

## Weigh In!

Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at [JLCtools@hanleywood.com](mailto:JLCtools@hanleywood.com) or 707.951.9471



# Toolbox

EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW



## Bosch 18V Multi-X Oscillating Multi-Tool

BY STEVE DEMETRICK

I bought my first oscillating multi-tool, a corded Fein model MSxe 636 II, in 1996 for scraping and sanding old windows and fairing handrail easements. As oscillating saw blades grew more advanced and affordable, though, it became one of my prime remodeling tools, handling everything from delicate material removal to finishing touches. My crew and I have now been using two of these tools for years, and they're both still going strong.

In September when *JLC* asked if I'd like to field-test the new Bosch brushless model MXH180 18V Multi-X oscillating tool, I didn't hesitate to accept. It's one of several 18-volt models on the market that promise to perform like a corded model, and I couldn't wait to see if its cordless convenience would make a big difference on the jobsite.

### CLEAN KIT

The 18V Multi-X is sold only as part of the

MXH180BL kit. The user-friendly kit includes a modular L-Boxx-2 case that, for easy storage and transport, can be stacked with and locked to other L-Boxx cases and components in Bosch's Click & Go line. Inside the case, an Exact-Fit tray conveniently holds the tool with the battery and an accessory installed, houses two extra batteries and a charger, and even provides a dedicated space for the charger cord (thank you). The case also contains a removable plastic box that stores and organizes your accessories—a welcome feature that keeps everything neat and accessible.

The batteries and charger are sold separately. If you've already bought into Bosch's 18V lithium-ion platform, you're good to go. I haven't, so Bosch also sent me its SKC181-101 lithium-ion starter kit (\$100), which includes a 4 amp-hour battery and a charger. The tool also accommodates Bosch's compact 2 amp-hour battery and older batteries

in the platform, but Bosch recommends using the 4 amp-hour battery for remodeling because it is more powerful and delivers the longest runtime.

### QUICK-SWAP ACCESSORIES

Until recently, most oscillating tools required the use of an Allen wrench to swap accessories. The MXH180 lets you swap them at the flip of a lever, which is a blessing. Bosch makes a wide range of cutting, grinding, sanding, and scraping accessories, all of which mount to the tool using the company's 12-pin Oscillating Interface System (OIS). This interface prevents the accessories from slipping and allows you to orient them in 12 different positions for optimal access and maneuverability.

I tried several of these accessories with good results. I love the slight curvature of the OSC114F wood-metal blade, for instance, because it makes plunge-cutting and cutting into corners much easier. Also, Bosch's plunge-cut blades have a helpful depth scale along one edge. (Other manufacturers, including Fein, also make some accessories that fit this tool.)

### PERFORMANCE

According to Bosch, oscillating multi-tools typically spend about 80% of their operating time making cuts and, as it happens, I used the MXH180 almost exclusively for cutting. One reason I didn't also use it for sanding is that Bosch doesn't offer a vacuum attachment for this tool (not having such an attachment makes some sense for a cordless). Dust removal not only keeps jobsites cleaner and remodeling customers happier, but it also makes sanding more efficient and extends the sandpaper's life. Our corded Fein tools do have vacuum attachments, so we continued to use them for detail sanding.

On site, I used the Bosch to remove a section of rotted crown molding at the rake and to trim some existing moldings in place to accommodate a new chimney that passed



For more power and longer runtime, Bosch recommends its 4 amp-hour battery for remodeling.

through the edge of a roof. The tool was an excellent choice for those jobs because I didn't have to drag a cord up the ladder to get the precise cuts I needed. Indoors, I made cuts in plaster, plywood subflooring, hardwood flooring, and other materials. I also used the tool to scribe the bottom of a long bench seat to a hardwood floor.

Through all of this work, the tool was at least as powerful as my corded models, and the 4 amp-hour battery had plenty of runtime to complete each job. A fuel gauge on the battery indicates when it is time to recharge.

Runtime can vary dramatically, of course, depending on the workload. For what it's worth, when we fully charged the battery, mounted the Bosch OSC312F wood-metal blade that was included with the tool, and let the tool run full-throttle at room temperature until the battery quit, it ran for 41 minutes and 27 seconds. After that exercise, the Bosch's metal gear housing was too hot to touch, but that probably helped dissipate heat—the battery was only slightly warm.

The MXH180 weighs almost a pound more than our old Fein corded models (including their 16-foot-long cords). It also vibrated more and was a bit less comfortable to grip. Not a big issue, but when using the tool I often gripped it with both hands.



You can swap accessories with the flip of a lever—no wrench needed.

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

As much as I like my corded oscillating tools, they sometimes stay in the van simply because we don't want to drag out another cord or there's no place to plug in another tool. I constantly reached for the Bosch just because it's cordless. However, it's also powerful, has all the runtime I need, accepts plenty of useful accessories that you can quickly swap out, and has a great case. I recommend it to anyone who frequently uses a corded oscillating tool.

#### MXH180BL Specs

**Motor type:** brushless

**Weight (with 4 amp-hour battery):**

4.35 pounds

**Oscillations per minute:** 8,000 to 20,000

**Price:** \$230

**Included in kit:** bare tool, saw blade, L-Boxx-2 case with removable accessory box

**Warranty:** One year, 30-day money-back guarantee (register for free three-year ProVantage plan)

**Bosch / 877.267.2499 / boschtools.com**

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

#### WORMDRIVE UPDATE

Back in our June 2013 *Toolbox*, Oregon production framing contractor Terry Goodrich waxed poetic about the new 7 1/4-inch Skil MAG77LT wormdrive saw, which weighs just 13.2 pounds including the cord and blade. After working the saw hard for several weeks, he wrote: "I love the saw's light weight, it performs like my other Skils, it has every feature I can imagine wanting, and I expect it to last for years—just like its proven predecessors." Although it sold for \$219, he still considered it a bargain.

Those weren't idle words. Goodrich reports that he bought 10 of the saws five months ago—one for each of his framers—and the guys won't even touch their old wormdrives anymore. To date, the saws have been trouble-free. The Home Depot is now selling the saw for \$175.

In related news, Bosch just introduced the CSW41, which is the same saw with a few minor cosmetic tweaks and the same original price tag. After all, both saws are made by the Robert Bosch Tool Corp. in the same Chinese factory. —B.G.





## Milwaukee M18 Jobsite Radio/Charger

**Milwaukee's new 17-pound, 18-volt M18 Jobsite Radio/Charger (model 2792-20)** can charge or run on any battery from the M18 platform. In addition to a backlit LCD screen, an AM/FM tuner with five presets for each band, and a base and treble equalizer, it has a clock, a roll cage, three handles, a bottle opener, and a weather-sealed compartment with a 16-inch auxiliary input cord inside for connecting and protecting your smartphone or digital music player. Two AAA batteries power the presets and clock, and should last more than a year. The sealed compartment also has a 2.1-amp USB port that's active whether the radio is using AC or battery power. According to Milwaukee, it charges most mobile devices more than 50% faster than the USB ports in competing models. When opened, the compartment lid can hold a tablet upright while you charge it, transforming the radio into a portable entertainment center.

Perhaps the biggest news is that the M18

is the first jobsite model to include a Bluetooth receiver, reportedly allowing you to stream and control content from a mobile device from up to 100 feet away. In this mode, you can also pause or move through music tracks from the radio's control panel.

Given that my current work radio is a General Electric long-range AM/FM Superaudio II that I bought in 1986, I couldn't resist dialing into a new M18 to explore its features. For starters, I like its tall profile, which makes it easy to pick up, and its 12-by-12-inch base and low center of gravity make it difficult to knock over. Conveniently, M18 batteries slide down into the charger right behind the top handle. The USB charger worked exactly as advertised, topping off the battery of my iPod Touch with lightning speed.

The radio pulls in FM stations as well as my Superaudio does, but the AM reception is a notch below (though I can listen to local AM stations). I would prefer a dial to Mil-

waukee's two push-buttons for tuning, but that's a nitpick.

The M18's Bluetooth connectivity works like a charm. With a clear line of sight, my iPod Touch could connect from up to 200 feet away. Behind a couple of walls, the range was still significantly more than 100 feet where I tested it. Kneeling next to a clothes washer or walking into a metal-clad pole barn can break the connection, though, which might irritate your teammates.

The Bluetooth receiver also allowed me to stream Pandora and iTunes Radio into my detached shop by placing my iPod where it could simultaneously connect with the wireless router in my office and the M12 radio in my shop. Awesome. Last but not least, to my ear, the poly-cone speakers sound great.

The 2792-20 costs \$229, M18 batteries not included.

*Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC.*