

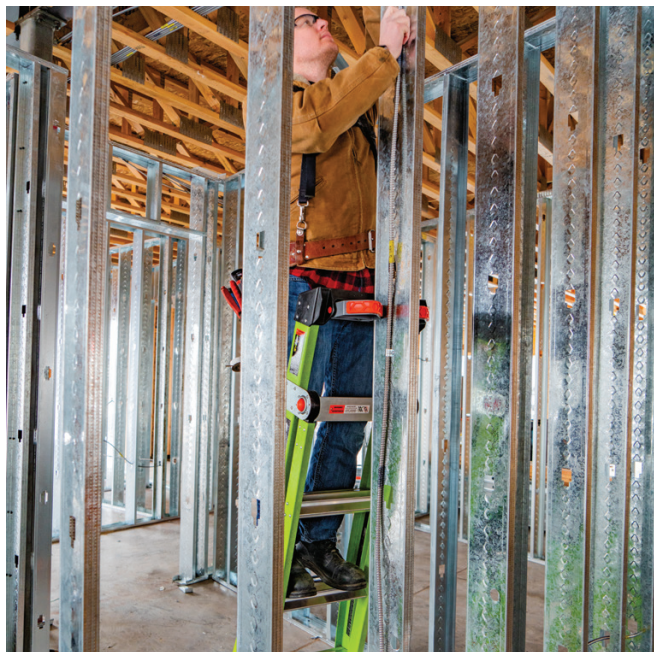
Weigh In!

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



The King Kombo 3-in-1 ladder has an adjustable pad for holding on corners or studs. It meets Type 1AA standards and is rated at 375 pounds in all configurations.

Lean In, Step Up

BY MARK CLEMENT

Little Giant's new King Kombo is not quite a stepladder, not quite an extension ladder—and certainly not quite a gadget. It is a 3-in-1 combination ladder that drew a lot of people in from the aisles of the International Builders' Show. What seemed to attract the most attention to this green bad boy was its rotating wall pad. This pad enables you to lean the unit on a flat wall or, with a twist, on an outside corner or on a single stud. For framers, the biggest draw was its ability to be used as both a stepladder (for working overhead in the field of a joist span, for example) or for leaning it like an extension ladder to skedaddle down the wall installing hardware; one ladder serves two masters.

There are three models: 5-to-8 foot (\$140), 6-to-10 foot (\$160), and 8-to-14 foot (just introduced; pricing unavailable). The ladder is fiberglass, of course, and Little Giant says it's cost competitive with an ordinary stepladder while doing more. It's rated at 375 pounds and meets or exceeds OSHA and ANSI Type 1AA standards in all configurations. So whether you're climbing up a stepladder to cut out window sheathing or leaning it up to access an attic before the stairs are in, or standing it on an outside corner, one ladder gets it done. kingkombo.com

Pick Up, Punch Out

Just because your nailers aren't cordless yet doesn't mean your compressor can't be. I know framers who keep a small compressor handy for (depending on where you live) "pick up" or "punch out." Whatever you call it, there's missing blocking or a window opening that needs to be packed in or nails to be installed for drywall. If your compressor is cordless, you can bring it to the work and leave the cord—and mile of hose from wherever the main compressor is—behind.

DeWalt says its DCC2560T1 60-volt Max 2.5-gallon Flexvolt cordless air compressor will dish out 1,220 nails on a single charge. I'm assuming those are finish nails, but nevertheless, an hour or two of setting blocks or nailing off a sheet that got missed seems to be well within the wheelhouse of this compressor. The unit has a OneTurn regulator, which means there's no more dial to fight with, and, DeWalt says, pressure adjustments are fast and accurate. The motor is brushless and the pump is oil-free. For its 21.5-pound weight, I'd like to issue a personal thank you to DeWalt, as carrying compressors is among my least favorite things to do. It provides 1.2 SCFM at 90 psi. Oh, and it has a ball drain valve, which should be required equipment on any compressor. A compressor kit with charger and battery costs \$300. dewalt.com



DeWalt's lightweight, 60-volt Max compressor can speed up punch-out work by making air more mobile.

Racing Through Rafter Connections

Simpson Strong-Tie's Quik Stik is a driver extension for setting rafter screws from the deck. It looks like it's one of those tools that pays for itself in one minute of not climbing up and down a ladder. Chucked into your impact or cordless drill/driver, the unit is designed to drive Simpson's bright orange SDWC Truss Screw in a variety of positions along the double top plate to accommodate different truss and rafter positions as they relate to the studs below. The bit holder secures the screw (which has a T30 drive) while it's raised to the plate. Positioning prongs and rockers enable you to put the screw where you need it, whether that's straight up through the bottom plate or angled in. For an-

gled connections, putting both the positioning prongs and the rockers on the work optimizes the drive angle for that connection. The extension arm has a grip about halfway up to help you stabilize the tool in use and share the weight between both hands.

Simpson says the Quik Stik speeds up installation and increases worker safety, and it's readily apparent how that might be true. The tool is pretty simple to operate, so the new guy might even be able to do it without constant supervision. The fastener is code tested and listed. We found the tool online for about \$180; a protective case is sold separately. strongtie.com

Read the full review at toolsofthetrade.net.



Simpson Strong-Tie's Quik Stik is an impact-driver extension that enables you to fasten through the top plate from the deck.

Kickin' Work Boot

Plywood, mud, ladder rungs, top plates, snow, rain ... a framer's feet see it all. Merrell says it has a new hiker-style work boot that can take the heat (and cold and rain and boiling hot summer days). Its new Moab Vertex Mid Waterproof Composite Toe Work Boot (J11515) has the usual alphabet soup of features that are supposed to make your feet more comfortable. This includes the ComfortBase contoured footbeds that "cradle your foot in comfort all day." The ComfortBase midsole technology is designed for increased shock absorption and cushion.

According to Merrell, each outsole has Merrell M Select grip rubber, which "tunes each outsole with durable traction." I'm not sure I need the outsole "tuned"; while I like to make the case that those of us in the trades are, in a sense, professional athletes, we're not place kickers in the NFL. However, I will say that what jumps out at me is the water-

proof full-grain leather upper—which Merrell claims is breathable. I've had other new waterproof hikers in which my feet were swampy by the end of the day, so this is an especially appealing feature.

Other features include a "closure" with nonmetallic hardware and a bellows tongue to keep out debris. The rubber toe cap (over a composite safety cap) looks boss, as the toe is often the first thing to go on boots. The heel features Merrell's air cushion to absorb shock and add stability. There's a breathable mesh lining and molded nylon arch shank for midfoot support and flexibility. If it's hot out, or you're framing a house on an active volcano, the rated-heat-resistant outsole provides foot protection for brief periods of direct contact that meet or exceed 500°F.

Overall, this seems more like a legitimate work boot than a weekend hiker in tough-guy clothes. Cost: \$155. merrell.com



Merrell's new Vertex with an all-leather upper and composite toe looks jobsite legit.



According to the maker, the TrussLox bracing system saves crane time and man hours when setting trusses.

Smash And Grab: Truss Edition

TrussLox lightweight, tough, and smartly designed truss clips look like they make all the sense in the world. Set for 24-inch-on-center spacing, they're reusable, TrussLox says, and they save crane time and man hours. They're safe and it looks to me like they wouldn't take long to pay for themselves. Take one end and smack it over the top truss cord on each pitch. Fly it in, put on layout, then tilt into place. The tapered end clicks and locks over the previous truss. The more I think about this, the more I realize that what looks like a simple head-slapper-why-didn't-I-think-of-that tool required some precise engineering and testing to work over and over again each time.

Made from heavy-duty plastic, TrussLox are reusable and are made by a mom-and-pop shop in the U.S. The maker calls them the "world's greatest temporary truss locking system." It might be on to something. Pricing is based on quantity and distributor availability. Check with TrussLox to find distribution in your area or to purchase direct. trusslox.com

Custom Toolbelt

If you haven't seen Diamondback's immutable reach into the toolpouch-wearing trades, then you must genuinely be off the grid. These guys are everywhere, it seems, and using social media to more than just megaphone, "Hey, we have a new product; hey, we have a new product." The company is using it to inform itself on how to build belts and services that it thinks can help its customers—us. "A lot of what we do is catching up toolbelt designs with modern techniques and tools," says Connor Crook from Diamondback. "Most guys are not carrying around 8s and 16s anymore. They have an impact with screws or a nail gun with sleeves or coils. The best ideas come from customers, because they actually know the gaps in the market and where belts can be improved."

Diamondback enables you to customize the belt and bags that hang on your waist. It's not a take-it-or-leave-it situation. More than any other maker, it seems to be able to get you a tool pouch (nail bag, whatever you call it) that works best for you. I know this is starting to sound like marketing copy, but I've seen it firsthand, and I think—as a wearer of a "Frankenbelt" my whole adult life—it's cool. What customers tend to do, says Diamondback, is to have a larger bag on the left for fasteners, which nets out to combos like Ox/Elias, WrangellXL/Elias, or Wrangell/Talon. And if you have bags or suspenders or a hammer holder from another brand, that's OK; they'll probably fit on the Diamondback belt or otherwise weave into its overall system. Oh, and these belts have a "gun loop," which looks ingenious for toting a spiker around and not have it banging off your legs. Diamondback says it has well over a million combinations. toolbelts.com



Diamondback bags are customizable. Use one bag from one belt and another from a different belt to craft your own system.