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Toolbox

EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW



Makita 8 1/2-Inch Sliding Compound-Miter Saw

BY STEVE DEMETRICK

In the October 2013 issue of *JLC*, I reviewed Makita's 7 1/2-inch model LS0714 sliding compound-miter saw. Compact, accurate, versatile, and durable, the LS0714 has been my go-to miter saw since 2005 for cutting everything from light framing to interior trim.

Makita recently replaced the LS0714 with the 8 1/2-inch model LS0815F, which promises to stretch the saw's cutting capacity without sacrificing portability. After field-testing one of these saws with my crew for several months, I definitely think it's an upgrade.

STILL AN EASY CARRY

My old LS0714 saw weighs just 28.9 pounds, or about half as much as a comparable 10-inch or 12-inch slider. We routinely jump between several jobsites with it and don't hesitate to carry it from the truck for making just a couple of cuts. When we're trimming interiors, it is usually faster to move this compact saw from room to room than it is to pitch a fixed high-capacity miter-saw station somewhere and hike back and forth for each cut. We can lift the saw with just one hand, so we can easily carry it up a ladder and prop it on staging for

cutting siding and trim.

Thankfully, the new LS0815F weighs just 2.2 pounds more than the LS0714, and we can barely tell the difference. The maximum cutting capacity of the LS0714 is 2 1/16 by 11 3/4 inches when the saw is set to a 0-degree miter and bevel, and 1 1/16 by 8 3/8 inches at a 45-degree miter and bevel. For the new saw, the figures have expanded to 2 1/16 by 12 inches and 2 by 8 1/2 inches, respectively.

The slightly wider cutting capacity of the new saw is almost irrelevant, but the added depth of cut has definitely helped. For instance, when we screw a tall wood facing to the aluminum fence of the LS0714 for added vertical support, we can cut crown moldings up to about 3 inches tall by nesting them against the facing in the usual upright, upside-down position and adjusting the miter angle for a perfect fit. With the new model, we can cut crown up to about 3 1/2 inches tall that way. When crown exceeds those limits, it must be cut on the flat, which forces you to adjust the bevel angle every time you tweak the miter angle. That's no problem for us if we're only making a few cuts, but we use one of our bigger sliders when running taller crown in an entire house.

MITERS & BEVELS

My old LS0714 can miter 47 degrees to the left and 57 degrees to the right, while the LS0815F adds 4 degrees in both directions. Although a detent override allows both saws to bevel up to 5 degrees to the right (a feature we often use to back-cut wide pieces for a perfect fit), they are both essentially tilt-left, single-bevel saws that can require you to flip the stock end-for-end when cutting bevels or compound angles. (Dual-bevel models, on the other hand, let you tilt the cutting head to either side instead of flipping the stock, which can be helpful when cutting long pieces in tight quarters.) But this beveling limitation isn't an issue for us, because we plan our cuts so we seldom need to flip the stock. More significantly, the LS0815F

can bevel up to 48 degrees to the left versus 45 degrees for the LS0714, which can be a big help when trimming rooms that are a bit out of square.

OTHER FEATURES

My LS0714 has two separate pairs of rails that ride on linear ball bearings to extend the cutting head. The LS0815F has one pair. We prefer the latter because it's slightly smoother, uses fewer wearing parts, and has one locking screw instead of two. Sometimes I forget to lock both pairs of rails on my LS0714; when I pick it up, the unlocked rails slide until they slam to a stop, which probably isn't good for the saw.

Unlike the LS0714, the LS0815F has a soft start, which we really appreciate. When hooked to my tool-triggered Festool CT Midi vacuum, the old saw sometimes trips a fussy circuit breaker, while the new soft-start saw has yet to do that. On the other hand, the old model has a rubber shroud behind the blade that directs significantly more dust into the vacuum. I highly recommend that Makita add this shroud to the new model.

Makita did add an LED work light with a dedicated on/off switch to the new saw. We don't work in dim spaces, and the light doesn't illuminate the cutline all that well anyway, so we never use it. The LED also adds a tiny wire at the back of the saw that's bound to catch on something and rip out as we load or unload the saw from our work truck.

Finally, the new saw is considerably quieter than the old one, adds an inch to the

height of the fence, has better grips for setting the miters and bevels, and has a more secure depth stop for making grooves and dados.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I wish the LS0815F emitted less dust when hooked to my vacuum, and I don't use its marginal LED work light. But the compact, lightweight 8 1/2-inch saw is even more useful and easier to use than its 7 1/2-inch predecessor and currently costs about \$100 less. I'll soon be replacing my weary 9-year-old 7 1/2-incher with this welcome new model.

LS0815F Specs

Blade: 10 inches; 5/8-inch arbor

Weight: 31.1 pounds

Amps: 10.5

RPM: 5,000

Cutting capacity, 0° miter/bevel:

2 9/16 by 12 inches

Cutting capacity, 45° miter/bevel:

2 by 8 1/2 inches

Maximum miter angle: left 51°, right 61°

Maximum bevel angle: left 48°, right 5°

Price: \$350

Included with saw: blade, blade wrench, vertical vice, two extension wings, dust bag, triangle rule

Warranty: 1 year, 30-day satisfaction guarantee

Steve DeMetrick is a residential remodeling contractor in Wakefield, R.I.



MIGHTY NAIL PULLER

I regularly take apart walls, decks, and other structures, and I have an arsenal of tools that make the work less strenuous while preserving materials for reuse. The Extractor is one of my favorites. It lives to pull nails—even headless ones—and is great for pulling finish nails through the back of salvaged moldings so you don't damage the face. For years, I used end-cutting nippers for this purpose, but The Extractor works better because it reduces the chance of cutting through the nail shank. Unlike my nippers, which have sharp edges designed to cut wires and nails, The Extractor has serrated parallel jaws that grab and tenaciously hold the shank without requiring you to tightly squeeze the handle. Also, the tool's curved heel and 11-inch length provide greater leverage. Still, despite the added length, this narrow tool can fit into tight places.

Like nippers, The Extractor doesn't dig out nails that are flush to the surface. For those, I use a cat's paw to pry the head above the surface, or use a sharp chisel to remove the wood next to the head, and then grab the nail with The Extractor to yank it out. The tool costs \$27.95 plus shipping at nailextractor.com, but it's also sold by Amazon.com and others. —*John Carroll is a remodeler in Durham, N.C.*

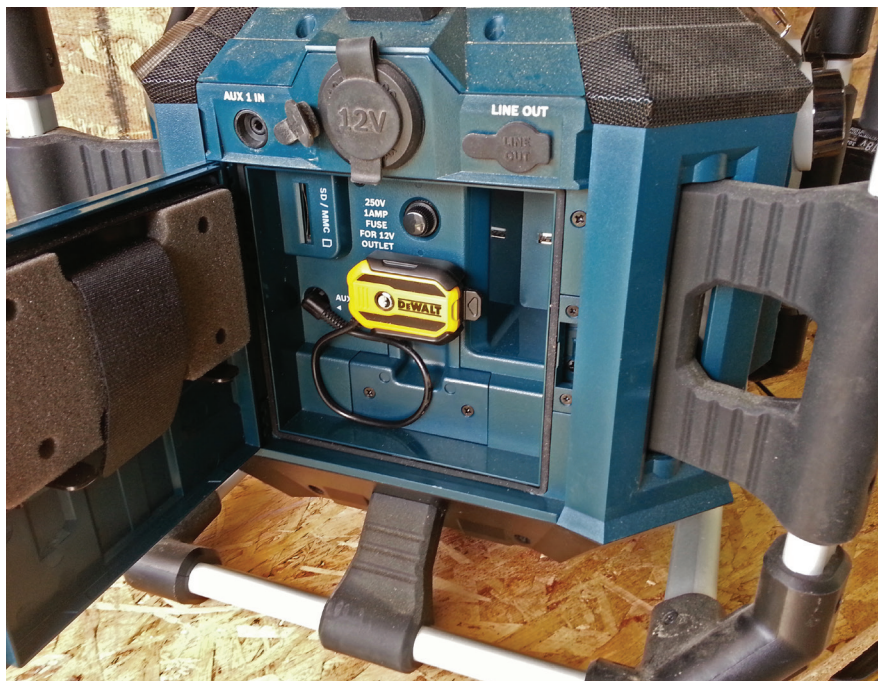
Photos: top, Bill Phillips; bottom, Steve DeMetrick



With a tall wood facing screwed to the fence, the saw can cut crown up to about 3 1/2 inches tall in the standard upright, upside-down position.



The saw bevels up to 48 degrees to the left, which is helpful when trimming out-of-square rooms.



DeWalt Bluetooth Radio Adaptor

BY ROBERT SHAW

My crew and I listen to the radio almost every day while building our custom decks and outdoor living spaces, but we get tired of all the commercials on the local radio stations. We can stream the music of our choice directly from my smartphone, but that forces me to plug it into the radio's 3.5-mm auxiliary input and leave it with the radio. I've missed plenty of calls because I can't get to my phone fast enough, and for privacy, I have to unplug the phone and walk away.

I recently bought Milwaukee's new Bluetooth-enabled M18 jobsite radio/charger, which allows me to wirelessly stream content from my phone from up to about 100 feet away. But my older Bosch PB360S jobsite radio sounds better and delivers more complete jobsite coverage, so we often use it instead.

DeWalt's DCR002 Bluetooth Radio Adaptor has solved our problem. The simple, compact receiver can plug into any radio equipped with a 3.5-mm auxiliary port (including our Bosch), so you can stream from your phone or other

mobile device without tethering it to the radio. A single push button makes it easy to pair the adaptor with the mobile device and turn the unit on or off. An internal battery delivers about eight hours of runtime and takes about four hours to fully recharge. To recharge, you plug the adaptor into an AC outlet or a USB port using the accessories included with the kit. An LED indicator light tells you all you need to know about the charging and operating status. The adaptor also comes with a great docking clip that easily mounts to a radio.

According to DeWalt, the DCR002 has a range of up to 100 feet. I've found that I can keep my phone in my pocket or toolbag while moving around the jobsite. It doesn't always stay connected when I go to the truck, but it's easy to reestablish the connection. The adaptor costs \$40 and comes with a two-year warranty and a 90-day money-back guarantee.

Robert Shaw owns Colorado Deck and Framing, in Colorado Springs, Colo.

WIRELESS TOOL CHARGER

The Bosch wireless charging system consists of an inductive charger and specially equipped 2-amp-hour Li-ion batteries that fit the company's 18-volt tools.

Inductive charging has been around for years and is used to charge small devices such as cellphones without removal of the battery. Wireless systems rely on a pair of coils—one in the charger works as a transmitter, while one in the battery is a receiver. Bosch's new batteries get charged by plopping the tool on the charger. Do this every time you put the tool down and the battery will charge whenever the tool isn't being used. The tool must be able to stand upright on the charger, or you can remove the battery and charge it by itself. The battery can reportedly be charged to 100% capacity in 50 minutes—a charge time that's in line with that of the average battery system (though slower than Makita's, which claims a 20-minute charge time for 2.0-Ah packs). While the charging speed of the wireless system may only be average, that may not matter: It's likely the pack will be charged intermittently throughout the day. Read more online at toolsofthetrade.net.

—David Frane is editor of *Tools of the Trade*.

