

Dash-Board Portable Workshop

BY NATHAN RINNE

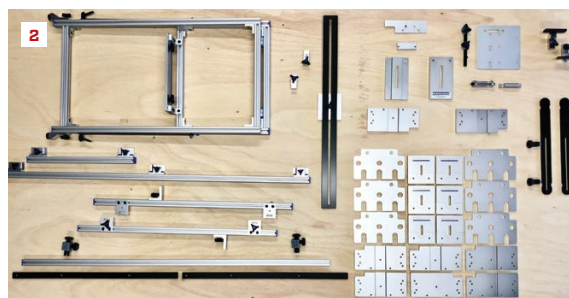
As a carpenter who primarily focuses on custom furniture and built-ins, I've found the track saw has become something of a necessity for the way I work. Could I get by without it? Sure, but with the amount of time I save using one vs. other methods to make crosscuts as well as more complicated compound cuts, I can honestly say I wouldn't want to work without mine ... or without a good workbench. Over the years, I have found that having a worktable dedicated to my track saw is a must-have for any of my jobs, whether on site or in the shop. I've tried everything from a pair of sawhorses and a sheet of plywood to various commercially available worktables, all of which have left a lot to be desired. As such, I have always been on the lookout for that one setup that would check all the boxes for me: rigid, lightweight, portable, well-designed, and well-built. One evening, while scrolling through Instagram, I came across an ad for the Dash-Board Portable Workshop. After watching several videos about it, I believed the build quality of this workbench was far and above anything I had used in the past, and I decided to see about testing one out.

I contacted Dash-Board and ended up speaking with inventor and company owner Rob Schumacher about the system and the company's review process. It's a small company, and Rob has a hand in pretty much everything it does, from product development to

marketing and even follow-ups with customer service. The fact that he spent years in the finish carpentry and cabinetry field shows in the way he designed the bench and accessories. Rob has spent a lot of time perfecting and tweaking the design, and if you check out the company's Instagram account, you will see several iterations of the basic bench that's produced today.

First impressions. My Dash-Board shipment arrived over the course of several days and in quite a few packages, every piece wrapped and padded in a way to avoid any possibility of damage from careless handling. Since I got both the basic bench and the platinum accessory pack, I had a ton of pieces to assemble, but I was able to put them together in one afternoon.

The bench itself comes preassembled and is very sturdy, something severely lacking in the commercially available setups I've used. For example, the top is made from Baltic birch plywood instead of MDF, and the amount of extruded aluminum in the frame puts any competitors to shame. At almost 8 feet long and 24 inches wide, it is sized for breaking down sheet goods efficiently while providing full-length material support. Any of the parts that aren't milled aluminum (parts vary from 1/4 inch to 7/16 inch thick) or extruded aluminum are made from carbon fiber, which is extremely durable and lightweight.



The Dash-Board Portable Workshop is shipped direct from the manufacturer ready to assemble and set up on site. The workbench has a Baltic birch plywood work surface that measures 92 inches long by 23 3/4 inches wide and weighs about 60 pounds as shown (1). The author upgraded the standard bench with the company's Platinum Pack, which includes a set of guide-rail brackets needed to make crosscuts with a track saw, bench dogs, an assortment of different fences, and other useful accessories (2).

Photos: 1, 3-5, courtesy Dash-Board Portable Workshop; 2, Nathan Rinne

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Performance. The Dash-Board is designed to make quick work of breaking down sheet goods. For crosscutting, it has guide-rail brackets made from 1/4-inch plate aluminum that allow you to quickly hinge the track out of the way when you need to move the workpiece, and then simply drop the track back down into a pin on the opposing guide bracket, guaranteeing a square, repetitive cut every time. You accomplish this by squaring the side-mount fences to the track upon initial setup. The two-piece design of the fence ensures material support on both the left and right sides of the cut, which combined with the design of the guide-rail bracket, provides continuous support even at the point of cut. Using the carbon fiber flip stops on the fence makes repeat square cuts an easy task. I find this especially useful in cabinet construction as I can cut all my shelves to exact tolerances without needing to measure anything but the initial shelf.

Rip cutting is also an easy task, using the Universal Track Stars and Outriggers. Simply mount the SpiRail Dogs to your track and each of them will slide and drop into the slots on the Track Stars. The various parallel guides and rip gauges allow you to make repetitive rips and quickly break down sheet goods. The Outriggers are a must for material support, but they also help complement the inge-

nious design that has you cut just to the side of the bench, thereby missing all brackets and accessories with your blade as you do so.

The Dash-Board also functions as an incredible door and panel bench, thanks to a pair of optional door and panel supports that mount to the bench. These allow you to stabilize and clamp a door or panel along the side of the bench and perform any number of drilling, planing, and routing tasks while on the job.

Cost. The standard Dash-Board bench costs \$1,760 (which includes shipping), and the Platinum Pack (which includes most of the accessories described in this review) is priced at \$2,700. While the price of a complete package may seem cost-prohibitive to some, the company offers a number of options for building a custom bench or adding any of the features and accessories they make standard in their offerings to an existing bench. From my perspective, however, I like to spend my time making money and would be more than happy to take the write-off that comes with purchasing the complete Dash-Board system.

In my opinion, both the Dash-Board's design and the quality of its materials are better than those of any other commercially available unit on the market, and I would not hesitate to recommend this bench to anyone looking to up their on-site carpentry game. dashboardpws.com

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Crosscuts as wide as 24 3/4 inches are possible when the guide-rail brackets are fitted to a track saw's guide rail (3). Adding the system's Outriggers to the workbench provides additional support for ripping sheet goods (4). Doors or panels can be clamped vertically to the side of the bench with the addition of optional supports (5).

StealthMounts Tool Mounts

BY TOMMIE MULLANEY

Misplacing a tape measure or not having a place to hang a drill can be a daily frustration on the jobsite, so when I discovered StealthMounts, a British company that creates injection-molded ABS accessories such as tape hooks, battery holders, level holders, and more, I had to try its products out. After more than six months using them daily, I've found the holders and clips that I've bought to be rugged and extremely useful.

I started off with the StealthMounts bench belt universal tool holder (\$14 for a six-pack set on Amazon), which I use primarily on ladders to hold a tape measure, drills, and nailers. Designed to work with a tool's belt hook, these holders can be mounted just about anywhere with a couple of screws (not supplied). I've added a second mount to my miter saw stand to give my measuring tape a dedicated, easily accessible home instead of just resting it on the stand, where it would eventually be in the way or knocked off.

Next, I bought a two-pack magnetic bit holder (\$18 on Amazon) for my Milwaukee M12 impact driver. The bit holder uses the existing belt-clip threaded hole with the supplied screw, making this a "plug and play" product that was quick and easy to install without affecting the drill's ergonomics. Now I have access to several bits at all times, as well as a small magnet on the side for loose fasteners.

Track-saw guide rails can be tricky to keep out of harm's way, so I bought several sets of StealthMount's guide-rail holders (\$33 on Amazon) to store them safely in my van. The holders have cam locks that secure the rails in place and keep them from rattling around. batterymounts.com

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Made of tough ABS plastic, StealthMounts universal tool holders can be placed virtually anywhere to provide a spot to hang a tool with a belt clip (top). Among the other accessories that the company offers are bit holders fabricated specifically for the drill/drivers of a number of different manufacturers (above).

Metabo HPT Work Light

BY TIM UHLER

Offering 10,000 lumens in a compact unit that weighs little more than the battery, this battery-powered light from Metabo HPT is nothing short of perfect. It's on the company's MultiVolt platform, so it can be plugged in and run off A/C power, and it has 15 brightness levels, is IP65 rated, and is a good value at \$200 (tool only).

The unit has a handle on top for carrying (or hanging), a leg that folds out as a stand, a 5/8-inch-diameter threaded fitting for mounting on a tripod, an adjustment dial for brightness, and a USB port to charge a phone. A larger, 8.0-Ah battery lasts a little over 90 minutes with the light at full brightness, which is fine with me because it takes half that time to recharge. If you're already in the Metabo HPT ecosystem, then I highly recommend this light. metabo-hpt.com

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Metabo HPT's MultiVolt battery-powered work light has a compact footprint, a tripod mount, and 15 light settings.

Photos: top, Tommie Mullaney; bottom, Tim Uhler