

# Toolbox

## Max SN883 Series Framer

by Tim McNamara

Earlier this year, Max introduced two new framing nailers: the SN883CH/34, a conventional gun (up to 100 psi) that takes 34-degree clipped-head nails, and the SN883RH, a similar model that takes full round-head nails. When *JLC* asked me to test the former, I agreed; I'd never used a Max tool before, so I was eager to try one out.

Not long after, the shiny new gun arrived in the mail. For several months, my crew and I used it for various framing jobs. (After a while it didn't look so shiny and new anymore.) Here's what we discovered.

### Size and Weight

The SN883CH/34 is short: only 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches tall, which is an inch or two shorter than most framing guns. It's very maneuverable and fits easily into a 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch stud bay.

The tool's light, too; the manufacturer says it weighs 6.8 pounds. The only guns close to that weight are a 7.0-pound model from Hitachi and a 7.6-pound model from DeWalt. Most framing guns weigh 8 pounds or more.

### Power

Despite its minimal weight and size, the SN883CH/34 has good driving power, especially for the size of nails it



takes (3 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches by .131 inch, or 12d). However, we did notice more recoil than we get from heavier guns.

### Features

This nailer has a rear-loading magazine, a swivel fitting to reduce air-hose fatigue, a molded rubber grip, and adequate teeth for toenailing. To prevent junk from getting inside, the tool has a built-in debris filter that automatically discharges when the air supply is disconnected.

The exhaust cap is fixed, with the air blast directed toward the nose of the gun; it didn't bother me that the cap isn't adjustable.

What did bother me was the lack of a rafter hook: If I bought this gun I would add an after-market version.

Also, we noticed that the trigger is not very comfortable for users with small hands.

With my own framing gun, I rarely use the depth-of-drive mechanism, but the adjustment knob on the SN883CH/34 is so convenient I found myself changing depth when I changed materials — shallow for  $\frac{7}{16}$ -inch OSB and deep for microlam beams.

### Max SN883CH/34 Specs

**Weight:** 6.8 pounds

**Dimensions:** 12 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches high by 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide by 18 $\frac{1}{8}$  inches long

**Nails:** 2 inches by .113 inch to 3 $\frac{1}{4}$  inches by .131 inch

**Collation:** 34-degree clipped-head; paper or plastic

**Capacity:** Up to 90 nails

**Street price:** \$295

**Comments:** Similar model available for use with round-head nails

Max USA Corp.

800/233-4293

www.maxusacorp.com



**Firing modes.** Although the gun comes in single-fire mode, it can be switched over to contact-fire or bump-fire mode. Once the selective trigger has been switched over to “contact actuation,” the gun still won’t double-fire, thanks to what the company calls an “anti-double-fire mechanism.”

To bump-fire this gun, you have to squeeze the trigger *before* bringing the nose into contact with the work. If you contact the work and then squeeze the trigger, the nailer will fire only once. This took some getting used to, but after a while it was like using any other framing gun.

I did find it frustrating that the Max dry-fires when out of nails, and I can think of situations where this could be dangerous — when nailing wall braces, for example. The problem is magnified by the fact that the right side of the magazine is a solid piece of metal, so you can’t see in from that side — though you can check on the nails by looking in from the left.

One curious feature of the gun is that it comes with an on/off switch near the trigger. This seems unnecessary to me.

If I don’t want someone using the gun, I simply disconnect the air hose. Another reason I’m skeptical of this feature is that — with my luck — it’ll probably get stuck in the off position someday, leaving me with a nonfunctioning tool.

We did have one mechanical problem with the SN883CH/34. After I’d been using it for some time, it started to leak air from the top of the piston. I removed the cap and pulled out the seal; since the seal looked okay I put it back in and reinstalled the cap. The gun worked fine after that. I don’t know what the problem was — maybe the cap bolts just weren’t tight enough.

All in all, I think this gun is a solid tool. It’s light and has good power. I like it — but not so much I feel compelled to run out and buy it right away. Still, I’ve decided that I’m going to keep my eye on Max, and if one of my current guns bites the dust I’ll consider buying one of the company’s SN883C series tools.

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# Protected Laser Transport

by Greg Burnet

As a remodeling contractor, I rely heavily on my compact laser tools. At last count I had four: a cross hair, a plumb bob, a five-point tool, and a laser tape measure. Unfortunately, the soft-sided and blow-molded plastic cases commonly included with these tools either offer scant protection or are too cumbersome for my crowded truck and trailer.

My solution was to buy a Pelican case (800/473-5422, [www.pelican.com](http://www.pelican.com)). Pelican cases are waterproof, foam-lined, heavy-duty plastic containers used primarily by photographers and sound and video technicians to

transport their sensitive gear. They come in a variety of sizes, so I ordered one that would hold all four of my laser devices.

The model I ordered — 1450 (\$75) — has a “pick and pluck” foam interior: The user pulls out the foam in the right configuration for each piece of equipment. I arranged the instruments in an efficient layout on top of the foam, marked the corners of each device with drywall screws, then pulled out the chunks of foam between the screws (the foam is already scored on a 1/2-inch grid pattern, so this is easy to do). Last, I dropped each tool into its newly formed pocket.

I now have a secure, efficient way to organize and transport my lasers. And the container’s high-visibility color reminds me to take it home every night.

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*Greg Burnet owns Manor Services in Chicago.*



Available in a variety of sizes, Pelican cases are designed for camera, sound, and video equipment, but they can also accommodate optical and laser instruments.



Scored on a 1/2-inch grid, the “pick and pluck” interior can be custom-shaped by the user. Model 1450 (\$75) safely holds the author’s four lasers — with room to spare.



**Capable Cutter.** Cutting shingles for valleys, rakes, and hips has to be the slowest part of any roofing job, but the *Shingle Shear Model 2003* can speed up the process. This tool has a 20-inch blade and weighs only 16 pounds, making it easy to carry; an adjustable fence helps with repetitive cuts. It sells for \$270 to \$300; replacement blades cost \$25.

**Howard Tools**, 607/775-2200, [www.howardtools.com](http://www.howardtools.com).

**Sure-Footed.** When it comes to working safely on roofs, nothing's more important than wearing the right footwear. The replaceable high-friction pads on the soles of *Cougar Paws* roof shoes increase safety and production on virtually any roof type, says the maker. The shoes come in hiker (\$115) and work-boot (\$135) styles. Replacement traction-grip pads sell for \$15 a pair; spiked pads for tear-offs cost \$28 a pair.

**Cougar Paws**, 703/497-2997, [www.cougarpaws.com](http://www.cougarpaws.com).



**Extra Hands.** Handling fiber-cement siding panels by yourself is no small feat. Over the years, I've seen numerous tools designed to make the job easier, but only *SoloSiders* let you tweak the reveal. The devices adjust in  $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch increments from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches. According to the maker, they won't scratch the siding — and they last a lifetime. A pair sells for \$35.

**SoloSider**, 541/247-8306, [www.solosider.com](http://www.solosider.com).



## Toolbox | Storage

**Open-Ended.** A little more than five years ago, carpenter Roger Brouard revolutionized tool transport and storage with his Veto Pro Pac tool bags, which boasted zippered flaps and enough pockets to satisfy even the most obsessive-compulsive tradesperson. Now he's introduced a line of pro-duty open-top bags. Each of the three new models — OT-LC, OT-XL, and OT-XXL — can be carried one-handed and features well-designed pockets, riveted construction, and upturned polypropylene bottoms. Prices start at \$140.

**Veto Pro Pac**, 877/847-1443, [www.vetopropac.com](http://www.vetopropac.com).



**Tamper-Resistant.** Protect your tools with DeWalt's *job-site storage containers*. Available in seven models, the sturdy chests (DWJB1332, -2448, -2460, and -3048), boxes (DWJB3660 and DWJB4860, shown at left), and cabinet (DWJB5660L) have multi-point locking systems secured with puck-type padlocks. Perks include an electrical access port for battery chargers, OSHA-rated skyhooks, and extra reinforcement on lids and hinges. Prices start at about \$500.

**DeWalt**, 800/433-9258, [www.dewalt.com](http://www.dewalt.com).

**Rolling Stock.** With nearly 4,100 cubic inches of storage space, Klein Tools' *Hi-Vis Tool Box* (54701) contains a small tools-and-parts tray, a larger intermediate-tool tray, and an undivided tub for power tools. The optional Wheel Caddy (54701WC) adds wide tires and a telescoping handle for increased mobility. I found the tote online for about \$50; the wheel kit costs another \$36.

**Klein Tools**, 800/553-4676, [www.kleintools.com](http://www.kleintools.com).

