

Lithium-Ion Drill-Driver Kit

**DCX4230 Hammerdrill and
Impact Driver Combo Kit**
DeWalt
800/433-9258
www.dewalt.com
Street price: \$449

by Greg Burnet

DeWalt's Nano line of batteries and tools is the latest addition to the lithium-ion bandwagon. The key advantage LI technology offers over nickel-cadmium and nickel-metal-hydrate batteries is decreased weight: LI batteries often weigh in substantially lighter than nicad batteries of the same voltage, and an 18-volt Nano battery weighs about the same as a 12-volt nicad battery. In use, I've found the LI batteries deliver

about the same power and runtime as the 18-volt XRP nicads I'm accustomed to using.

Two other benefits to the Nano batteries are that, unlike nicads, the batteries have no memory and they don't suffer from self-discharge to the degree nicads do, according to DeWalt. This means the packs should have a much longer lifespan than traditional batteries, and once they're charged, they should be able to sit for months without a noticeable loss in power.

The kit my crew and I field-tested included the new DC92718V hammerdrill and DC827 impact driver. Both tools were redesigned to work with the new battery platform. Both performed extremely well, though there were no discernable differences in torque and runtime between them and the nicad versions I've used so often in the past. What sets these new tools apart from the older XRP line are their weight and balance, which make them much more comfortable and less fatiguing to use.

The impact driver is my new favorite, due to its compact size, light weight, and raw power. It provided plenty of torque for running 4-inch GRK Rugged Structural screws into a pressure-treated deck frame we were building. And thanks to its high rpm output, it made short work of fastening steel studs together using self-drilling TEK screws on another project. The best thing is that all this ability comes in a lightweight package — just a hair under 3³/₄ pounds. The LED headlight is a nice feature, as well.

The hammerdrill, while not as comfortable as the impact driver, is a nice



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tool in its own right. It's lighter and better balanced than my old nicad model, and offers three speed ranges (0-400 rpm, 0-1,500 rpm, 0-1,800 rpm), a more comfortable grip, and a great self-tightening chuck.

I did find one disadvantage to the LI batteries: In very cold conditions, they didn't perform nearly as well as their nicad counterparts. Perfor-

mance dropped off when temperatures were around freezing and below, and the batteries had to be warmed up before they would take a charge. We've encountered this problem with several other manufacturers' LI batteries, as well.

While this may be an issue for those who work outside in colder climates, the new batteries and tools from

DeWalt are real winners in my book. I'm sold on their comfort, since I've grown tired of lugging heavy 18-volt nicad tools around — yet still want the performance this voltage offers. DeWalt has clearly delivered here.

Greg Burnet is a remodeling contractor and deck builder in Berwyn, Ill.

Walk-Behind Skid Steer Lightens the Load

Dingo
The Toro Company
888/384-9939
www.toro.com
Rents for: \$200 per day

by James Kidd

can dig Sonotube footings in no time flat with an auger attachment.

Attach a bucket and you can move tons of gravel, bluestone, or dirt without breaking your back. I'm told more than 30 attachments are available for this machine, including one for mixing concrete.

The Dingo is a snap to operate: After spending only about 10 minutes with the machine, you'll be comfortable enough to work with it. A steering bar moves the machine in whatever direction you need and acts like an extension of your arm. You don't need to push or pull this tool. And it can get into some tight spaces. A joystick on the right of the steering bar makes it simple to operate the loader arm.

The machine easily fits in the back of a pickup truck, but I prefer towing it on the trailer. I rented the machine for \$200 for the day, thinking it would take that long to dig a dozen 54-inch-deep footings — but I was finished well before lunch.

James Kidd is a remodeling contractor and writer in Ghent, N.Y.



THE TORO COMPANY

Update

CP505A-12 ProSite Protractor
Starrett
978/249-3551
www.starrett.com
Street price: \$85



In *Tool Kit* in the January/February 2007 issue of *Professional Deck Builder*, we reported on the Starrett 505A ProSite 12-inch protractor. Starrett has updated a good tool with the addition of a second protractor scale on the back, as well as a scale that converts standard roof pitches to degrees. — *Andy Engel*

Handy-Sized Metal-Connector Nailer

MCN-150 StrapShot
Stanley Bostitch
800/556-6696
www.bostitch.com
Street price: \$230



Tim Landry, the manager of the Lombard, Ill., branch of Berland's House of Tools, arranged for me to try out the new Bostitch MCN-150 metal-connector nailer. Although my company builds its share of decks, at that point we happened to be in the middle of a major renovation on an old Victorian house. No matter — this tool will be just as handy on our next deck job.

The task at hand required removing a bearing wall, installing an engineered-lumber beam, and attaching a couple of dozen hangers to some very hard 125-year-old southern yellow pine joists on either side of the beam. The space was tight and hand nailing was out of the question. A palm nailer might have worked, but it would have been slow and loud. However, the compact (10½ inches high and 11½ inches long) MCN-150 made getting in these tight spaces no problem.

Installing the hangers required working from a scaffold. It also required some contortions to reach all the hangers. Again, the compactness and light weight (4.6 pounds) of the gun was an advantage over others I've used. And it had no trouble driving 1½-inch-long, .148-inch-diameter nails into either material, providing the compressor was set to at least 100 PSI. The gun would leave nails slightly proud if the pressure dropped much below 100 PSI.

Working from below with irregular joist spacing meant it wasn't always easy to see exactly where to nail. It would have been even more difficult if the gun didn't have such an excellent line of sight. It's the point of the leading nail, rather than a probe, that's placed in the hardware's holes. The nail tip is easily visible, and we had no trouble placing nails, even in the toughest of spots.

The Bostitch MCN-150 drives both 1½-inch-long .131 and .148 paper-collated nails. (A similar tool, the MCN-250, which uses both 1½-inch and 2½-inch metal-connector nails, is recently available.) Bostitch offers the nails in HDG, which is approved for use with ACQ lumber, and in regular hardened steel. Paslode and Hitachi nails fit the gun, too.

The gun has performed flawlessly for nine months, and I've come to appreciate its adjustable exhaust and low nail lockout, as well as its comfortable grip. If I had to pick out a flaw, it would be the lack of a built-in belt hook. While it's easy to add an aftermarket hook, it would be nice if Bostitch incorporated a compact swing-out hook on the end of the gun.

That minor criticism aside, I'd say that Bostitch has come up with a nearly perfect metal-connector gun for remodelers and deck builders. — G.B.

