

Weigh In!

Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at JLCtools@hanleywood.com



TOOLS

OF THE TRADE

Editors' Choice Awards

BY JLC STAFF

Throughout 2018, the former editor of Tools of the Trade, Chris Ermides, and several contributing editors were on the lookout for new tools and technologies that they felt showed real promise in helping building professionals work better—that is, faster, more efficiently, and more accurately. Here's their report:

We can't include every tool or product that drew our attention since last year, but there are 13 standouts that we touch on here (and describe in much more detail on ToolsoftheTrade.net). Some of these are new-to-market concepts soon to be released, some improve on an existing technology, and all are worthy of special recognition. As always, this list is completely unbiased and not sponsored by any manufacturer. We put most of these tools to the test (with a few exceptions, limited by availability).

DEWALT CORDLESS STAPLER FOR ELECTRICAL CABLE

Of all the tools DeWalt launched last year, this one stood out as the most brilliant. Who doesn't hate stapling wire, especially in tight spaces? Powered by DeWalt's 20V Max battery platform, the DCN701D1 Cordless Cable Stapler (1) can handle NM-B cable from 14-2 all the way up to 10-3, and it will work with low-voltage wire as well. dewalt.com



HILTI RIGID FOAM NAIL GUN

For foundations or finish basements, the GX-IE cordless fastening system is the best tool for attaching rigid foam (from 1 to 8 inches thick) to concrete (2). The system is composed of a cordless battery/gas-powered nailer and anchors specifically sized for the thickness of the rigid foam that you're attaching. hilti.com

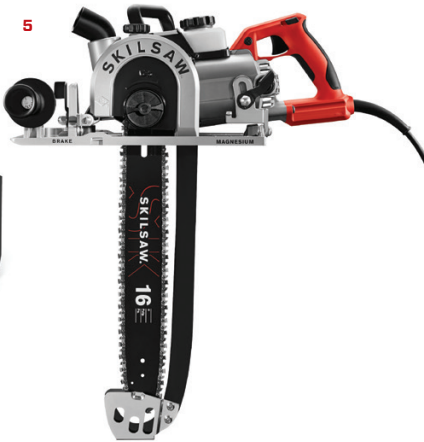
3M WORKTUNES

We love these—even as just normal hearing protection. They're lightweight and you can stream music on them. Though it's not a new concept, it's worth remarking that the execution of 3M's WorkTunes Connect Wireless Hearing Protector With Bluetooth (3) is solid. The microphone isn't great for having a conversation, but it's fine for answering the phone to confirm a delivery or to simply agree to call back a contact on a clearer line. 3m.com

BOSCH CORE CHARGING SYSTEM

Bosch has been making a solid push with its new ProCore battery and its cordless GAL18v160C Charger (4), which has five charging modes: Standard, Power-Boost, Storage (charges up to 50% if battery will be stored for long periods), Long-Life (charges to 80% for constant use), and Transportation (charges to 30% to comply with flight





rules). In Power-Boost mode, it can charge an 8-Ah battery from 0% to 50% in 15 minutes and full charge in 30 minutes. boschtools.com

SKILSAW CHAIN SAW

Named after its 16-inch circular-saw cousin, the 16-inch Sawsquatch Carpentery Chain Saw (5) has a 14 1/2-inch cut capacity. It is self-lubricating, and it features a 56-tooth fully housed chain for more precise and efficient cutting and on-board tool-less tensioning controls. The end of the blade is supported by the stationary blade guard and it can bevel up to 60 degrees, making the saw a legitimate choice if you want to gang-cut rafters. skilsaw.com

MAKITA CORDLESS TRACK SAW

The Makita X2 LXT (6) seems to be the most-praised track saw by contractors in the field after the Festool TS55, but it's cheaper. People love the smooth plunge mechanism. The only downside is that you need to use both batteries (the Festool version runs on two batteries for 36V as well, but it will also run on 18V at a slower rpm in a pinch). That said, the two 18-volt batteries provided more than enough power and runtime for almost anything we could throw at it, including 3/4-inch oak flooring with a layer of 3/4-inch AdvanTech subfloor beneath it. This saw allows

you to control speeds ranging from 2,500 rpm all the way up to 6,300 rpm with plunge depths up to 2 3/16 inches at 90 degrees and 1 9/16 inches at 45 degrees. makita.com

BEITER BOX LASER GREEN OR RED

Beiter has been making lasers for other manufacturers for a long time, so it is not exactly new to laser technology. What qualifies Box-CV2G Green and Box-CV2G Red lasers (7) for recognition is that they are amazingly priced (about \$300 each) but still pack nice features, including a rechargeable battery, a 360-degree horizontal line, and two verticals pointing 90 degrees from each other. beiterlaser.com

EVERWIN NAILER

Everwin is a relatively new company, and it has done a fantastic job of building lightweight nail guns that deliver. The FCN90L Framing Nailer (8) is an excellent example: It held up well on site and compares favorably with the Hitachi NV83A5 but weighs in 2.2 pounds less. everwinpneumatic.com

HANGPRO DRYWALL LIFT

This is a contractor-invented tool (by @thatdrywallguy, Myron Ferguson) that makes it possible for one person to load and hang up

10



11



to a 16-foot-long sheet of 1/2-inch drywall on a wall. The Hangpro (9) can be broken down for easier transport, features large rubber wheels and a heavy-duty auto-locking winch, and works for walls up to 10 feet tall. We were blown away by how easy it was to load and move sheets around, and how easily it can be adjusted to keep a sheet on the wall as you fasten it in place. hangprolift.com

MILWAUKEE CORDLESS TABLE SAW

Like many of the Milwaukee M18 Fuel cordless products, the new 8 1/4-inch table saw (10) packs some impressive power. As a portable jobsite saw, this unit offers a number of great features, including one-wrench blade change, fast blade height adjustment, and a useful riving knife design. Dust collection, cutting capacity, and portability also shine. milwaukeeetool.com

MULTI-USE BAKER STAGING

Baker staging already gets used for much more than just a work platform, and this adaptable version enhances that multiplicity. Metaltech's ScaffoldBench (11) has four modes: scaffolding, miter-saw stand, storage rack, and utility cart. With fully assembled dimensions of 74.75 by 29.75 by 75 inches, the setup can be rolled through any door openings wider than a 2-6 rough (2-8 finished). It's rated for 1,100 pounds. metaltech.co

METABO HPT MULTIVOLT

The Metabo HPT MultiVolt battery (12) is a dual-voltage 36V/18V battery that delivers more than 1,440 watts; the packs offer 4 Ah in 36V tools and 8 Ah in 18V tools. (Metabo joined forces with Hitachi last year, rebranding as Metabo HPT.) The batteries will work in all Metabo HPT (and all existing Hitachi Power Tools) 18V tools. In addition, an optional MultiVolt AC Adapter lets you run Metabo HPT 36V tools corded or uncorded. Concurrent with the announcement of the MultiVolt platform was the introduction of the first 10-inch cordless table saw (all the others are 8 1/2 inches). This saw is essentially the same as the company's new corded table saw—on either platform, it's a well-designed portable table saw, especially for the money. metabo-hpt.com

FESTOOL BLUETOOTH CONVERTER KIT

This affordable converter kit is a no-brainer for anyone who runs a CT vac. The system (13) revolves around a small plate that makes a CT dust extractor instantly Bluetooth-enabled. The Bluetooth module plate replaces the cover plate that sits on the front of the CT dust extractor just next to the tool-operated power outlet. Once the Bluetooth module is installed, the vac can be turned on cordlessly either by the included remote or by a cordless power tool equipped with the new 18V Bluetooth battery. festoolusa.com