

Skilsaw 10¼-Inch Wormdrive

Skilsaw SPT70WM-22

Motor: 15 amps

Speed: 4,600 rpm

Max. cut at: 90 deg., 3¹¹/₁₆ in.;

45 deg., 2¾ in.; 51 deg., 2½ in.

Cord length: 8 ft.

Weight: 16.5 lb. (without blade, cord, or wrench)

Supplied blade: Diablo 40-tooth carbide

skiltools.com

Street price: \$450

by Tim Uhler

Skil wormdrives have been a West Coast staple for decades. After recently rebranding itself as Skilsaw, the company introduced a beam saw it calls Sawsquatch—a 10¼-inch blade-left wormdrive (SPT70WM-22). Our crew has been using beam saws since 2002, so I wanted to try this one out. *Tools of the Trade* [a sister magazine of *PDB*] contacted Skilsaw, which sent me a Sawsquatch.

Blade-Left Beam Saws

Several companies make 10¼-inch blade-right sidewinders. But as a West Coast framer, I like a blade-left wormdrive. In his *Roof Cutter's Secrets*, Will Holladay mentions a few blade-left beam saws that were available decades ago. Today, we have even fewer choices when it comes to that kind of tool. In 2002, we bought a Big Foot Tools adapter kit and turned an old Mag77 into a 10¼-inch beam saw.

The adapter kit worked well and continues to work well. We used the adapted saw so often that we bought a second Big Foot in 2006. That one wasn't a kit; it was a Big Foot 10¼-inch saw on a Bosch body. It too works well.

How We Use Beam Saws

We use two beam saws when framing walls. The person who is doing the layout uses one for gang-cutting wall plates (we gang-cut them to insure they are exactly the same length). The other framer uses the second beam saw to gang-cut trim-

mers, blocking, or anything else that can be cut more than one piece at a time.

Features and Performance

Skilsaw's 10¼-inch wormdrive has features the Big Foot does not, such as brass gearing, a magnesium motor housing, and a dual-field motor designed to stay cool while cutting large timbers and engineered beams. The blade runs true (no wobble), the guard works well, and the motor and gears feel and sound smooth (smoother than the ones on our Big Foot with the Bosch body).

I particularly like the anti-snag guard, which is similar to the guards on the 7¼-inch Skilsaws I reviewed last year. The guards on those saws worked well and this one does too. The Sawsquatch is also equipped with a rafter hook and comes with a Diablo thin-kerf blade, our preferred brand for framing. We've used these blades for years, and they've proven to be durable. I like the handle that screws into the upper guard hous-



ing because it allows me to stabilize the saw with my left hand.

On remodeling jobs, we mark new window openings on the outside of the building and plunge this saw in to cut through the existing sheathing and studs—finishing off with a recip saw. It's faster and more accurate than using a recip saw for the whole job.

The Bottom Line

I've read online comments from framers who wonder if buying a 10¹/₄-inch saw is worth the money. A good friend, who held out against getting a larger saw, finally bought a Big Foot adapter kit and put it on an old Skil body. When I asked him what he thought, he responded that he wondered how he had framed without it. Is \$400 to \$450 a lot to spend on a saw? Sure, but as framers, we cut a lot of glulams and beams, and gang-cut material to speed up production—tasks at which beam saws excel. Our Big Feet have been great, but if I were buying now, I'd save up and get a Sawsquatch.

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Iron Dog Modular Toolbelt

Iron Dog Tool Gear

203.210.7559

irondogtoolgear.com

Price: \$40 for the basic belt; accessories and options vary

by Sheena Klien

When I spotted Iron Dog's toolbelt at a recent trade show, I was immediately drawn to it. I liked that the toolbelt could be customized to fit the way a builder works—whether demolishing an old deck, screwing down new decking, or installing trim—thanks to a modular system of interchangeable pouches and tool holders that clip to the belt. You start by picking the right-sized belt (\$40; another \$40 if you also want suspenders), then you select the holsters or pouches that you want, all of which have been deliberately designed for a specific tool or purpose. Pouches start at about \$30, while a utility-knife holder costs \$10 and a tape holder, \$15. Drill holders (\$29) are available in both right-hand and left-hand versions; you won't have to switch hands when holstering or unholstering your drill.

Construction is sturdy, with top-quality leather and tough ballistic nylon, hardy stitching, and secure clips. The leather belt is built with loops that run its full length, so gear can be positioned anywhere along the belt. Another nice feature of the pouch design is that it allows you to double-hang gear: Clip a nail pouch onto the belt, then clip a framing-square holder onto the nail pouch. Even when the belt is fully loaded, it's very comfortable.

The pouches and holsters slip on and clip into place all in one motion, while removal requires a bit more work. To detach a pouch, I needed to lift each clip and wiggle it free. It's not a quick-release system, but it's reassuring to know that the pouches aren't moving until I want them to. ❖

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