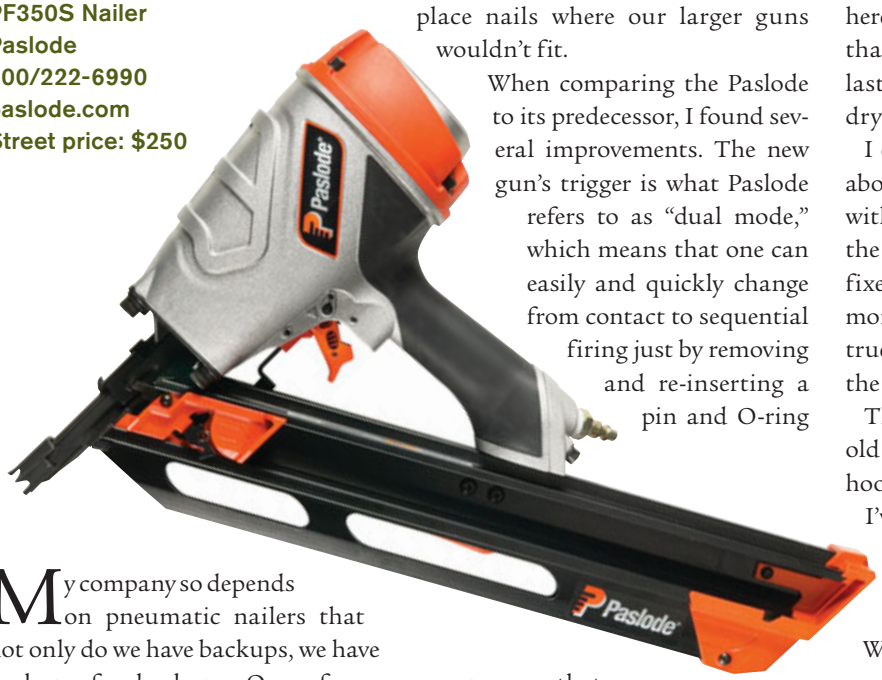
# Compact Nailer Sinks Them Deep

by Greg Burnet

**PF350S Nailer**
**Paslode**
**800/222-6990**
**paslode.com**
**Street price: $250**




My company so depends on pneumatic nailers that not only do we have backups, we have backups for backups. One of our frontline nailers for over 10 years has been Paslode's Powermaster Plus. It's been a workhorse, so I was more than happy for the chance to put the newest Paslode framing nailer through its paces.

The PF350S is a stick gun capable of shooting 6d to 16d nails into even the toughest engineered lumber. It fires 30-degree paper-collated nails in diameters from .113 to .131. It never failed to sink the fasteners we were using, whether we were nailing into treated southern yellow pine or LVLs, providing our compressor kept it fed with a steady operating pressure of at least 100 psi.

Despite its power, the PF350S is a compact and fairly lightweight tool, weighing about 7½ pounds and standing just 13 inches high from the nose to the top of the exhaust cap. The compact size came in handy in several situations, allowing us to place nails where our larger guns wouldn't fit.

When comparing the Paslode to its predecessor, I found several improvements. The new gun's trigger is what Paslode refers to as "dual mode," which means that one can easily and quickly change from contact to sequential firing just by removing and re-inserting a pin and O-ring — a process that takes only seconds. Also, the depth-of-drive adjustment is dramatically improved: Now all that's needed to increase or decrease the depth is the simple turn of a thumbwheel located on the nose of the gun. The work contact is more aggressive, helping to prevent the gun from skidding when toenailing. Finally, the new tool is easier to load than the old one, thanks to a simple two-step rear-load magazine: Simply insert the fasteners and then pull back on the follower. I like this style magazine because there's less fussing than with top-loading guns, allowing for faster reloads.

One feature I feel all nailers should have is a dry-fire lockout, to keep a gun from being fired when there are no nails in the magazine. Dry firing is hard on a gun, leading to broken driver blades and potentially shortening its life. Paslode has delivered here as well, with a mechanical arm that moves into position after the last nail is expended, preventing a dry fire.

I do have a couple of minor gripes about the tool. Paslode has done away with the directional exhaust cap of the previous model. In its place is a fixed metal cap that's touted as being more durable. While that's likely true, I miss not being able to direct the exhaust.

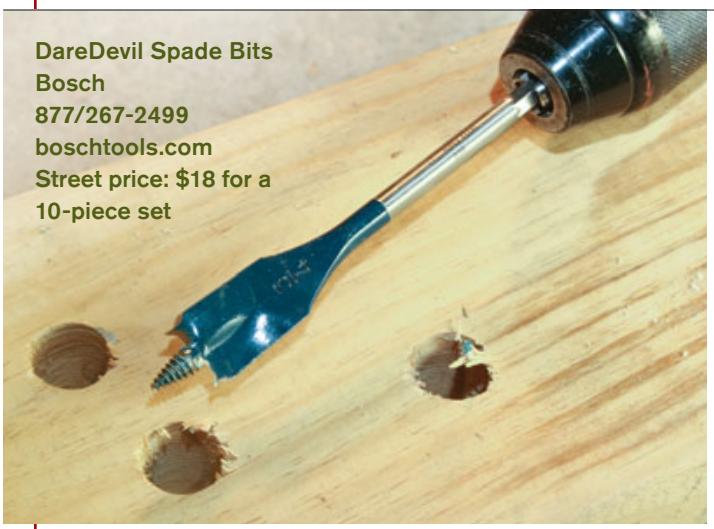
Then there's the rafter hook. Our old Powermaster guns have steel hooks that I rank among the best I've ever used. The hook on the new gun is plastic.

I'm not sold on this for two reasons. The first is durability. While we haven't broken ours, I question whether the hook can stand up to the abuse and rigors of some sites. Second, the hook has a fair amount of flex to it. This caused the gun to sometimes "list" to one side when we hung it from the hook — something our other guns never do.

Minor gripes aside, Paslode has built a very nice tool. It's comfortable to use, thanks to its light weight and nice molded rubber grip. And although it's technically a clipped-head gun, it can shoot Paslode's offset round-head nails. That's of great value to us, since we prefer to use round-head nails wherever possible but don't want to deal with the hassle and mess of plastic-collated nails. All in all, the positives are great and the quibbles few, so I'd encourage anyone in the market for a new stick nailer to check out the PF350S.

*Greg Burnet is a deck builder and remodeler in Berwyn, Ill.*

# Fast and Clean Spade Bits



**DareDevil Spade Bits**
**Bosch**
**877/267-2499**
**boschtools.com**
**Street price: $18 for a 10-piece set**

When I was a kid, my father would get me out of his way for hours by giving me a brace and bit and a chunk of wood. In the 40-some years since, I've drilled thousands of holes in wood. Tens of thousands, probably.

For holes between 1/4 inch and 1 1/2 inches, I've favored spade bits. They're workhorses — not the fastest but easily controlled, and they leave a clean hole, at least on the front face of the wood. Neither the old square-shouldered bits nor the newer ones with spur cutters bore a clean exit hole, though. When that counted, I'd drill until the point just came through the back side, then flip the board over and finish the hole from the reverse side. It was a little tedious, and the hole didn't always align perfectly, but it was usually good enough.

A few months ago, Bosch sent me a 3/4-inch DareDevil spade bit to try out. It looked kind of cool, with an auger point and a twisty shape where most spade bits are flat. But still, it was just a spade bit. I left it sitting in its package all summer. Then last night, in a fit of boredom, I chucked it up and ran it through some treated 2-by. Holy moley! That thing drilled like John D. Rockefeller loosed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge! It was fast, with the auger tip pulling the bit through the work and saving me the effort of pushing. Yet despite its aggressiveness, the DareDevil was easily controlled by slowing the drill's speed.

Most impressive, however, were the exit holes. You can see them in the photo above. Yep, that is the backside of the board you're looking at. Those exit holes are cleaner than a lot of holes I've drilled in the faces of boards. A full set of DareDevil bits just made it onto my Christmas list. — *Andy Engel* ❖