

New Tools FROM THE _____ National Hardware Show



These offerings from tool manufacturers address real needs in the field

The National Hardware Show, held every August in Chicago, is one of the biggest shows for the building industry. Traditionally it's where tool manufacturers introduce their new lines, but at this year's show, several major manufacturers were conspicuous by their

by **Dave Crosby**

absence. It is clear that the industry is changing. Undoubtedly, economic pressure from big-box distribution has been heating up the already fierce competition and, most likely, changing the marketing and distribution strategies of some manufacturers. How companies that were absent, such as Bosch, DeWalt, and Hitachi, will unveil their new tools remains to be seen.

The manufacturers' reps who did attend seemed to place an emphasis on providing innovative tools, with attention paid to feedback from the field — a good trend for the professional tool user. Here's what we turned up while walking the aisles of this year's show.

NAILERS

Paslode TrimMaster Cordless Angled Finish Nailer



Paslode introduced the IM250A TrimMaster Cordless Angled Finish Nailer, a 4.9-pound addition to the Impulse family. It drives 16-gauge nails from 1¹/₄ to 2¹/₂ inches long and features a stainless-steel O-ring for longer intervals between maintenance, a lockout mechanism to prevent blank firing, no-tools depth-of-drive adjustment, and no-tools clearing of jams. The manufacturer claims a fuel-cell life of approximately 1,200 nails and a battery-charge life of approximately 4,000 nails. The fuel-cell valve for the Impulse tool line has been redesigned, so installation is now a two-step process rather than four. The TrimMaster is also said to drive 1,000 nails per hour under continuous operation. It is available for \$499.

Porter-Cable Framing Nailer

Magnesium seems to be the latest answer in the continual quest for a lighter nailer. At 7.4 pounds, Porter-Cable's Model FR350MAG framing nailer incorporates a new magazine release mechanism for clearing jams, a longer trigger for two-finger operation, a 360-degree swiveling air deflector, and a removable non-marring tip. At \$299, it's competitively priced — unless you're buying your tools by the pound.



Senco ThinkTrac Technology

Senco has released the new ThinkTrac Technology on the FramePro Model 600E, 700E, and 750E nailers. These standard pneumatic framing tools have microprocessors designed to prevent unintentional nail drives without slowing productivity. Nobody likes to think that the tool needs to be smarter than the user, but accident statistics sometimes suggest otherwise. The tool will function in the bounce-fire or sequential-fire mode, and the manufacturer says you can expect about 80,000 fastener drives before changing batteries. Brief use on the show floor confirmed that the tool still provides the rate you'd expect for production framing — the manufacturer says it can drive 8 nails per second, which is about twice as fast as most folks can move. So you still get to "keep up the fire," but if you shoot yourself with this tool, it will be very hard to explain. This tool sells for between \$339 and 349.



Stanley Industrial High-Speed Palm Nailer

Stanley brought out the new PN100 Industrial High-Speed Palm Nailer, claiming a 20% edge on competitive nailers at 2,287 cycles per minute. The kit for it includes a case, spare O-rings, tool oil, a glove to secure the tool to the palm of the user's hand, and three different noses for driving your choice of framing nails, finish nails, or spikes. Suggested retail price is \$129 to \$149.



CORDLESS TOOLS

Recent innovations, especially in battery and charger technology, have resulted in a new generation of cordless tools. If either mobility or time spent dragging cords around is a concern, you're in luck: There is a better selection than ever. Prices vary, and while these tools are expensive, if speed and convenience count, they might be worth their higher price tags.

Makita Cordless Tools

Makita brought over two dozen new cordless tools to the show. The 9.6-volt through 18-volt line is too extensive to list, but highlights included three jigsaws powered by 2.6-amp-hour Ni-MH batteries, the 14.4-volt and 18-volt hammer/driver-drills, both with single-sleeve keyless chuck and shaft lock, and a cordless rebar cutter with a capacity of up to #6 bar.

The most notable innovation was the MakStar line of eight new 24-volt tools. Before you start with the car-battery jokes, try these tools out. While they're definitely larger and heavier, they are also surprisingly well balanced, maneuverable, and powerful.

The 24-volt Nickel-Metal Hydride (Ni-MH) batteries are available in 1.7 amp-hour or 3.0-amp-hour configurations, with the corresponding weight difference you'd expect.

New charging system. At the heart of the 24-volt technology is a new charging system that uses a CPU in the charger and memory chips in each battery, working together to optimize the charging cycle. Forced-air cooling and heat dissipation plates prolong battery life and reduce charge time. With the use of an adapter, all Makita batteries from 7.2-volt to 24-volt can be charged in the DC24SWA charger.

Makita has also developed a 7.2- through 14.4-volt fast charger (Model DC1439), which the company claims can charge a 2.0-amp-hour Ni-Cad battery in 16 minutes and a 3.0-amp-hour Ni-MH battery in 30 minutes while also adjusting the charging current for longer battery life. And speaking of battery life, there is talk of 750 charge cycles on these new Ni-MH batteries. If that's true, this represents a major development in cordless tools.

SDS rotary hammer and cordless impact driver. Among the long list of 24-volt tools were a 1/2-inch cordless impact wrench, a cordless impact driver, and a 13/16-inch SDS rotary hammer, which was impressive in brief use on the showroom floor drilling concrete. This new battery platform provides power: Both impact tools deliver 1,774 inch-pounds of torque. That's over 147 foot-pounds, or 75% more torque than what's required to install the lug nuts on most light trucks. I don't think your 1/2-inch lag bolts are going to give these tools any trouble. The tools are available for \$560, \$575, and \$595, respectively.



Milwaukee 6¹/₂-inch Circular Saw

This new 18-volt, 6¹/₂-inch circular saw features a bevel capacity of up to 50 degrees, all-metal upper and lower guards, an electric brake, and a 2.4-amp-hour Ni-Cad battery. The manufacturer claims the tool can make 145 crosscuts through a 2x4 or 106 feet of 5/8-inch OSB. If you still think cordless tools are a novelty, when was the last time you cut that many 2x4s without setting the saw down? Prices range from \$255 to \$357.



Milwaukee Model 6515-28 Contractor Cordless Combination Kit

One of the challenges buyers face is the price of batteries. They're expensive, so we have to at least consider standardizing tool purchases around a particular brand and voltage. Perhaps as a result of

this concern, we're seeing more combination kits these days. Milwaukee has joined the fray with the Model 6515-28 Contractor Cordless Combination Kit, which features an 18-volt Sawzall with the Quick-Lok all-metal keyless blade clamp, a 1/2-inch T-handle hammer-drill with a keyless chuck, two 2.4-amp-hour batteries, and a one-hour charger, all packed in a water-resistant bag with 20 padded storage pockets for \$385 to \$539. In addition to that, Milwaukee now offers a Model 6310-24 kit, which includes the 6¹/₂-inch circular saw, a 1/2-inch T-handle hammer-drill, two batteries, and a charger in a carrying case.



Porter-Cable Model 837 Tiger Saw

Porter-Cable has rounded out its 19.2-volt line of tools with the new Model 837 Tiger Saw, a cordless reciprocating saw with a 1-inch stroke and variable speed up to 2,900 spm. The 16-inch recip is counterbalanced, has a quick-change blade clamp, and is designed to sit upright for convenience. Brief use at the show says this tool has promise — it's surprisingly comfortable and cuts well. The Tiger is available by itself or as a kit (Model 9837) including battery, charger, and plastic case for \$279.



Porter-Cable Quad Pack

A variety of combination kits are available from Porter-Cable, including the 19.2-volt Quad Pack, which includes a 6-inch circular saw, the new recip saw, a 1/2-inch keyless-chuck hammer-drill, a flashlight, two batteries, a charger, and a case. It sells for approximately \$599.



continued on next page

AC POWER TOOLS

Makita 12-inch Portable Thickness Planer

The Model 2012NB 12-inch Portable Thickness Planer is said to eliminate snipe with an automated head clamp and offers quiet operation at 83 decibels. The 61-pound planer uses two disposable double-edge blades and will hit the street at \$489.



Makita Blade-Left and Blade-Right Circular Saws

Makita also brought two new 7¹/₄-inch circular saws, the Model 5007NHK (blade-right) and the Model 5007NLK (blade-left). The 10.1-pound, 5,800-rpm, 15-amp saws feature a bevel capacity of up to 50 degrees with a positive stop at 45 degrees. Each saw costs \$169.



Makita 1-inch Rotary Hammer with Dust Collection

Several 2¹/₄-horsepower routers, a selection of drills, and the Model HR2431 1-inch rotary hammer with dust collection (shown at right) were among the other highlights from the multitude of AC tools that Makita brought to the show.



Milwaukee Corded Drills

Milwaukee brought an impressive array of corded tools, including a line of 1/2-, 3/8- and 1/4-inch drills that the manufacturer claims have the best power-to-weight ratio on the market, along with more horsepower and torque than any competitor. These tools are comfortable, powerful, and a pleasure to use. The 360-degree side handle on the 1/2- and 3/8-inch drills seems especially well designed, as do the trigger and the grip. Select models feature a keyless chuck and an 8-foot Quik-Lok cord. The detachable cord is designed for easy repair and for tangle-free carrying and storage. Prices range from \$137 to \$193.



Milwaukee 7¹/₄-inch Tilt-Lok Blade-Left Circular Saw

New to the circular saw line is the Model 6391-21 7¹/₄-inch Tilt-Lok Blade-Left Circular Saw. We'll never solve the blade-left versus blade-right debate, but the number of manufacturers who have recently come out with blade-left sidewinders says that the industry is paying attention. Personally, I like to plug in one of each and leave them both at the sawhorses. Having a saw for left or right bevels is a real convenience, especially when you're cutting jack rafters.



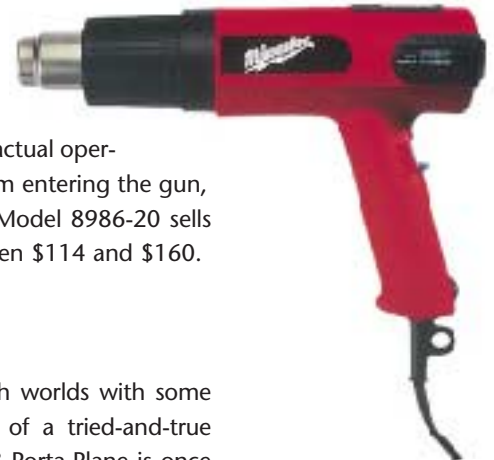


Milwaukee Rotary & Chipping Hammers

Two 1³/₄-inch rotary hammers made their debut at the show, along with a chipping hammer. All three tools feature a patented Vibration Isolation System. The Model 5345-21 Spline-Drive, available for \$575 to \$804, and the Model 5346-21 SDS-Max, available for \$599 to \$839, both use an Electronic Feedback Control Circuit with soft-start, and deliver 1,300 to 3,450 blows per minute at 150 to 400 rpm and 8.6 foot-pounds per blow.

Milwaukee Heat Guns

Two new heat guns, Model 8986-20 and Model 8988-20, both have an electronic temperature control system that regulates a variable range of 90°F to 1,100°F. The Model 8988-20 has an additional LCD that shows the actual operating temperature. Removable air filters prevent debris from entering the gun, and nine nozzles are available for a variety of tasks. The Model 8986-20 sells for \$91 to \$127, and the Model 8988-20 sells for between \$114 and \$160.



Porter-Cable Porta-Plane

Porter-Cable brought the best of both worlds with some innovative new tools and the revival of a tried-and-true favorite. For \$280, the Model 9118 Porta-Plane is once again available as a result of “thousands of requests to bring it back,” according to Mike Whitman, manager of product development. With a cutting capacity of 2¹³/₃₂ inches wide and 3³/₃₂ inches deep, the shoe can be adjusted for bevels of -15 degrees to +45 degrees.



Porter-Cable Portable Oscillating Spindle Sander

The new Model 121 Portable (that's right — hand held) Oscillating Spindle Sander means you can now take the tool to the work. The sander has a variable speed range of 2,400 to 3,600 rpm and a 1/2-inch stroke at 40 to 60 oscillations per minute. It offers the unique capability of sanding edges at exactly 90 degrees and removing stock accurately to very close tolerances. Along with the obvious advantage for curved lines, such as cutouts for undermount sinks, the tool also can be used with an edge guide for straight surfaces. It uses five standard-diameter paper sizes from 1/2-inch to 2-inch, in 80-through 220-grit. With the use of an adapter plate, the sander also can be mounted onto the Model 698 Router Table for use as a bench top unit (at right). The Model 121 with an edge guide, dust nozzle, 2-inch drum, and 2-inch 150-grit sleeve retails for approximately \$250.



Porter-Cable Tile Saw

Priced at \$299, the new Model 1500 Tile Saw features a compact, portable design, a 7-inch wet-cutting blade, and a two-track sliding removable table. For small jobs or work on multiple-story buildings, it could be handy.

COMPRESSORS



Porter-Cable 135-psi Portable Oil-Free Compressor

Porter-Cable has brought out a new line of generators and compressors. Higher cut-out and cut-in pressures are designed to offer more air at working pressure with less waiting time.

The Model CPF23400S 135-psi Portable Oil-Free Compressor (5.3 SCFM at 90 psi) looks like someone finally designed a compressor with normal abuse in mind. Around \$279, this model comes with a one-year warranty.

Porter-Cable 175-psi Two-Stage Wheelbarrow Compressor

The Model CPF2TV3520VP 175-psi Two-Stage Wheelbarrow Compressor delivers 5.1 SCFM at 90 psi. This compressor has handles at both ends of the tank so two people can comfortably load or unload it. The two-stage pump provides mechanical efficiency and is said to be 50% quieter than other oil-free designs. At 175 psi, the 20-gallon tank holds the equivalent of a 49-gallon tank at 125 psi. An attractive feature of this compressor is the removable high-flow regulator with four quick-connects. This means you can take the regulator with you, plug in four tools, and adjust the air pressure without walking back to the compressor. Expected retail is \$699 with a five-year warranty.



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Manufacturers

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