

Makita Cordless Random Orbit Sander

by David Frane

Makita has been on a roll, having recently introduced 18-volt cordless versions of tools previously available only with cords: a sliding compound miter saw, a power planer, and now the LXOB01 random orbit sander. When I first heard about this sander, I couldn't help wondering: Why? The cordless sanders I'd seen before were aimed at the DIY market, and it simply hadn't occurred to me that a company would make one for pros.

A push-button switch starts the tool and toggles through high, medium, and low speeds (the other button stops the tool). The sander takes 5-inch 8-hole hook-and-loop disks.



The dust-collection bag, though not highly efficient, does collect most of the dust. This pile of dust, which I dumped onto the bench after 10 to 15 minutes of sanding, filled the collection bag about halfway.



LXOB01 Specs

Speed: 7,000, 9,500, and 11,000 OPM (oscillations per minute)

Weight w/battery, paper, & bag (by author): 3.9 pounds

Disk diameter: 5 inches

Orbit diameter: 1/8 inch

Price: \$280 for the kit; \$100 for bare tool

Kit includes: tool, two 3.0-Ah LXT batteries, charger, dust bag, and carry bag

Makita, 800/462-5482, makita.com

Performance

Though I've had the LXOB01 for only a few weeks, I've used it enough to say that it works surprisingly well. It's slightly slower and about a half-pound heavier than comparable corded models (it's based on the BO5031), but it feels very similar in use. When I put a 100-grit disk on the tool and sanded the face, sides, and edges of some rough redwood fence boards, it removed the surface material quickly, and the convenience of not having a cord to deal with partially offset the additional weight.

According to Makita, the tool can sand for 20 minutes at high speed and 40 minutes at low speed on a 3.0-Ah battery. To find out if this was true, I installed a 100-grit disk and timed how long it took to deplete a fully charged battery while sanding redwood at high speed. The tool ran strong for 25 minutes, at which point the motor slowed and made it clear that the battery was just about empty.

When testing cordless tools I'm in the habit of stopping every so often to let motors and batteries cool. This turned out to be unnecessary with the sander — the battery remained cool and the tool never became more than slightly warm. Evidently, sanding doesn't strain motors and batteries the way drilling big holes or driving lags does.

A Secondary Tool

One question I can't answer is whether this tool will catch on. I do most of my work in a shop or in rooms where I need to do a really good job collecting the dust. In those places it's easy enough to use a corded model that connects to a dust-collecting vac, so there's no great advantage in going cordless.

However, I could see adding this sander to my kit as a secondary tool for those occasional tasks where I need to be mobile and am not that concerned about collecting dust — jobs like sanding decks and exterior trim, working from ladders and staging, and doing interior work where I have to cover a lot of ground (finishing up a punch list, for instance).

David Frane is the editor of Tools of the Trade. This review originally appeared in his blog on toolsofthetrade.net.