

## Makita Compact Cordless Drill and Impact Driver

by Greg Burnet

**A**s a finish carpenter and remodeler, I often find mega-power cordless tools too heavy for my needs. Instead, I look for cordless tools that are light-weight and ergonomic and fit in tight spaces. So when I first saw Makita's new compact 18-volt lithium-ion drill (BDF452HW) and impact driver (BTD142HW), I couldn't wait to try them. Easily identifiable by their white housings, the compact models are essentially smaller, lighter, less-expensive versions of Makita's blue-green lithium-ion tools.

To keep size and weight down, Makita opted for 1.5-amp-hour batteries rather than the 3-amp-hour packs used on the larger tools. (The compact tools do accept the 3-amp-hour batteries — but the smaller batteries won't fit in the larger tools.)

### Driver/Drill

Somehow, Makita has produced an 18-volt drill that feels as if it's tailored to my hand. At about 3½ pounds, it's roughly the same size and weight as my much-less-powerful 12-volt drill. It has no problem powering screws into dense material or running large spade bits, thanks to its 450 inch-pounds of torque. The two speed ranges (0 to 450 rpm and 0 to 1,500 rpm) work fine, but I'd like to see a third, higher setting for drilling metal and pocket holes. The 16-position clutch offers enough sensitivity to drive small screws.

The variable-speed trigger provides excellent control even at very slow speeds, and the ½-inch Jacobs chuck works flawlessly and holds securely. A headlight directly above the drill's trigger casts a bright light; unfortunately, it's partially obscured by the chuck.

The 15-minute charger has an internal processor and a somewhat noisy fan,

both of which make battery packs last longer, according to Makita. My one real gripe with the tool is that the manufacturer didn't include a belt hook; it's available only as an accessory. Tracking one down is a pain.

With two batteries, a charger, and a case, the drill sells for about \$200 on the Internet.

### Impact Driver

In performance and features, this tool appears to be a virtual clone of Makita's heavier, more-expensive BTD140 model. Aside from their different batteries and weights (2.8 pounds and 3.3 pounds), the two tools have nearly identical specs: 0 to 2,300 rpm, 0 to 3,200 impacts per minute, 1,280 inch-pounds of torque.

Unlike the BTD140, the compact impact driver lacks a



Sold with a soft-sided case, Makita's compact impact driver performs much like the company's larger, more expensive BTD140. However, it weighs a half-pound less, largely because it comes with smaller, 1.5-amp-hour batteries.

## Toolbox



Makita's 18-volt drill (on the left) weighs a mere 3½ pounds; the author's other 18-volt drill weighs 6 pounds and takes up significantly more space.

belt hook and bit holder, but it does have the same above-the-trigger LED light. It comes in a roomy, soft-sided bag that tends to swallow up loose bits and related accessories; they should be kept in a separate case.

As part of my testing, I used both impact drivers for the same tasks. Other than battery life, I found no discernable difference in performance. The weight discrepancy — a mere half-pound — wasn't significant enough to make the lighter tool a clear favorite. But at about \$210, the new tool costs 25 percent less than the larger model; it's a good value.

The impact-driver kit includes two 1.5 amp-hour batteries and a 45-minute charger; too bad it's not the 15-minute charger shipped with the compact drill.

Overall, I'm very pleased with both compact models. Clearly Makita has put a lot of thought into developing well-balanced and powerful — yet surprisingly lightweight — cordless tools.

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**Greg Burnet** owns Manor Services in Chicago.

## Kevlar Work Jeans

by Tim Uhler

About a year and a half ago, Duluth Trading Co. introduced a new work jean with a five-year warranty. Whoever heard of clothes that carry a warranty? Intrigued, I decided to find out if these pants were any good. I ordered two pairs, one for me and one for another carpenter.

**Durability.** The MN denim work jeans are made from a Kevlar-reinforced cotton-polyester fabric that the maker claims has four times the tensile strength and abrasion resistance of ordinary denim. I've been wearing mine to work almost every day, except when it's hot.

They're reinforced at cuffs, pockets, and waist with the company's "Fire Hose" fabric. The stuff seems to be working: My pockets are hole-free and the trouser bottoms aren't frayed. In fact, unlike most jeans, which look pretty bad after a year, this pair shows no wear at all. The other carpenter's are as good as new, too.

**Features.** The first thing people want to know about these Kevlar pants is whether they're bulletproof. The answer is no. They won't stop nails, either (don't ask).

They have oversize back pockets and triple stitching, plus a hammer loop on each side, a ruler pocket on the right leg, and a dual-compartment cargo pocket on the left.

**Comfort.** Durability is great, but pants also need to be comfortable. I normally buy my work pants too big, for comfort, but this isn't necessary with the Kevlar jeans because they have



a hidden crotch gusset and are cut to provide extra room in the legs.

**Cost.** The MN jeans sell for \$69.50 on Duluth Trading Co.'s Web site ([www.duluthtrading.com](http://www.duluthtrading.com)). That's a lot to spend for a pair of work pants — but in this case they're worth it. The only thing I don't like about them is that in warm weather they feel hotter than regular denim.

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**Tim Uhler** is a lead framer for Pioneer Builders in Port Orchard, Wash., and a JLC contributing editor.

**Cheap Insurance.** Imagine you've just installed a new tile floor over an electric radiant mat. You crank up the thermostat — and nothing happens. Watts Radiant's *LoudMouth Monitor* is designed to prevent such scenarios: Its battery-powered alarm and red LED alert installers if one of the heating elements is damaged. A green LED and a test button indicate whether it's connected and everything is working properly. The device costs about \$30.

**Watts Radiant**, 888/432-8932, [www.suntouch.com](http://www.suntouch.com).

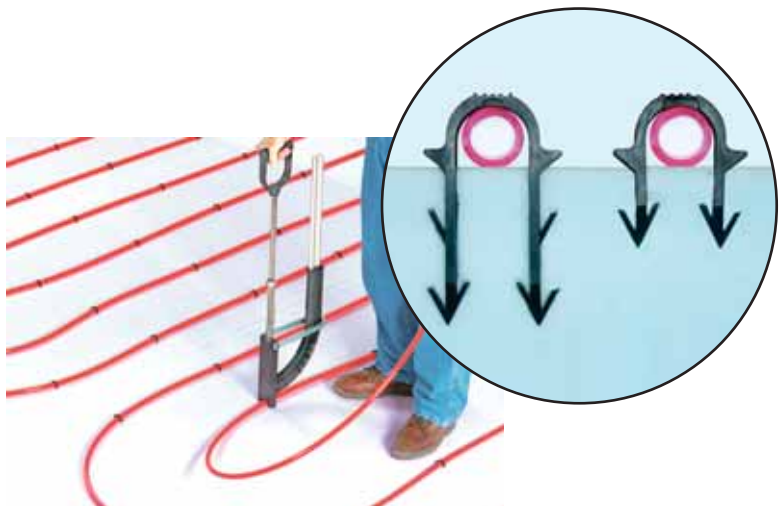


**Super Wrench.** Swapping out faucets and sinks is a mainstay of kitchen and bath remodeling. Ridgid's *Faucet and Sink Installer* can help with this job, in several ways. The ergonomically shaped wrench turns 1- and 7/8-inch faucet and supply-line nuts, frees frozen shut-offs, and secures strainer baskets for installation and removal. It costs about \$25.

**Ridgid**, 888/743-4333, [www.ridgid.com](http://www.ridgid.com).

**Hold On Tight.** Next time you have to install PEX tubing in a concrete slab, check out this cool new tool from Malco. With the *FBSN Foamboard Stapler*, you can fasten 3/8-, 1/2-, and 5/8-inch tubing onto polystyrene insulation from a standing position. The tool has an aluminum magazine and an ergonomic D-shaped handle and sells for \$260 online.

**Malco**, 800/596-3494, [www.malcoproducts.com](http://www.malcoproducts.com).



**No Limit.** Most tile saws use a sliding table or a rail-mounted motor, both of which limit the size of tile that can be cut. Raimondi's 55-pound GS86 avoids such limitations because it's set up like a table saw. It has a built-in grinding wheel and a channel on the side for putting 45-degree bevels on tile edges. The whole rig comes in a sturdy plastic case not much bigger than a breadbox and costs about \$1,500.

**Raimondi Tools USA**, 800/625-6686, [www.raimondiusa.com](http://www.raimondiusa.com).



**Soft Landing.** Want to give your knees a break? Use ProKnee's *Model 07* kneepads when you're setting floor tile. Custom-fitted and with extra cushioning and surface area, they're the most comfortable kneepads available, says the maker. They cost \$209.

**ProKnee**, 877/776-5633, [www.proknee.com](http://www.proknee.com).



**Shine On.** Speed up tile layout with a specialty laser designed just for that purpose. DeWalt's *DW060K* floor-tile layout laser projects perpendicular laser lines of up to 100 feet long. The cast aluminum base has reference marks for 22½-, 45-, and 90-degree layouts. The maker claims the device operates for 70 hours on two C batteries. The kit — case included — costs about \$250.

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

