

Ridgid R2600 Sander

by Joseph Fusco

As a cabinetmaker, I use sanders almost every day. I was recently checking out the random-orbit sanders at the local home center when the 5-inch Ridgid R2600 caught my attention. Ridgid is new to the hand-held power tool market, so I looked it over carefully and decided it deserved further consideration.

The R2600 has cushioned grips that felt great in my hand immediately, which is important in a tool that you might use for hours at a time. It also has a good bit of weight, which for many tools might be a minus but for a sander makes it more comfortable and easier to use. The only potential prob-

lem was the eight-hole sanding pad. I've always used machines with five-hole pads, so I had a boat load of five-hole paper. I decided that I could adapt my leftover paper for use on the eight-hole machine, and based on the tool's good ergonomics and the fact that Ridgid was (at the time) offering a "lifetime guarantee," I decided to buy one.

The sander comes with two backing pads, one for PSA discs and one for hook-and-loop. It has a 12-foot cord with a velcro strap for storage and a light-up plug that tells you the tool is ready to go. It also has a side-mounted dust collection port that works with either a 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch or a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch vacuum hose. I had to make an adaptor to fit my Porter-Cable dust-collecting vacuum, but that didn't surprise me because, oddly enough, I had to make one for my Porter-Cable sanders, too.

The first time I unpacked the sander, I noticed that everything fit easily inside the carrying case — a welcome change from most of my recent purchases. The 2600 has variable-speed control from 7,000 to 12,000 rpm and a pad brake — both important features. The tool is quiet, has very little vibration, and is easy to control. It also has enough power to sand dried Bondo without a hitch. The dust collection system works well, too, especially considering that I'm still using my modified five-hole paper.

It's always a little scary going with a new brand of power tool, but this purchase seems like a good decision so far. For the \$69 I paid, my only regret is that I didn't buy two.

Joseph Fusco is a cabinetmaker in Staten Island, N.Y.



Included on all of the new Ridgid power tools, a light-up plug shows that you're plugged into a working receptacle. It also tells you what tool you're plugging in when you're dealing with a tangle of black cords.



A little wheel on top of the housing adjusts speed from 7,000 to 12,000 rpm. The sander also has a pad brake to prevent the sanding disc from free spinning when you remove it from your work.

The Corded Hatchet

by Victor Rasilla

Working as an apprentice in Los Angeles, I got a lot of experience with reciprocating saws early in my career. I often worked cutting down walls in downtown high-rise buildings for eight hours straight.

Given my experience, when Milwaukee introduced the Hatchet cordless reciprocating saw about three years ago, I wasn't interested. I couldn't imagine a cordless tool that could stand

up to the abuse I'd seen electric

tools take on a daily

basis. I'll concede

that the Hatchet's

folding handle looked useful, but I

never really considered buying one. When Milwaukee

recently released a corded version of the Hatchet, model 6524-21, however,

I was happy to give it a test.

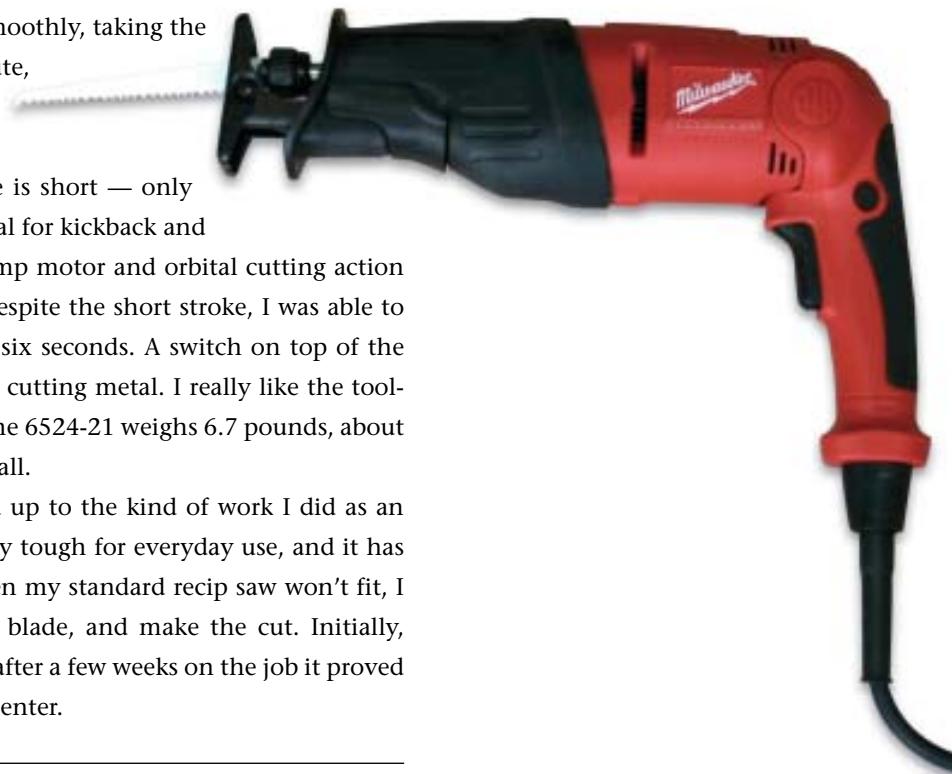
The Hatchet's folding handle is its most notable feature, promising greater comfort for the user and easier access to tough cuts. When the handle is folded all the way down, you can fit the saw in a 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch stud bay, though there's virtually no room to spare. Still, making the saw short in a hurry proved convenient over the course of the kitchen and bath remodel where I used it.

The variable-speed switch operates smoothly, taking the saw from 0 to 3,000 strokes per minute, and, unlike other saws I've used, you can reach the switch easily from different cutting positions. The blade stroke is short — only $\frac{3}{4}$ inch — but that reduces the potential for kickback and makes plunge-cutting easier. The 7.5-amp motor and orbital cutting action make for fast cuts and ample power. Despite the short stroke, I was able to cut through Douglas fir 2x4s in about six seconds. A switch on top of the housing turns off the orbital action for cutting metal. I really like the toolless blade clamp and adjustable shoe. The 6524-21 weighs 6.7 pounds, about half a pound less than a standard Sawzall.

Although it probably wouldn't stand up to the kind of work I did as an apprentice, the corded Hatchet is plenty tough for everyday use, and it has earned a place in my tool arsenal. When my standard recip saw won't fit, I fold the Hatchet's handle, reverse the blade, and make the cut. Initially, I had some doubts about its utility, but after a few weeks on the job it proved to be a great tool for a remodeling carpenter.



Like the cordless version, the corded Hatchet has a six-position folding handle that adjusts from straight out to a 90-degree bend. With the handle folded all the way down, you can use it one-handed — handy for cutting loose-hanging pipes.



Victor Rasilla is a lead carpenter for Sattler's Construction in Walnut Creek, Calif.

ROUTERS AND ACCESSORIES



Butt Hinge Template. Using an adjustable hinge template is among the best ways to save time when hanging doors, and the Bosch 83038 *Door and Jamb Hinge Template Kit* has been the industry standard for nearly 50 years. What makes the template better than competitive products is that you can easily reproduce settings, switch between right- and left-hand doors, and use it to hang new doors in an old jamb. It comes in a rugged steel case and sells for about \$230.

Bosch, 877/267-2499, www.boschtools.com.



Power Hinge Prep. Spending almost \$500 on a router that only preps door hinges may seem a little crazy to some carpenters, but when you add up the cost of a good router (\$200) and a hinge template (\$230), you're almost there anyway. The Virutex *Door Hinge Router FR29M* uses the router base as the template, and integral base clamps hold the unit on the jamb or the door. The jaws open to 8 inches, so you can clamp the tool on most jambs that have the casting already installed. A metal rod is used to transfer the hinge locations to the jamb and vice versa. You can use this router with 1/4- and 5/8-inch-radius hinges, or you can square the corners with an optional corner chisel. It works with hinge leaves up to 3 3/8 inches wide and 5 11/16 inches long. According to the maker, door hangers can cut their hinge-prep time by at least a third. It sells for \$490.

Virutex, 800/868-9663, www.virutex.com.

Stouter Router.

When Porter-Cable announced it was replacing its 690 router with a new model, legions of woodworkers, trim carpenters, and cabinetmakers were concerned. After all, the 690 and its predecessors have been around so long that most users have accumulated perhaps several hundred dollars in accessories. Fortunately, the new 890 series routers not only work with 690 bases and accessories, they offer easier table mounting and increased power, according to the manufacturer. The new soft-start motor has been bumped to 2 1/4 horsepower, and depth adjustments can now be made from above a router table. The 890 is offered in several versions with fixed, plunge, and D-handle bases. The 895 PK includes fixed and plunge bases and an intelligently designed case for about \$230.

Porter-Cable, 800/487-8665, www.porter-cable.com.



Double Identity. Two-sided veneer plywood can present a challenge for conventional flush-trim bits — both down-cutting and up-cutting versions can damage one side of the material. The unique Woodhaven *Up/Down-Cut Flush Trim Bit* uses up-cut and down-cut flutes on the same bit, so you can cut the material without chipping either face. According to the manufacturer, the bit leaves a slight line where the flutes meet, but it won't affect gluing or edge banding. Model 21460, suitable for 3/4-inch material sells for \$41.

Woodhaven, 800/344-6657, www.woodhaven.com.

SANDERS



Two in One. If sanding versatility is your aim, you might consider the *Rotex Random-Orbit Sander* from Festool. This heavy-duty 6-inch machine features two sanding modes, rotary random orbit for fast stock removal, and true random orbit for a fine finish. The high-efficiency dust collection system uses a rear-mounted dust port that keeps the hose out of your way while you work and a unique eight-hole pad that makes abrasives last up to 30% longer, according to the manufacturer. Festool says the Rotex is especially favored by solid-surface fabricators because of its efficient, low-vibration operation, fast stock removal, and unusual versatility. The company suggests treating the sticker shock induced by the \$400 price tag with the comforting thought that "it's actually two sanders in one tool."

Festool, 888/337-8600, www.festool-usa.com.



High Roller. If awards were given for coolest-looking tools, I think the DeWalt *DW433 Belt Sander* would be in the running. But according to the manufacturer, the new sander's not just for show. The three-roller design lowers the tool's center of gravity for more comfortable and efficient sanding, and it provides additional space for the longest platen available on a 3x21-inch machine. Feedback circuitry helps the 8-amp motor maintain a consistent sanding speed from 850 to 1,400 surface-feet per minute. The 11-pound machine also has a removable dust bag, automatic belt tracking, and an 8-foot rubber cord. The DW433K includes a blow-molded case and sells for \$190.

DeWalt, 800/433-9258, www.dewalt.com.



Attention to Detail. Cheap detail sanders that were all the rage only a few years ago saw their popularity plummet shortly after their heyday. Their usefulness was easy to question, especially among professionals, who complained that the sanding action was slow and that the tools lacked versatility. The Fein *Multi-Master*, however, is one detail sander that's consistently cited by pros as worth buying. Not only does the triangle sanding head get into tight spaces, it can be swapped out with a number of other useful attachments. You can use it for scraping away gummy adhesive, undercutting door jambs, and cutting away grout, among other things. The tool features a variable-speed motor and rear-mounted dust port. The MSXE-636-2 Multi-Master kit includes a steel case, and it sells for \$200 at amazon.com.

Fein, 800/441-9878, www.feinus.com.



Baby Belt Sander. Hand sanding in tight spaces can really slow you down, but with a *Compact Belt Sander* from Bosch you can give up the aluminum-oxide origami and plug in the power tool. The 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ x12-inch belt rides on a 15/16-inch front roller that allows the little sander to get into places other sanders won't fit. In addition, the belt is flush to the housing on one side, so you can get into corners and close to obstructions. Flipping the tool over allows flush sanding on the other side. The unit also features a variable-speed motor, a rear-mounted dust collection port, and a blow-molded case. The 1278VSK Compact Belt Sander includes ten assorted belts and sells for about \$130.

Bosch, 877/267-2499, www.boschtools.com.