BY TIM UHLER

With an IP67 rating, this laser level is completely waterproof. The author added a temporary plywood cap for his own peace of mind, but it isn't necessary.

Photo: Tim Uhler

DeWalt 20V Max Green Rotary Laser

We bought our first rotary laser in 2004. Until that point, we had used a builders level while forming foundations or shooting control points on a building. Once we started using a rotary laser, however, we instantly realized its time-saving benefit.

When I saw the ads for the new green rotary laser from DeWalt, I wanted to see how it compared with the first level we'd purchased—particularly because this new laser is "built tough." I also wanted to try out a green laser because of its purported "better visibility," and I liked that this new version runs on DeWalt's 20V Max battery platform.

FEATURES

While green-beam lasers are three times more visible than red lasers, they have historically required more power, so battery runtime has traditionally been an issue. Having a green rotary laser that runs on a rechargeable battery platform means that we always have adequate power for it on hand. The unit's power LED will flash when the battery is running low; there is also an indicator on the battery itself.

This laser is rated to 1/16-inch accuracy at 100 feet, has a detector range of 1,500 feet, will self-level if it is within 5°, and has three scan modes: 15°, 45°, and 90°. We could usually see the laser outdoors, especially if we slowed down its rotation or put it in scan mode, which limits the beam's rotation. While shooting level to install some columns before framing a porch, we put it in 45° scan mode and could see the laser easily except when it was very bright outside.

This unit also has plumb dots that go up and down (when the unit is upright). The unit can be set on its side, making it possible to use for laying out square, as well. The "dual axis slope mode" means the unit can be set out of level or plumb to shoot slopes along the x-axis, say for laying pipe, or along the y-axis.

A remote control is included with the kit, and I used it frequently. It has the same controls as the unit itself, so it's easy to navigate and use. You can power the unit completely off from the remote (but not on, because of safety compliance). I like this feature because I don't have to waste time walking back to the unit if I'm done using it. I also like using the remote when I'm marking control points, because I can slow the rotation down from wherever I'm standing, making it easier for me to see the beam.

The kit also includes a detector, which increases the level's range from 150 feet to 1,500 feet and can be mounted to a grade stick. The detector beeps to indicate whether you're high or low but doesn't tell you how far off you actually are (for example, 1/4 inch), so you have to move slowly and watch the arrows until you get a steady beep.

BOTTOM LINE

This laser arrived when we were setting up a foundation in a giant puddle, while snow was falling on us. Needless to say, we wanted to get that footing raised to grade quickly. Without reading the instructions, I set up the laser, put a board over the top, and shot the grade. I discovered later that with an IP67 rating, the laser unit is dustproof and waterproof (note: the batteries do not have an IP67 rating).

I found the laser easy to use and accurate, and the remote works well. It feels well made and durable and certainly lives up to its "built-tough" moniker.

This is a tool that will save time and increase accuracy. The major bonus to this unit is that it can be seen in bright conditions (but not direct sunlight) more easily than a red laser, and it functions on a cordless battery platform. A minor nit-pick is that the plastic piece that slides into the bottom for the tripod attachment seems a little flimsy, so we had to treat it delicately. There's also no place to mount the remote on the unit itself, so if it's not in the case or in my pouch, it could get lost.

This kit comes with the laser, charger, detector, glasses, TSTAK storage case, tripod adapter, ceiling bracket, detector bracket, and target card. It is FlexVolt compatible. Cost: $1,300. dewalt.com

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Bosch Redesigns the Recip

The Bosch GSA18V-125 18V cordless reciprocating saw is designed to be more ergonomic than the saws you're used to. I used it briefly at a trade show last winter and was impressed by how smooth and powerful it felt. While I made only a couple of cuts with it, I got the impression that it's a contender as a replacement for a corded saw.

Bosch said that it repositioned the handle and nose and extended the handle's gripping surface to offer more leverage and better working angles while taking pressure off users' hands. I made cuts at waist-height, and in that position, the saw did feel comfortable. I wondered how it would fare when working overhead, though—and if the trigger would still be accessible should I try to hold the saw towards the handle's bottom.

With three orbital settings (0, 1, 2), a dial for setting the max speed, and a variable-speed trigger, you can fine-tune how aggressively the saw cuts. It produces 0–2,500 strokes per minute with a 1 1/4-inch stroke length and is outfitted with an oversized rafter hook, an adjustable shoe, and large blade-change mechanism that's operable even with gloved hands. The EC brushless motor is designed to be more efficient and last longer than previous 18V motors, and an internal counterbalance system reduces vibration. The saw's electronics offer overload protection separately for the battery and the motor to prevent overheating, and they monitor the load to maintain constant speed. Two LED lights—one on each side of the blade—illuminate the work surface.

Though the saw will run on any of Bosch's 18V batteries, Bosch recommends the Core18V platform for performance on par with a corded recip saw. The kit includes a Core18V Lithium-ion 6.3-Ah battery, an 18V Fast Charger, two 6-inch bi-metal blades, and a carrying case. Cost: $400 (kit); $300 (tool only). boschtools.com

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The new Bosch cordless recip saw, equipped with the new Bosch Core18V lithium ion battery, features cord-like power, a redesigned handle, large blade-change mechanism, and built-in electronics that monitor the load to maintain cutting speed.

A New Jobsite Table Saw

Hitachi's C10RJ 10-inch table saw is a complete departure from any table saw you've seen from the company in the past. At first glance, the roll-cage design looks similar to a compact saw, but its specs and features set it firmly in the jobsite saw category. The saw is stout (and heavy) with an aluminum top; with the initial startup, I could tell that it is a table saw to be taken seriously. It runs on a direct-drive 15-amp motor that has soft start and electric brake and produces a no-load speed of 4,500 rpm. Hitachi reports the saw can handle anything from framing lumber to hardwoods (in my initial testing, it cut through 2-by stock and 3/4-inch CDX with ease; I've yet to test it on hardwoods, but a full review is forthcoming).

Its rolling stand comes with 8-inch rubber all-terrain treaded wheels and folding legs; one of the legs includes an adjustable foot to aid in leveling the saw on uneven surfaces. The large rubber feet make for a solid base, but they pop off relatively easily so it's worth adding some epoxy to secure them. I question whether the stand will take the same amount of abuse as beefier aluminum stands and think the wheel mounts need some reinforcement (one side is bent already—the result of landing unevenly from a 6-inch drop).

The top measures 28 3/4 inches by 22 inches and has an integral outfeed arm that extends beyond the back of the saw for additional material support. In its closed position, the outfield arm sticks out far enough that it makes maneuvering in and out of doorways a little cumbersome; I removed it completely because even when it was fully extended, the gain seemed unremarkable (I feel this way about all integrated outfeed arms). The fence rides on telescoping arms that move similarly to DeWalt's rack-and-pinion fence (though not as finely tuned) and extend it to either side of the blade for a 35-inch capacity to the right and 22 inches when set on the left. The fence itself is solid and true and locks in the front and back of the arms; it has a nice flip-down feature for material support when extended beyond the table.

Bevel capacity for the blade ranges from 0° to 45° (the bevel adjustment knob rides on a rack-and-pinion assembly as well); the max depth of cut at 0° is 3 1/8 inches, and at 45° is 2 1/4 inches. It can take a dado stack up to 8 inches by 13/16 inch.

The C10RJ also includes overload protection with automatic shut off to prevent damage to the motor; an adjustable riving knife; built-in storage for the push stick, blade guard, anti-kickback pawls, and a 2 1/2-inch dust port for connecting to vacs and dust collectors along with other accessories. Additional features include blade alignment access from the table top and a quick-release, tool-less blade insert. The C10RJ also comes with a 10-inch 40-tooth carbide-tipped blade, T-style miter gauge, two blade wrenches and hex bar wrenches, and a folding stand. Further testing is necessary, but so far I have been impressed by the power, accuracy, and cut quality of the saw. Cost: $480. hitachipowertools.com —*C.E.*

The C10RJ features a roll-cage design, has a top that measures 28 3/4 inches by 22 inches, and can rip up to 35 inches to the right of the blade. It comes with a folding stand that collapses into a dolly-like cart. One of the rubber feet is adjustable so the saw can be set up securely on an uneven surface. A push-stick, miter gauge, blade wrench, and other tools are stored right on the saw.