

King-Size Miter Saw Is a Winner by Chris Green

6955-20 12-Inch Sliding Dual-Bevel Miter Saw
Milwaukee Electric Tool Corp.
800/729-3878
milwaukeetool.com
Street price: \$690

At 65 pounds, the Milwaukee 6955-20 is a big miter saw — but big material calls for a big saw. Like most saws in its class, moving it requires two hands.

Though the 6955-20 is weighty, it's not unwieldy. In fact, it's surprising how smoothly the saw operates. Its head rolls like a dream on slide rails, and its soft start reduces the initial jolt of the 15-amp motor.

The saw has a couple of features to help with precision. A 1/10-degree miter-angle fine adjustment makes

crosscut needed no adjustment. It has all the usual detent settings and can easily crosscut 2x12s and 1-by up to 14 inches and can miter a 2x10. The 12-inch blade will cut nearly 5 inches deep across most of the crosscutting range of the saw.

Because the motor is placed above and behind the blade, the saw can cut full 2-inch stock 6½ inches tall. I'm not sure when a deck builder would need this capacity, though, unless for an occasional inside job working with big base molding.

The saw's bevel adjustment is in the rear, which at first seemed like it might be less convenient than having it in the front, as some competing saws do. However, the large, flat lever handle was easy to engage and disengage, and the rear bevel adjustment proved to be no inconvenience at all. The beefy 3/8-inch-thick steel depth stop is reassuring for a saw this size and flips out of the way for intermittent use. Its thumbscrew adjustment feels secure and comfortable.

Worth noting is dust collection that actually collects sawdust — not everything but most of it — which is a big improvement over saws I've used in the past.

I don't have much to nitpick about. The blade guard whacked my thumb a few times as I lowered the blade until I learned to keep out of its way. And the manufacturer-supplied, 60-tooth, ATB blade was nothing to brag about, though it was fine for framing material. But all in all, the Milwaukee 6955-20 is a great new saw.

Chris Green is a remodeling contractor in New Milford, Conn.



it easy to change a miter angle just slightly and then accurately repeat it. And although it's a simple idea, my favorite feature might be the two lights, one mounted on each side of the blade. I've always thought carpenters deserved to see their cut lines, especially when existing light is bad.

When it comes to actually cutting through wood, this saw is a winner. Right out of the box, the 90-degree

Clamp Holds Hangers While You Nail

HangerPal Joist Hanger Tool
HangerPal
207/460-4588
hangerpal.com
Street Cost: \$5.95 plus shipping

by Mike Guertin

Some of the most useful tools I carry in my tool bags are the simplest: a hammer, a mini pry bar, a knife, a pencil, a pair of pliers, a screwdriver — and now a HangerPal.

A HangerPal is a U-shaped piece of spring steel that clamps metal hangers to joists in a flash. For years, I

held hangers with one hand and shot in nails from a metal-connector gun in the other. With every trigger pull I wondered when my luck would run out and I'd get a misfire in a finger. Sure, I could drive in the hanger tangs for a temporary hold, but the opposite side always seemed to pop off when I fired in a nail.

The HangerPal eliminates that safety problem and speeds production. The ends of the U are flared and slip right up from the bottom of a hanger that's positioned around a joist end. A stiff push with your hand seats the HangerPal, clamping the joist hanger in place whether you're driving nails pneumatically or by hand.

The slender spring-steel rod snuggles right up against the flanges, so it doesn't obstruct any of the nail holes. It takes three seconds to position and clamp the joist hanger with the HangerPal and one second to remove it.

You could make do with just one HangerPal, but I find working with three or four lets me clamp on a series of hangers within reach of my gun and nail them all off. Then I set up on the next group of joists.

My only gripe is the color — black. Drop your HangerPal in deep grass and you'll be hunting for a while. I got wise after losing one the first day out and painted the remaining three bright orange.

Mike Guertin is a carpenter in East Greenwich, R.I.



Lightweight Titanium Utility Bars

TiBar 12 and TiBar 16

Stiletto Tools

800/987-1849

stiletto.tools.com

Street cost: TiBar 12, \$170;

TiBar 16, \$250

Yeah, they're expensive. But you know what? They're lightweight — and I suspect I'm not alone in having reached an age when strapping on my toolbelt means that by the end of the day my legs hurt and my back aches. Shaving ounces is a mission.

My regular old steel cat's paw weighs a pound, and my flat bar weighs 1¹/₄ pounds. The TiBar 12, at 15 ounces, weighs in only slightly lighter, and the TiBar 16 — at 2 pounds — weighs more; however, the TiBar is more versatile than either of my steel bars and can do the job of both.

A TiBar pulls nails the same way a cat's paw does: You drive the sharp end of the bar into the wood under the nail head. Also, it has a second puller that works like a flat bar for nails whose heads are proud of the wood. And finally, a set of parallel jaws fits around 2-by stock, providing a grip to lever twisted joists straight.

Both TiBar models have a hammer head as well; the one on the TiBar 16 has a replaceable steel face. I'm a bit dubious of the hammer head, but then again, why not? I'm sure that my tendency to use the tool in hand for the task at hand means it will see some service.

Clearly, given my mission to lighten the load in my toolbelt, I'm not going



to carry both of these tools around. For building decks, though, tossing my cat's paw *and* my flat bar in favor of a TiBar 12 seems a no-brainer. It's lighter than its big brother and perfectly suited to deck framing. And it takes a smaller bite out of my wallet, the one place I don't mind some extra weight. — *Andy Engel* ❖