

RotoZip Proves Its Versatility

by Gary Katz

I recently took a job installing a truck-load of replacement windows in a newly painted home, and cringed at the idea of removing all the window stools. The new vinyl jambs were $\frac{3}{16}$ inch wider than the space between the blindstop and the stool, and I didn't want to damage the casing, the stool, or the apron. I wanted to rip the stool right in place but accurately, cleanly, and quickly. And I wanted to cut as close to the jamb as I could. I thought of using a router, and I thought of using a laminate trimmer, but a local lumberyard recommended a RotoZip (RotoZip, 1861 Ludden Dr., Cross Plains, WI 53528; 877/768-6947; www.rotozip.com). I had seen the ads and was skeptical; but as it turned out, I bought the Revolution model, and now I'm glad I did.

Fast, Easy, and Accurate

You wouldn't think that a RotoZip — first designed as an alternative for making outlet cutouts in drywall — would interest a finish carpenter. But since that window replacement job, I've used the tool for a variety of tasks. I've found the circle cutting attachment is far faster than my jigsaw. I've used it to cut 4-inch holes in wooden mounting brackets for exterior light fixtures and 6-inch holes for recessed lighting — and those are hole saws I've never carried (see Figure 1). I've made countless cut-outs for electrical outlets in wainscoting, trimmed a little ceramic tile (the tool is kind of slow at this task, but what else isn't?), and found that it's great for cutting baseboard in place — when you're adding a new door or changing the casing to a wider style, for example (Figure 2).

A tile installer recently told me how he used the tool to replace a bad tile:

After donning safety goggles, dust mask, and hearing protection, I played

dentist with the RotoZip and ate away the tile and the thinset beneath it. I was able to remove every speck of tile and thinset and leave the waterproofing membrane unblemished. Since then, I have used the same procedure to remove bad and broken tiles when doing repairs. It's a breeze. That tool more than paid for itself on the first repair job.

The RotoZip doesn't come with a fence, but I didn't find that an inconvenience — I used a simple straight-edge to help me cut a perfectly straight line on window sills. And I found that this tool is surprisingly easy to control; relatively straight cuts can be made even without a guide.

Handy features. There are several features that I particularly like about the RotoZip. Maybe it's just because my eyes are getting old, but I enjoy a well-lit work surface, and this tool carries its own dual-headlights, which makes it easy to guide the bit into the

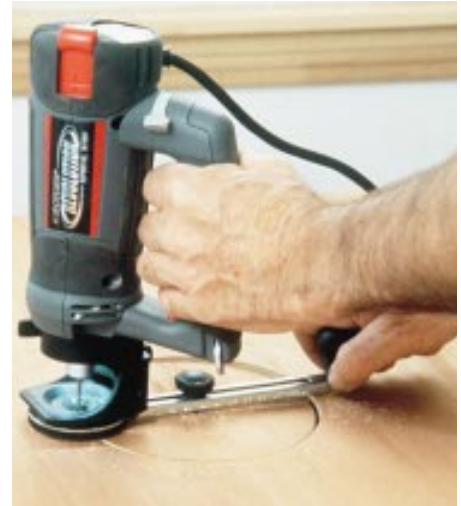


Figure 1. The hole cutting attachment made short work of exterior light fixture mounts and 6-inch openings for recessed lighting.

exact spot you aim for (Figure 3). To make seeing the work even easier, a built-in air diverter blows sawdust away from the cutting area.

I've worked this DIY tool hard and it



Figure 2. The RotoZip worked great for cutting baseboard in place (left) and ripping a window stool in place (right) without damage to surrounding materials.



Figure 3. Built-in lights make it easy to place the tool right on the mark.

hasn't failed me yet. The fact that it made it through all those window stools, without chipping even one (at 15,000 to 30,000 rpm!), has earned this tool a full-time spot in my truck. Although depth of cut is listed as $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, by cheating the bit slightly out of the collar nut, I was able to get a $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch depth of cut (but keep in mind that cutting anything greater than $\frac{3}{4}$ inch will stress the tool, as the RotoZip is ideally suited for thin stock).

The deluxe kit I bought, called the Revolution Zip Mate Combo Kit



Figure 4. The Revolution Combo Kit includes a circle cutter, a Zip Mate, extra bits, and a plastic case.

(Figure 4), comes with a hard plastic case with bit storage and wrench storage, the circle cutter, a removable handle, a trigger, and a long extension cord. Also included in this kit is the Zip Mate, a right-angle attachment that allows the RotoZip to use $3\frac{1}{2}$ -inch metal and masonry cut-off blades, as well as an assortment of sanding, grinding, and polishing discs. Several sanding/cutting discs are included in the kit.

Extra Zip Bits are included, too: a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch Outlet bit (for cutting drywall

around outlets and recessed lights); a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch Sabrecut bit (for cutting wood paneling free hand); a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch Tilecut carbide bit (for ceramics and stone); and a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch collet for use with $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch bits.

The suggested retail price for the RotoZip Revolution is \$139; the Revolution Zip Mate Combo Kit costs, as reviewed, \$199.



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TOOLBITS

Control the Pressure

The *Copeland Portable Air Regulator* is a palm-sized device that can be connected directly to an air compressor, a manifold, or to an air tool to control the flow of air pressure at any point in the system. This means that you can run several tools, each requiring different pressure, off of the same compressor. The regulator comes fully assembled and ready to use for \$59.95.

Contact: Copeland Industries, 1151 East Ave. North, Sarasota, FL 34237; 800/981-6696; www.copelandindustries.com.



Stay Sharp

The *Tri-Hone Knife Sharpening Kit* comes with a 6-inch coarse synthetic stone, a medium Arkansas stone, and a fine Arkansas stone, mounted on a plastic holder with a plastic base designed to catch oil drips. Suggested price is \$30.50.

Contact: Smith Abrasives, P.O. Box 5095, Hot Springs, AR 71902; 501/321-2244; www.getsharp.com.

