



## Makita Fills the Compound-Miter Gap

by Clayton DeKorne

Less than five years ago, the only ways to make an accurate compound miter cut was with a radial arm saw, the *Delta Sawbuck*, or, of course, a hand saw. Then Black & Decker introduced a lightweight slide compound-miter saw — the *DeWalt Crosscutter*. Soon after, Hitachi brought out its *C-8FB* (see *Toolbox*, 6/89), which in a short time became well-known in the industry as “the slide saw.”

Last summer, however, Makita came out with a slide saw — the *LS1011 Slide Compound Saw* — that not only filled a gap in their tool line, but topped other slide saw makers by offering a tool with a 10-inch blade and a 12-amp motor. These features increase the cutting capacity, and make the Makita LS1011 the most versatile slide compound-miter saw available.

### Cutting Capacity

Like the Hitachi and DeWalt, the Makita Slide Compound Saw combines the rotating table of a miter saw with the sliding blade of a radial arm saw. The Makita table rotates to cut miters between 0 and 45 degrees to the left, and 0 and 57 degrees to the right. The blade pivots to one side to cut bevels between 0 and 45 degrees.

George Michaels, a framing contractor near Fort Worth, Texas, reports that he has abandoned his

radial arm saw in favor of the portable Makita slide saw. With the 10-inch blade, the LS1011 can square cut material up to 12 inches wide and 3½ inches thick. This increased depth-of-cut allows him to double cut all of his header stock, including 2x12s. The new slide saw can also handle the 3½ x 12-inch glulams, which he uses for garage door headers.

According to Michaels, the compound angle cutting capacity isn't as useful on rafters. For a 45-degree plumb cut, or a 45/45 cheek cut, the widest stock the saw can handle is 2x8. Most of the roofs he frames have 2x12 rafters, which he gang cuts with a worm-drive circular saw. But the compound angle capacity is plenty for exterior trim work (rake wall fascias and crown molding), and deck building (mitering deck planking, chopping 4x4s, and beveling the top four corners of newel posts), he says.

### A Guard That Works

The LS1011 touts several features — an electric brake, a material clamp, a shaft lock, and positive stops at 0, 15, 22½, 30, and 45 degrees — that are notable, but not exceptional. The best features are standard parts that have remarkably sensible designs.

Most outstanding is the blade guard — a single, clear plastic

sheath that lifts clear as the blade is plunged into the cut. The guard, which rides on a steel arm, never touches the work. It is easy to lift with your thumb when sighting the blade, and its simple design seems durable. As one contractor put it, “It is the only guard I haven't wanted to take off.”

The fence design is also worth mentioning. The break in the fence to clear the blade for bevel cuts is about 1-inch wide. But the tip of the fence will still support those ¾-inch scotia returns that would otherwise fly off into oblivion. This design is most notable when compared to Hitachi's fence, which has about a 5-inch gap in the center.

### Will It Last?

During a short period of testing, the Makita slide saw proved as smooth and precise as the Hitachi slide saw. But compared to the Hitachi, the Makita's slide mechanism seems less durable.

Hitachi uses two thick parallel steel rods to support the saw motor. These are located directly behind the motor and tilt with the motor when the saw is set up for bevel cuts. I know of one Hitachi slide saw that has withstood almost two years of daily professional use.

Makita uses only one steel rod, which is smaller in diameter than the rods on the Hitachi, and runs along the bottom of the saw into the table. At first glance, this design looks skimpy. But I think the position of the rod makes the Makita design work. First, much more of the weight of Makita's motor is balanced over the base, rather than being suspended at the end of two rods. When cutting, it seems harder to stress the sliding mechanism or make the rod deflect by bearing down on the saw. And when the saw is locked down for transport, the rod is housed within the swing table out of harm's way.

Only time will tell if Makita's design is as durable as Hitachi's has proved to be. According to Robert Dick, a carpentry subcontractor in Arlington, Va., who primarily installs stairways, the Makita looks like it might last. He has used the LS1011 extensively since August 1990 for cutting newel posts, handrail easements, and stair treads. So far, he hasn't noticed any deflection in his cut or a wobble in the slide.

The LS1011 lists for \$850. I have seen it discounted as low as \$488. ■



Its 10-inch blade and 12-amp motor give the Makita LS1011 compound-miter slide saw a greater cutting capacity than others on the market.