Toolbox

Ridgid R3210 Wormdrive Saw

by Tim Uhler

Over the last few years, there have been quite a few changes to in-line circular saws. Manufacturers have made them lighter and more powerful, and have added many features. About a year ago, I tested eight in-line saws for an article in *JLC* (see "Wormdrive Saws," 2/04). Ridgid had just gotten into the power-tool business and did not have an in-line model for us to test. Later in the year, however, the company introduced the R3210, its first wormdrive saw and the tool my crew and I tested for this article.

Ridgid did not skimp on features when it designed this saw. The R3210 has a 15-amp motor with oil-bathed gears, an aluminum base plate, and a magnesium housing and guard. The grip is overmolded rubber; the depth and bevel locks are oversized to make them more comfortable to use. The saw has a folding rafter hook and a 12-foot cord with a plug that lights up when the tool is live.

Ridgid R3210 Specs

Amps: 15
Weight: 14 pounds
Rpm: 4,400
Maximum bevel: 51.5 degrees
Maximum depth of cut at 90, 51.5, 45 degrees: 2 3/8", 1 9/16", 1 3/4"
Blade diameter: 7 1/4"
Street price: $169

Ridge Tool Co.
866/539-1710
www.ridgid.com

Power and Weight

The first time my crew tested saws, we learned that certain tasks quickly separate the best models from the merely average ones. One such task is roof cutting. If the tool is good for that, then in my opinion it's good for everything else.

The first day we had it, we used the Ridgid saw to cut 2x12 rafters and 1 3/4-inch LVL material. We were working on a 12/12 roof, so the tool needed to make the 45-degree plumb and level cuts as well as the 45-degree bevel cuts on hips, valleys, and jacks. When I cut the LVL material, the R3210 powered right through. The motor felt and sounded a lot like the hypoid gear motor on Makita's 5277NB, a saw I like because it runs very smoothly. Compared with the models we had tested previously, this one felt as though it had more power.

At 14 pounds, the Ridgid saw is lighter than average for an in-line model. It's not the lightest one you can get, though. That distinction goes to DeWalt's 13-pound DW378G. (There are two other 14-pound saws, as well: the Bosch 1677M and the Skil HD77M).

The weight and balance of the R3210 make it easy on the arm and comfortable to use. The overmolded rubber grip increases the saw's comfort level, too; it provides padding and makes it easier to hang on to the tool when it's wet, with or without gloves.

Cutting Capacity

The maximum depth of cut is the same for this saw as it is for the Makita: 2 3/8 inches at

90 degrees, 1¾ inches at 45 degrees, and 1 9/16 inches at maximum bevel. It's worth noting that these distances are almost ¼ inch less than you can get with the Bosch 1677M or the Skil HD77M. On occasions when an LVL had swelled because it was left out in the weather, the Ridgid did not cut all the way through on a 45-degree bevel. However, the saw didn't come up short by much, and it took only a quick slice of the utility knife to sever the remaining wood fibers.

The R3210 tilts a little bit further than other in-line saws. Whereas the steepest angle we could cut previously was 50 degrees, the Ridgid cuts 51.5 degrees. There is a certain roof design we frame all the time, and the cheek cut for some of the jacks is 51.34 degrees. In the past, we cut them to 50 degrees and called it good. With this saw, we can make the cut at the actual angle we want.

Adjusting bevel and depth. I appreciate how easy it is to adjust the bevel on this saw. Like many other framers, we've spent a lot of time using Skil's worm-drives and, more recently, the Bosch version of those tools (Skil and Bosch are part of the same company). One problem we have encountered with these very popular models is that after they have been dropped a few times, the base won't tilt to 45 degrees or beyond unless you tap it with a hammer or change the depth setting of the blade. This wasn't the case with the Ridgid. After it took a few falls, the depth and bevel setting mechanisms continued to operate smoothly.

Ridgid's R3210 is a true worm-drive: Its hex fitting is the oil plug. The black button at the center of this photo is a spindle lock for changing the blade.

The bevel gauge is clearly marked and the blade tilts to 51.5 degrees.

A rubberized handle makes the saw easy to grip. The screw that secures the blade takes a hex key, which stores in the back of the handle just below the cord.

The base plate. The one concern I have about the durability of this saw is that the base plate is made from a smooth piece of aluminum. The only other in-line model with a flat base of this type is the Skil HD77M, and its plate, which is made from magnesium, sometimes bends if you drop the saw. The plate didn't bend on the Ridgid, and I don't know if that was just luck or if the aluminum holds up better than magnesium. I'd prefer for the base to have wafflelike reinforcing ribs, like the models from Bosch and DeWalt. We never managed to bend one of those bases, although we did break one when the saw took a fall from two stories up.

The Verdict

The R3210 compares favorably with all of the in-line saws I've used. It feels more powerful, has every feature you could ask for, and is competitively priced. We didn't have the saw long enough to assess its long-term durability, but it seems well-made, and those oil-bathed worm gears have a reputation for holding up.

I do have a couple of minor complaints. The locking lever on the elevation bracket tends to work loose unless you tighten it more than you would with another saw. And the guard snags every once in a while on steeply beveled miter cuts — not often, but enough for me to notice.

Other than those quibbles, I was very happy with the Ridgid saw and will probably buy one when this test is over.

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Toolbox | Demolition Tools | by Patrick McCombe

Super Sawyer.

Whenever lunchtime bull sessions turn to favorite demo tools, Milwaukee's Sawzall always tops somebody's list. Dubbed the *6523-21 Super Sawzall*, the newest version of the venerable demo tool has an eight-position rotating handle and a more powerful 13-amp motor. Complete with orbital cutting action, the new saw boasts a 1 1/4-inch cutting stroke and a variable-speed trigger that delivers up to 3,000 strokes per minute. Other features include a toolless blade clamp, a gear-protecting clutch, and a vibration-dampening transmission. I found the 6523-21 on the Web for about $200.

Milwaukee, 800/729-3878, www.milwaukeetool.com.

Kick-Ass Bar.

Stanley sent *JLC* a *FatMax 36-inch Wrecking Bar* shortly after introducing it. Few tools, I have to say, have generated as much interest around the office as this good-looking bright-yellow crowbar. Instead of the hex-shaped tool steel commonly used in these devices, the bar is forged from steel with a rounded shape. Stanley calls it a "tri-lobe" design and says it makes the tool stronger and more comfortable to hold. The bar also comes in 14- and 24-inch sizes; all three versions cost less than $20 apiece.

Stanley, 800/782-6539, www.stanleyworks.com.

Dawg Pound.

When remodeler John Foley couldn't find the right tool for removing drywall, he went straight to the Dawgs — the *Demo Dawgs*. The professional-grade tools in his new line promise to be among the most versatile available. Suitable for knocking down drywall, beating out studs, ripping up plates, removing strip floor, and even digging up landscape plantings, Demo Dawgs come in three sizes: the 16-inch Puppy Dawg ($30), the 20-inch Mean Dawg ($50), and the 30-inch Big Dawg ($60). All sport steel handles and padded grips.

Demo Dawg, 888/363-3697, www.demodawg.com.

Your Friend Lefty.

As if breaking a bolt or fastener weren't bad enough, drilling it out so you can use an extractor often makes the situation even worse. The problem is that conventional right-handed bits tend to tighten the bolt further, increasing the possibility of breaking the extractor. Believe it or not, a left-handed drill bit — which admittedly sounds as ridiculous as a left-handed hammer — is the right tool for the job. Irwin's *Left-Hand Black Oxide Drill Bits* and *Left-Hand Cobalt Drill Bits* won't tighten the broken bolt as you drill (in reverse), and frequently they'll remove the fastener. Just make sure to buy these babies before you need them or you'll have to endure the strange looks of hardware-store employees as you explain the concept. The bits come in sizes from 1/16 to 1/2 inch; prices for the black oxide bits (part no. 62304) start at about $2.70. The 3/8-inch cobalt bit shown (part no. 30524) sells for about $12.

Irwin, 800/464-7946, www.irwin.com.

Sheet-Metal Hole Saw.

Recently, I had the unfortunate task of drilling holes in light-gauge metal studs while running some wire. I wasn't expecting it to be a big deal, but soon discovered that the metal would heat up and deform very quickly, making it surprisingly difficult to get through. The job, I suspect, would have been easier with a *Carbide Hole Cutter* from Lenox. Designed specifically for sheet metal and stainless steel, it has a split-point pilot bit to prevent walking and an attached spring to eject the slugs. According to Lenox, the tool's precision-ground teeth cut faster and last longer than the teeth on other hole saws. A 7/8-inch carbide hole cutter — the most popular size — sells for about $36.

Lenox, 800/628-8810, www.lenoxsaw.com.

Tight-Space Turner.

Looking for a way to turn fasteners in all those tight spaces? Check out the cool new *Model 49-22-8510 RAD* (right-angle drill) *Attachment* from Milwaukee. It features a sturdy-looking, all-metal housing and an adjustable secondary handle for added control. Designed to accept 1/4-inch hex-shaped drill and driver bits, the attachment comes as part of a kit that includes the most common Phillips and square-drive sizes and a 1/4-inch-drive socket adapter. Even if you need this tool only occasionally, it seems like a good thing to keep in the drill case. It costs about $50.

Milwaukee, 800/729-3878, www.milwaukeetool.com.