

Weigh In!

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



TOOLS

OF THE TRADE

Deep Bench

BY MARK CLEMENT

The first thing I set up on any job is a work table. It's nothing fancy—usually just two or three 2-bys and sheet of plywood—but it is the nexus of all the work I do moving forward. I also use foldable tables from time to time and deploy them as needed. Sometimes, I mount the miter saw to the big table, with in-feed out-feed support (2x4 blocks on edge work pretty well) for long boards screwed to the plywood.

Other times, I use it as an actual bench on which I would put, pile, or mount, or use in conjunction with, any number of tools from jointers to routers and as a place for coffee, keys, chargers, multi-plug, file folders with jobsite docs, my phone, and the like. Otherwise, that stuff ends up where I can't stand it—everywhere. To that end, here are some tools that might make a bench-top, whatever it may actually be, better.

Worx Bench

The Worx Pegasus Folding Work Table and Sawhorse could not possibly come from a more DIY, infomercial manufacturer. Manufacturers send me things, and this appeared on the doorstep one day and I was pleasantly surprised.

I forget the original job I used it for, but the table itself is solidly built. Though I eventually threw the table's DIY clamps out, this table's design and features are extremely well built. It folds and unfolds solidly. It collapses into a compact-enough shape to not take up too much space when not in use, and it's just the right height to be outfeed for my table saw. I also found it ideal for cutting Rockwool insulation. The Pegasus is just the right size (31 by 25 inches) and working height (32 inches) to support the shorter stone-wool batts that are cut with a bread knife. Any time I can stand up to work or support hard cuts with a tool that stores easily, I'm a fan.

worx.com // \$120



Four Flavors of Impact

Makita's new XDT16 18-volt impact driver doesn't just look fully-featured; it's overflowing with features. I'm pretty happy with the forward/reverse switches on my impact drivers, but Makita has so many features in what it's calling the most compact and lightest weight impact driver in its category, that I'm not sure it's in the category. The driver has an Assist Mode for minimizing cam-outs and cross threading longer fasteners; Tightening Mode 1 for self-tappers; and Tightening Mode 2 for self-tappers in heavier gauge metal. It has four speeds. And a work light. It all runs on Makita's 18-volt battery system. It even has "Extreme Protection Technology," which is reportedly a series of integrated seals engineered to channel away dust and water for increased durability. My only question is what else can the company add to the driver a year or two from now when it wants to upgrade the tool? Maybe combine it with its coffee maker.

makitatools.com // around \$180



Slide to the Left, Slide to the Right

While my main chisel-use is to blast into a PT joist to pry the wane out of a deck board, I appreciate a sublimely sharp tool—which mine is not. Lacking in the skill, patience, or coordination to resharpen my edge tools, I basically just don't. However, the M-Powertools Fastrack jig might get me there. Screwed down to a bench-top, this jig positions the iron against the stone. Sliding back and forth (in a dovetail aluminum channel the precision of which should make any craftsman happy) leads to a sharp edge. Used with the company's Diamond Cross stones, you can make even the most beat-down chisel shine with sharpness.

m-powertools.com // \$80

Water Table

In my informal survey of tool-store shelves, tile saws seem to be either fully-featured, water-cooled piles of awesome or rattle-trap store brands. There is very little occupying the middle of the road. Porter-Cable's new PCC780LA 20-volt Max 7-inch Table Top Wet Tile Saw seems to fill that void. (Craftsman, too, which is owned by the same parent company, seems to have inherited some DNA from the Stanley brands. I've made a few cuts with the Craftsman version, and for occasional tile jobs, it seemed to cover most of the bases.)

Many years ago, Porter-Cable had a corded tile saw with a curvy armature and what amounted to a vertically mounted angle grinder, and I cut a decent amount of tile with it. This one is considerably better; it is lighter (27 pounds) and smaller, has no cord to bend a drip loop into, and has a carry handle (aka "roll cage," according to Porter-Cable). The sliding table delivers 17 inches of on-table cutting capacity, which means you can cut a 12-inch-by-12-inch tile corner to corner. It includes on-board miter square and splash guards.

portercable.com // around \$200



Mega Miter

A miter saw and bench are usually the nexus of my jobsite setups. And while we could fill up a mile of pixels @the_tools_show (our presence on Instagram) lamenting features that have come and gone from mi-



ter saws over the years, I'll be all set if I never lug a 12-inch slider up a winding staircase again. I like using them, sure, but finding a way to carry them without gouging the walls and my knuckles isn't easy. I'm not sure I've picked up the current miter saw I have the same way twice. The cord never seems to want to re-wrap the same, and I can't get my fingers under the deck to lift it.

Jet, in what looks to be a sensibly feature-rich 12-inch slider, seems to have heard my complaints. The first in its list of features on the website is "multiple carry handles allow for convenient portability." And, on closer look, it appears there's more to like. For instance, the rails are covered. This will keep sawdust out, of course, but it'll also hold off rain or snow should that be something you contend with. It's got a cord wrap. (Yes!) The knobs look easy to manipulate, and I'm partial to the horizontal D-handle configuration.

The unit also features Jet's Xacta green laser guide, which the company says is easy to see even in outdoor applications. While I'm partial to louvered guards, this one is clear, which I think is the next best thing.

jettools.com // \$800

Mobile Workshop

Even if you are not bleeding black and green, I think this mobile workshop is Indy Car-level cool. It has a workbench and tool storage. On wheels! What a great concept. While this isn't yet for sale as I write this, you will be able to buy it someday for \$650; some retailers are currently accepting pre-orders.

The MW 1000 is compatible with all accessories for Festool's MFT multifunction table including guide-rail supports, parallel guides, quick clamps, and more. The unit measures 25¹/₄ by 23⁵/₈ inches and is 46 inches wide. It has a none-too-shabby load capacity of 220 pounds. Set up, the table is 17¹/₂ by 14¹/₄ inches with a work height of 35¹/₂ inches. It weighs in at 68 pounds.

festoolusa.com // \$650

