



Cool Tools for 2014

Bar-raising products from the annual STAFDA show

BY BRUCE GREENLAW

Walking the aisles at the annual Specialty Tools & Fasteners Distributors Association (STAFDA) trade show is like being in the front row at the tool industry's Super Bowl. Hundreds of tool and hardware manufacturers display and demonstrate their latest wares to distributors and retailers. For *JLC*, the STAFDA show represents a golden opportunity to talk shop with manufacturers large and small to get a preview of the exciting products that are going to be available over the coming year.

Here is a cross-section of noteworthy products we saw at the latest STAFDA show, which was held last November in Las Vegas.

1. CUTTING-EDGE ACCESSORIES

Spyder Products has only been around since 2008, but it has already introduced several unique power tool accessories. Take its German-made chrome-vanadium jigsaw blades, for instance, which have teeth on both edges. I was told that the rear teeth help clear the kerf—to prevent binding, bending, and breaking—while creating a cleaner cut by acting as a sander. The rear teeth also allow the blades to cut in reverse. At the Spyder booth, I watched a blade make a tortuous cut in $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood. The blade was pushed hard while repeatedly turning on a dime; it even pivoted in place without breaking.

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In a separate demo, a carbide-tipped Spyder Pro TCT hole saw (previous page, top right) punched through a 3/4-inch plywood sample in a heartbeat. The “Rapid Switch” and “Rapid Core Eject” hole saws can bore through a variety of materials, including wood, brick, and fiber cement. Spyder offers other noteworthy accessories, too, including double-sided blades for oscillating multi-tools (previous page, left). **Spyder, 888.471.2239, spyderproducts.com**

2. DUAL-BATTERY CIRCULAR SAW

Makita’s new 36-volt 7 1/4-inch circular saw is the latest addition to the 18V X2 LXT lineup of cordless tools, joining a rotary hammer, a chain saw, a blower, and a hedge trimmer. Each is powered by two batteries (hence the X2) from the company’s flagship 18-volt LXT lithium-ion platform, which includes more than 70 tools. According to Makita, the circular saw weighs 10.1 pounds with the batteries installed and cuts 2 3/8 inches deep at 90° and 1 1/8 inches deep at 45°. The bare tool (XSH01Z) includes a blade and costs about \$230. The kit (XSH01X) adds two batteries, a charger, and a tool bag, and it costs about \$420. **Makita, 800.462.5482, makita.com**

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3. RECHARGEABLE THREE-PLANE LASER

Spectra Precision’s new self-leveling LT56 Universal Laser Layout Tool is designed to compete with the versatile Bosch GLL3-80. Both project one horizontal and two vertical 360° reference lines in three perpendicular planes that, depending on the modes you select, can collectively establish plumb, level, or square for any interior application. Both also have a pulse function so you can use them outdoors with a detector. They’re accurate to within 1/4 inch at 100 feet, and they allow you to override the self-leveling function for slope work. Unlike the Bosch, however—which is powered by four AA batteries that are said to deliver from five to 18 hours of runtime—the Spectra Precision uses a rechargeable 3.7-volt lithium-ion battery that’s designed to deliver from 25 to 45 hours of runtime on a full charge. According to the manufacturer, the LT56 also projects brighter and crisper lines than the Bosch. The LT56 costs about \$450 and includes a case and a universal bracket. The LT56-2 costs about \$550 and adds a detector. **Spectra Precision, 888.527.3771, spectralasers.com**

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4. PNEUMATIC SHINGLE CUTTER

The new Captain Edge model HB-150 pneumatic hook-blade cutter by PneuTools resembles the Ridgid model R040SCA roofing cutter and is in fact made in the same Taiwan factory. Delivering 9,600 strokes per minute, it cuts roofing paper, roll roofing, and composition shingles (including architectural shingles) and can trim layered shingles at rake edges. The trick is to start the cut and let the tool and its beefy replaceable hook blade do the work. For best results, PneuTools recommends using a compressor with at least a 5-gallon tank and a minimum output of 4.9 SCFM. The HB-150 weighs 1 pound, and at 10 1/2 inches long with a blade installed, it will slip into most toolbelts. It costs between \$80 and \$100, including a hook blade. **PneuTools, 888.689.2529, pneutools.net**



5. RUNAWAY RUNTIME

In 2012, Metabo introduced one of the first batteries to be rated at 4 amp-hours to the U.S. At the STAFDA show, the company displayed the world's first 5.2-amp-hour battery, which it is plugging into its 18-volt lineup of cordless tools. According to Metabo, the new battery is the same size and weight as its 4-amp-hour battery but delivers more power and, predictably, about 30% more run-time on a full charge. It costs about \$140 and packs a three-year warranty. **Metabo, 800.638.2264, metabo.us**

6. CORDLESS JOBSITE FLOODLIGHT

The typical cordless work light used to be a xenon flashlight that came with cordless combo kits. But new models have been rolling out lately and redefining the category. Milwaukee's new M18 18-volt floodlight, for instance, contains eight LEDs with two output settings emitting up to 1,100 lumens at an intensity of up to 1,300 lux. An octagonal bumper on each end keeps the light stable when you rotate it to direct the beam. You can also stand it on a vertical piece of ½-inch EMT conduit, string it up with mason's line, or hang it on a nail. I watched a demonstration at the booth, and I was impressed. The light costs about \$100 without the batteries or charger. **Milwaukee, 800.729.3878, milwaukeeetool.com**

7. 21-GAUGE PINNER

Judging by recent threads in the *JLC* Finish Carpentry online forum, 21-gauge brad and pin nailers are gaining serious traction with carpenters who appreciate fasteners that provide significantly more holding power than 23-gauge pins and leave much smaller entry holes than 18-gauge brads. Popular models are made by Cadex and Omer, but Senco just became the first mainstream power-tool manufacturer to join the conversation. The company's new 2.7-pound FinishPro 21LXP fires 21-gauge headless and slight-head pins from ⅝ inch to 2 inches long. Deluxe features include last-nail lockout to prevent dry firing, a narrow nose for easy access, a reversible belt hook, and a jam-clearing wrench and extra no-mar pad that store on board. The tool is scheduled to hit the market in late March and will cost about \$250, case included. **Senco, 800.543.4596, senco.com**

8. MAKING HISTORY

I've read in the *JLC* online forums that Jenny compressors, which are made in Pennsylvania, are related to the vintage Emglo compressors that still command respect in the construction industry. At the Jenny booth, national sales manager Ken Jones told me that Jenny had indeed supplied compressor components to Emglo for more than 30 years and now makes the same components for its own compressors. Jenny offers a variety of models, from industrial stationary compressors to hand-carry and wheeled portables, like the wheeled 8-gallon twin-tank model K15A-8P shown here. That compressor lists for \$1,046. **Jenny, 888.425.3669, jennyproductsinc.com**

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9. PNEUMATIC TROWEL

ESI has introduced what it believes to be the first pneumatic walk-behind trowels. Unlike gas-powered trowels, the tools don't emit hazardous fumes in enclosed spaces, nor are they subject to the line loss suffered by electric trowels fed by long power cords. The padded handles are adjustable to reduce fatigue, and they house a safety switch that shuts off the tool if you lose control. The blade pitch adjusts quickly to move from floating to finishing. According to ESI, the machines need between 80 and 100 SCFM of air flow at around 110 psi to operate properly and are typically powered by towable gas-powered compressors. The 36-inch model EWT90A costs about \$3,600, and the 48-inch model EWT120A is about \$4,300. ESI is also rolling out related pneumatic tools, including rammers and vibratory plates. **ESI, 866.648.7101, theesichoice.com**

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10. BUCKET BOSS REBOOT

The original canvas Bucket Boss tool organizer, which fits over a 5-gallon bucket, hit the market in the late 1980s, and for the next several years, the company greatly expanded its product offerings. During the past decade, though, the brand has been mired in buyouts and consolidations. Pull'R Holding Co. is now relaunching it by reviving many of the original products, as well as introducing the new Bucket Boss Professional line of tool bags, toolbelts, and knee pads. Three of my favorites are the Contractor's Portfolio briefcase (#62200, \$24, not shown), which accommodates an iPad; the Pro Drop-Bottom 18 tool bag (#68018, \$100), which has a divided drop-bottom compartment for organizing accessories; and the Ballistic Suspension Rig (#57100, \$140), which has roomy pockets and stretch suspenders. **Pull'R Holding Co., 888.797.7855, bucketboss.com**

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11. CORDLESS IMPACT DRIVER/WRENCH

The distinctive Socket Ready chuck on Bosch's new model IDH182 18-volt brushless impact driver accepts not only 1/4-inch hex bits but also 1/2-inch square-drive impact-ready sockets. That eliminates the need to use a socket adapter with your impact driver and addresses most of the jobsite applications that would normally require a separate impact wrench. The tool offers three speed/torque settings and delivers up to 1,650 inch-pounds of torque. According to Bosch, when used as an impact wrench, the tool has enough power to sink 3/8x6-inch lag screws into hardwood or to drive the lag screws required for fastening deck ledgers to rim joists. Three LED lights help illuminate the work. The model IDH182-01L includes a pair of 4-amp-hour batteries, a charger, and an L-Boxx-2 case and costs \$330. The IDH182-02L includes two 2-amp-hour batteries with the charger and case and costs \$280. A third model, the IDH182BL bare tool, includes the case only and costs \$200. **Bosch, 877.267.2499, boschtools.com**

12. POWERFUL PLIERS

Thanks to the innovative pivoting action that multiplies their leverage, Crescent's new Pivot Pro 8-inch diagonal, 8-inch long-

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nose, and 9-inch linesman pliers cut materials with 40% less effort than usual, according to the manufacturer. That's a blessing for doing any repetitive cutting, and it can make the difference between one- and two-handed cutting with some materials, such as heavy electrical cable. The tools are scheduled to launch at The Home Depot in April. The diagonal and long-nose pliers will each cost about \$18, and the linesman version will cost about \$20. **Crescent, 800.688.8949, apexhandtools.com**

13. STRONG, SLEEK COIL FRAMING NAILER

Stick-style framing nailers outsell coil-style models in the U.S., but coil framing nailers are more popular in some parts of the country and globally. They're significantly heavier than stick nailers when fully loaded, but they can fire far more nails between reloads. MAX recently replaced its model CN890II SuperFramer coil nailer with the CN890F SuperFramer, shaving about an inch off the height for improved accessibility and a few ounces off the weight, while boosting the power by 7.2%. The magazine was also redesigned for easier reloading. The tool drives 15° wire-collated nails from 2 to 3 1/2 inches long. It costs about \$350, about 15% less than its predecessor. **Max USA, 800.223.4293, maxusacorp.com**

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14. GET A GRIP

Swanson Tool's new Savage brand GripLine tape measures have a distinctive rotating magnetic blade hook that can grab rounded edges and the curved surfaces of cylindrical objects up to 2 inches—or even more—in diameter. The sample I tried at the Swanson booth easily pulled measurements from 2 1/2-inch black iron pipe, 2-inch PVC pipe, a chain-link-fence post, metal conduit, and a metal stud. The tapes have nylon-coated blades with a scale on both sides, a spring-loaded lever-action belt clip, and a blade standout of 8 1/2 feet. They come in lengths of 16, 25, and 30 feet and cost from \$17 to \$24. **Swanson Tool Co., 800.291.3471, swansontoolco.com**

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15. EASY DRIVER

When I spotted Channellock's Code Blue 13 'N 1 ratcheting screwdriver at the show, it reminded me of the terrific Megapro multi-bit screwdrivers that I've been using for years. They have a patented bit cartridge in the handle that makes it exceptionally easy to select and install a bit. You just pull out the cartridge until it stops, rotate it to find the bit you need, pop out the bit, push the cartridge back into the handle, and insert the bit into the shaft. That normally takes only a few seconds. The shaft doubles as a 1/4-inch hex driver.

Not surprisingly, it turns out that Channellock's screwdriver is made by Megapro. Its cartridge holds six double-end bits that have various slotted, Phillips, Torx, and square-recess tips. The double-duty bits can also be chucked into an electric drill. The screwdriver's dual-composition grip and rugged 28-tooth ratchet enable you to apply up to 225 inch-pounds of driving torque. Cost is about \$35. **Channellock, 800.724.3018, channellock.com**

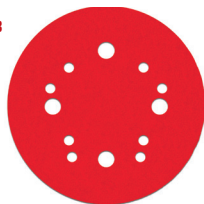


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16. LIGHTER LADDERS

DeWalt and Werner both introduced Type IA D-rung fiberglass extension ladders that use lightweight composite rails to reduce the weight. DeWalt's 24-foot model DXL3021-24 and 28-foot model DXL3021-28 weigh 45 and 53 pounds, respectively. Werner's D6400-2 series of Lightweight Performance (LP) ladders come in lengths of 16, 20, 24, and 28 feet and weigh from 32 to 53 pounds. Overall, both companies' ladders weigh roughly 12% to 15% less than equivalent ladders with standard fiberglass rails. Prices top out at around \$570 for the 28-footers. **DeWalt, 800.433.9258, dewalt.com; Werner, 888.523.3371, us.wernerco.com**

17. COMPACT MAG DRILL

In case you missed it, California builder Sim Ayers wrote about his Hougen HMD904 portable magnetic drill in *Toolbox* (Dec/13). Using annular cutters, the tool can quickly bore holes up to 1 ½ inches in diameter in steel up to 2 inches thick. Ayers uses it to bore holes through steel I-beam flanges and steel plates to make mechanical connections that satisfy the seismic requirements of the California Building Standards Code. The tool costs about \$925 and weighs 27½ pounds.

Fein's new Slugger brand JHM ShortSlugger portable magnetic drill can bore holes up to 1 ¾ inches in diameter by 2 inches deep, costs \$700, and weighs just 22 pounds. At only 11 inches tall, it also squeezes into tight spaces. In fact, according to Fein, the ShortSlugger weighs less, costs less, and is more compact than any other model in its class. Like the Hougen, it's made in the U.S. **Fein, 800.441.9878, jancy.com.**

18. FAST AND CLEAN SANDING DISCS

Diablo's new 5-inch hook-and-loop universal sanding discs have a unique 12-hole pattern to allow through-the-pad dust collection with all five-hole and eight-hole random-orbit sanders. According to Diablo, a series of two-minute, third-party sanding tests revealed that, on average, 80-grit samples of its new discs removed 54% more material from hard maple and delivered 49% better dust collection than 80-grit samples from its three leading competitors. Diablo said it achieved these results primarily through the optimal distribution and orientation of its ceramic-based grains and the distinct layout of its small and large dust holes. The 60-grit to 220-grit discs are sold in packages of four, 15, and 50, as well as in two 7-piece project packs. Prices range from about \$5 to \$20 per pack. **Diablo, 800.334.4107, diablotoools.com**

19. POTENT CORDLESS MULTI-TOOL

A recurring theme at the show was that many of the latest cordless tools with brushless motors perform as well as their corded counterparts. At the DeWalt booth, though, I was told that its new cordless model DCS355D1 brushless 20V MAX XR oscillating multi-tool actually outperforms its new corded model DWE315K. Powered by a 2-amp-hour battery, the cordless version shares

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several key features with the corded one, including an extra-large “Dual Grip” variable-speed trigger, an accessory system that allows you to quickly swap out attachments by squeezing a lever, and an LED headlight. The kit costs about \$200 and has one battery, a charger, a universal accessory adapter, a contractor bag, and various cutting and sanding accessories, including a guide that allows you to adjust the depth and height of your cuts. The bare tool (model DCS355B) costs about \$130. **DeWalt, 800.433.9258, dewalt.com**

20. FOAM-SLICING SAW BLADES

Once, on a large industrial job, I had to cut truckloads of rigid foam with a table saw, and I will never forget the odor and clouds of clingy dust that were generated. Bullet Tools’ new Centerfire circular saw blades look to be a brilliant solution to those problems. The blades have a knife edge rather than saw teeth, and they quickly slice through rigid foam panels (including foil-faced varieties) and insulating concrete forms, leaving factory-smooth edges—without creating a dust storm. The 7 1/4-inch blade costs \$60; the 10-inch, \$90. We’ll take the two blades for a spin in a future *Toolbox* column. **Bullet Tools, 800.406.8998, bullettools.com**

21. BUDGET UNIVERSAL SAFETY GLASSES

After trying on some SecureFit safety glasses at the 3M booth, I decided they’re not only ingenious but a bargain. Weighing less than an ounce, the glasses flex at the temples so they comfortably and securely fit just about anyone. The 200 Series (\$2.25 or \$2.41 per pair) offers clear, amber, and gray anti-fog or anti-scratch lenses. The 400 Series (\$3.25 per pair) adds soft adjustable nose pads that help reduce slippage, padded temple touch points, and a hint of neon green along with a choice of clear anti-fog, gray anti-fog, or indoor/outdoor mirror lenses. To view a video, visit the Safety Video Center at 3M’s website. **3M, 800.328.1667, 3m.com/occsafety**

22. REMODELING-FRIENDLY TILE SAW

Husqvarna’s TS 60 wet tile saw, which won a 2013 Editors’ Choice Award from *Tools of the Trade*, looks formidable in person. It comes with a folding stand; has wheels, so it can be maneuvered by one person; adjusts easily to make diagonal, bevel, and plunge cuts; and can rip 24-inch tiles and cut 20-inch tiles diagonally. It also features electronic soft start and protective circuitry with an LED warning light; cleans the water for reuse; and includes other refinements, such as a built-in bull’s-eye level. But the big story is its water containment system, which delivers water to the blade from below rather than above the tile to shield the jobsite from the usual overspray and slurry—just the ticket for remodeling. It can also deliver the water conventionally if needed. Price: \$1,200. **Husqvarna, 800.288.5040, husqvarna.com**

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23. LINEAR COMPACT CIRCULAR SAW

My 28-year-old Porter-Cable 4 1/2-inch model 314 wormdrive trim saw has been a savior on countless remodeling jobs because it fits into tight spaces, has a longer reach than conventional compact sidewinders, and allows me to make overhead cuts with little fear of a powerful kickback. The saw is also easy to use with cutting guides because everything tucks neatly within the margins of the base. The new Rockwell RK3441K 4 1/2-inch compact circular saw isn't a worm drive, but it appears to have all the other attributes of my Porter-Cable, plus a blade-left orientation that some users will appreciate. Unlike my trim saw, it can cut a 2-by at 90°. The saw weighs just 5 pounds, has a 10-foot cord, and can hook to a vacuum. It costs about \$100 and comes with a three-year warranty. **Rockwell, 866.514.7625, rockwelltools.com**

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24. DECK INSURANCE

To counter lateral loads on deck ledgers, the article "Strong, Safe Decks" (Sep/13) recommends following the 2012 IRC (Figure R507.2.3) and using hold-down tension hardware in at least two locations to tie deck joists to the house's floor joists. The usual approach at each location is to install a pair of Simpson Strong-Tie DTT2 Deck Tension Ties linked through the ledger and rim joist by a 1/2-inch threaded rod, but the hardware can be a hassle to install where the deck joists and floor joists don't line up or are perpendicular. The new Deck Harness Lateral Load Connector Kit developed by GRK Fasteners, on the other hand, consists of a galvanized chain that passes through a hole in the ledger and rim joist and connects to deck and floor joists with U-bolts. A thermoplastic plug seals the hole. GRK says that, because the chain doesn't need to run in a straight line, the Deck Harness cuts installation time in half. A one-connector kit costs \$150, and a two-pack costs \$290. **GRK Fasteners, 800.263.0463, grkfasteners.com**

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25. ACCESSIBLE JOBSITE CHEST

According to the manufacturer, the new Knaack 4830-D jobsite chest is the first on the market to include an independent locking drawer (called the Junk Trunk) so you can quickly grab some tools or supplies without opening the main box. Above the drawer, the raised floor of the main box allows you to reach the bottom more easily while still leaving enough headroom for 5-gallon buckets. The lid has a continuous finger grip on the front and sides so you can open it from almost any angle. A locking hinge keeps it open, and a gas strut prevents it from slamming shut when you close it. The chest costs \$800. **Werner, 800.456.7865, knaack.com**

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