for the following routers: Bosch 1615, DeWalt DW625, Makita 3612, Porter-Cable 690 series (3 routers), and the Porter-Cable 7500 series (5 routers). Suggested retail price is \$49.95.

The PowerNut

If you use an angle grinder, you know that the spindle locks don't ever seem to be strong enough to hold against the amount of torque required to loosen the nut after heavy use. Even if you can find a wrench that fits the spindle nut, you feel ridiculous wrestling with this tiny angle grinder, keeping one finger on the undersized spindle lock while jamming the disc against a scrap of lumber with one knee and hoping you don't crack the housing or your knuckles when the wrench slips.

Gas-Powered Mixer

This gasoline-powered mini-mixer is intended for concrete, stucco, mortar, and grout. The **GM2000 MixMax** is powered by a 31cc engine that is said to handle more than 100 pounds of mix at a rate of 60 pounds per minute. The \$299 hand-held mixer is intended for small-batch jobs, and is designed for easy transport.

Contact: Ryobi America, 5201 Pearman Dairy Rd., Anderson, SC 29625; 800/525-2579; www.ryobi.com.



Affordable Laser

If you've been waiting for the price to come down on laser levels, check out the **RoboLaser** and its new \$350 price tag. Accurate to +/- 1/8 inch at 100 feet, the RoboLaser rotates at three different speeds, is said to be visible indoors or outdoors, and has out-of-level sensing for dependability. This self-leveling rotary laser is part of a line of optical equipment that also includes the laser equivalent of a 300-foot tape measure and a laser replacement for the plumb bob, level, and square.

Contact: Toolz, 404 Villa St., Mountain View, CA 94041; 800/984-0404.



Miter Saw Stand

The new **StableMate XWC36 Portable Work Stand** features a flip-up work stop and fence, four adjustable supports, and extension arms that provide support between 46 and 106 inches. The 36-inch-high, 48-pound galvanized steel stand has fold-up self-locking legs and a pair of wheels for mobility. Available in January, suggested retail will be about \$159. The **Model RWC36 Portable Tool Stand**, which has 71-inch fixed rails, is currently available for about \$100.

Contact: Iowa Manufacturing, 2456 Eagle Ave., Battle Creek, IA 51006; 800/882-4422.



Those days are over. The Jacobs **PowerNut** replaces the existing arbor nut, eliminating the need for a wrench (Figure 2, page 100). Installed finger-tight, the PowerNut holds securely but enables you to change wheels in seconds using just your fingers. It sounds unbelievable, but it works. The design allows for a comfortable grip, but does not significantly interfere with the grinding angle. The Small PowerNut (\$14.95) fits grinders from 4 1/2 inches to 6 inches with a 5/8-11 spindle shaft;

the Large PowerNut (\$24.95) fits 7- and 9-inch grinders, also with a 5/8-11 shaft. The PowerNut works with regular abrasive wheels and depressed-center wheels; with the supplied backflange, it also works on diamond wheels and cut-off wheels.

For more information on either of these tools, contact Danaher Tool Group (P.O. Box 3767, Lancaster, PA 17604; 800/866-5753; www.jacobschuck.com).

