MultiQuip MC3PEA Concrete Mixer

BY JOHN CARROLL

Recently, I needed to place about 36 square feet of concrete in a basement, in three separate pours. Each pour required 1/2 to 3/4 cubic yard, which works out to about 2,000 to 3,000 pounds of concrete per pour. My ready-mix concrete supplier charges a $125 delivery fee for any pour less than five yards; so if I had used ready-mixed concrete, I would have paid an extra $375 for the three pours.

A cheaper option would have been to use my old concrete mixer. In 1986, I bought a portable concrete mixer that I still tow behind my truck to jobs. It's a heavy piece of equipment that easily mixes up three 80-pound bags per batch and, after 34 years, it's still running well. On the other hand, hooking it up to my truck and attaching the safety chains and then finding a spot on site to set it up can be a production. If I had used it on this job, I would have set it up outside the basement, poured each batch into my wheelbarrow, and then toted the concrete to the pour location in buckets. That would have saved me $375 but would have been a lot of heavy hauling.

With the MultiQuip Mix-n-Go mixer, however, I was able to carry the mixer to the job in my pickup truck. At the job, my helper and I carried the 138-pound, 3-cubic-foot mixer down a short set of steps, then rolled it another 30 feet to its final position inside the basement. We set it up a few feet away from the first pour, which was a footing.

The Mix-n-Go can be set up in two ways. In the first, it sits low on two wheels and two short legs that hold it at the correct angle for mixing. In this configuration, I mixed two 80-pound bags per batch, then rolled the mixer over to the footing and poured the mixture directly into the trench. Using it this way is like having a combination mixer and wheelbarrow. It's perfect for small, ground-level pours.

The second pour on this job, though, was not at ground level. After I had built a block wall on the footing, I had to mix and pour reinforcing grout (rich, flowable concrete) down every fourth core of the blockwork. To do this, my helper and I set the mixer on a metal stand that comes with the unit. My helper then made the grout and dumped it into a wheelbarrow. Using a small bucket, I scooped the concrete out of the wheelbarrow and poured it down the cores.

The third pour was a 4-foot-by-12-foot slab 5 feet above the floor. To do this pour, we again set the mixer on the stand and dumped the concrete into a wheelbarrow, then placed the concrete by the bucket. At the end of each pour, we rolled and carried the Mix-n-Go outside to clean it.

Features. The wheels on the Mix-n-Go are pneumatic but not roadworthy; the drum is thick, heavy-duty polyethylene plastic; and the paddles are made from steel. There are two power options: electric motor or gas engine. The mixer employs steel gears to reduce the speed and increase the torque of the motor or engine to the rotating drum. It has plenty of power and runs smoothly and quietly.

All in all, this is a high-quality mixer at a modest price. I paid $730 (including taxes and shipping) to Contractor's Direct (contractorsdirect.com) for the electric-powered model. If you do a lot of small pours, I highly recommend it. multiquip.com

John Carroll, author of Working Alone, *is a builder who lives and works in Durham, N.C.*

Photos by Matthew Carroll Navey

The compact MultiQuip MC3PEA Mix-n-Go mixer fits in the back of a pickup truck and—measuring only 24 inches wide—can be wheeled through a doorway (left). Mixed batches can be poured into a wheelbarrow or directly into a form (right).

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

Tough Carbide Recip Saw Blade

BY CLAYTON DEKORNE

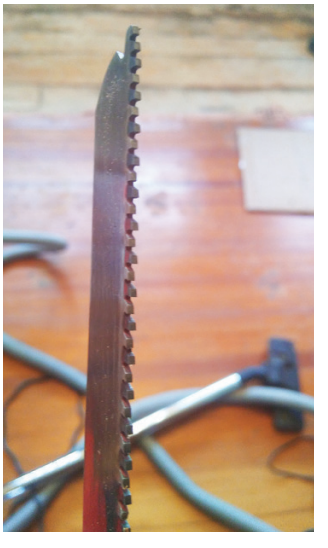
In the past year, Diablo and Milwaukee have each come out with carbide recip saw blades specifically designed for cutting thick metals. The Diablo Steel Demon with "Amped" carbide and the Milwaukee Torch with "Nitrus" carbide both feature thick, high-density carbide teeth with wide gullets (the hollows between the teeth). Diablo's blades have a bit closer spacing (8 teeth per inch) than Milwaukee's (7 teeth per inch), but both companies are going for the same effect: increasing the speed of the cut through hard, thick metals. Rob Robillard at Toolbox Buzz did a well-thought-out test of both these blades before they were available on tool shelves, and we encourage you to watch his video review online. Rob and the Toolbox Buzz crew evaluated both speed and duration. The Torch blade proved a smidge faster, but the Steel Demon more durable (more cuts per blade).

The typical applications for these blades are cutting out old cast-iron drains and cutting structural steel and rebar. They seem perfect for residential builders and remodelers who don't work with these materials on a production basis but do run into them more often than they might like. These blades are pricey—around $22 for a 9-inch Milwaukee, $20 for the Diablo. The 6-inch blades are around $15. These are not substitutes for a metal-cutting band saw, a chop saw with a carbide or diamond blade, a rebar cutter, or an acetylene torch—all of which will be much faster cutting options in production applications. But the new carbide recip saw blades can make these cuts when the cast iron or the steel is in the wall or otherwise impossible to access with other tools. That makes the blades indispensable for renovation work.

I was recently faced with a tough steel-cutting problem—taking out thick cut nails on a floor that needed to be removed so insulators could open up the floor and apply SPF to an otherwise inaccessible crawlspace. We needed to replace the floor afterwards so precision demolition was paramount, but the old wrought-iron nails were proving to be a huge obstacle. They smoked carbide multitool blades that ordinarily work well on steel nails. I could slip a 9-inch metal-cutting recip saw blade under the floorboards by bending it, but this was slow going—upwards of 40 seconds per cut and one blade for about 15 nails. At that rate, I would need about 10 blades and it would take about three hours just in cutting time.

Salvation came from the Diablo Steel Demon. Taking a cue from the Toolbox Buzz crew, I went for the longer-lasting blade. It zipped through each nail in about four seconds, and one blade did the whole job (upwards of 300 cuts). When I was done, the teeth looked unscathed. While wrought-iron nails are thick by nail standards, they aren't especially thick compared with, say, a wide-flange steel beam. Yet the hardness of the nails was my challenge, and the Steel Demon's aggressive carbide overcame it easily.

Clayton DeKorne is chief editor of JLC.



A recent job dismantling an old floor proved to be a good stress-test for the Diablo Steel Demon with "Amped" carbide (far left). Designed for cutting thick metals, this blade features wide gullets between the teeth (left). These help clear the metal flakes, which otherwise would build up between the teeth (as they do on the typical bimetal blade), creating lots of heat and slowing down the cut.

Photos: Elenai Studios