

TILE TOOLS

Great Curves. If complex curves are finding their way into your tile work, there's really only one tool for the job: the *Revolution Tile Saw*. It uses a 10-inch ring blade that can cut 2 1/2 inches thick, 25 inches long, and up to 18 inches on the diagonal. Besides having great capacity, the saw can make tight radius cuts that would otherwise require multiple relief cuts or tedious nipping. The drive system puts water right on the blade, eliminating a separate pump for cooling. According to the maker, the 61-pound tool is so clean and quiet you can set it up inside. It sells for about \$1,300 and includes a plastic protective cover.

Gemini Saw, 310/891-0288, www.geminisaw.com.



Clean Machine. Grouting tile is a slow and messy job, but the *18418 Professional Grout Cleaning Set* aims to cut down on the mess and speed up the process. The system's long-handled sponge is cleaned on a stainless tray that's suspended just above the water level in the bucket. Once the sponge is clean, you can squeeze out any excess water with the attached wringer. Not only does this reduce the amount of time spent on your knees, it keeps your hands out of that cold, nasty water. The set sells for about \$350 and includes all the tools you need for grouting tile, including a float, squeegee, bucket, clean-ing tray, sponge, and wringer. The company also makes less-expensive versions, if you're willing to sacrifice the lever-operated wringer.

Karl Dahm, 772/463-9590, www.dahm-tools.com.

Holey Tile. Drilling holes in tile and glass can be an exercise in frustration if you don't have the right tool. Fortunately, the seven-piece *PH 5050 Perfect Hole Cutter Kit* from Nattco will drill holes in porcelain, glass, glass tile, marble, and granite. The kit includes 1-, 1 3/4-, 1 3/8-, 2 1/2-, and 4-inch hole saws and bottles of fine and medium liquid abrasive. Compared with conventional core bits, these cutters cost less and should last longer, because most of the cutting action is done by the liquid abrasive and not the cutter. Each size includes an appropriately sized plastic dam that centers the pilotless cutter and contains the abrasive slurry. The manufacturer "strongly recommends" using the system with a hammer drill. I found the kit on the Web for \$122. Watch for a comprehensive review in an upcoming *Toolbox*.

Nattco, 800/406-8453, www.nattco.com.



TOOLBELTS AND BAGS

Heavy-Duty Leather. For maximum durability, there's nothing like genuine full-grain leather. Occidental Leather makes a complete collection of full-grain leather belts, bags, and accessories produced from thick-skinned American cows. For framing carpenters, there's the *5080 Pro Framer* (\$160; far right, top). This rig is practically bullet-proof and packs 20 pockets for tools and fasteners. It's compatible with Occidental's padded suspenders, dubbed the Stronghold Suspension System (item no. 1546, right). Trim carpenters should check out the *6100 Pro Trimmer* (\$150; far right, bottom). With 16 pockets, it's a little lighter than the Pro Framer rig but still has plenty of space. Both bags come in right- and left-handed versions and fit waist sizes from 30 to 54 inches.

Occidental Leather, 707/824-2560, www.bestbelt.com.



Rock Solid. Disappointed with the durability of your lightweight nail apron? Take a look at Boulder Bag's wares. The company — which offers tool bags to accommodate the specific needs of most trades — says its products last three times longer than most lightweight nylon bags, without any sacrifice in comfort. Options run the gamut from lightweight *Carpenter* belts with a quick-release buckle (\$88; left, top) to *Ultimate Pro-Framer* belts with extra pockets and space for fasteners (\$125; left, bottom).

Boulder Bag, 801/265-8089, www.boulderbag.com.

TOOLBELTS AND BAGS



Super Size It. Since introducing the *Veto Pro Pac* a couple of years ago, former builder Roger Brouard has sold about 8,000 of his well-crafted and functional tool bags. He recently introduced two new sizes to complement the original XL. One side of the XXL (\$150) organizes and transports your smaller hand tools (top left); the other accommodates larger tools like 2-foot levels, wrecking bars, and even a framing square. The LC (\$100) is slightly smaller than the original size and stores about 75 hand tools. Like the original, the new bags feature a carrying strap and sport vertical pockets and zippered flaps to keep your stuff neat and protected.

Veto Pro Pac, 877/847-1443, www.vetopropac.com.



Plenty of Pockets. With Milwaukee's new five-piece, 33-pocket *Heavy-Duty Tool Belt*, you've got no excuse to leave any tools in the truck. Made from ripstop polyester for lightweight durability, the heavy-duty belt boasts built-in suspender clips, a roller buckle, and die-cast tape holders that accommodate both 25- and 30-foot tapes. The large pouches have a flat-bottom design with reinforced corners to prevent blowouts. The belt also includes a cell-phone pocket and three hammer loops. I found it on the Web for about \$75.

Milwaukee, 800/729-3878, www.milwaukeetool.com.



Tool-Toting Backpack.

Duluth Trading's new tool-carrying system makes long walks from the truck much easier. Configured like a conventional backpack, the *Master Series Tool Backpack* offers lots of space for tools and frees your arms for carrying other items. Small front pockets accommodate hand tools; a large rear compartment holds extension cords, cordless drills, and larger hand tools. A removable cell-phone pocket is mounted on the strap. Thanks to a semi-rigid design, the pack will stand on its own. It sells for \$55.

Duluth Trading, 877/382-2345, www.duluthtrading.com.

Job-Site Radios

by Tim Uhler

I have never been on a job site where there wasn't someone playing music or listening to the radio. I consider a radio one of the most important tools I have, because it makes for a happier and more productive crew.

A few years back, DeWalt introduced the first radio designed specifically for job-site use. I bought one early on and used it every day for years. Since then, DeWalt has introduced a newer model and Milwaukee and Bosch have brought out models of their own. These new radios are more refined than our first radio and are equipped with an array of features. Recently, my crew was given the opportunity to test three of the latest radios. Here's what we found.



DeWalt DC011 Heavy-Duty Worksite Radio Charger

The DC011 is a combination radio/battery charger and is an improved version of the DW911 that I used to own. The earlier model was tuned with a dial and had no presets. This version has a digital tuner with a seek function and an LCD display. You can preset up to eight stations and change them by hitting a button. The sound quality is good and there is enough volume for the job site.

When you get tired of the radio, you can plug a CD player into the auxiliary port and listen to CDs. We like the plastic storage case on the side of the radio because it gives us somewhere to store our CDs and player, reducing the likelihood that they will be damaged or misplaced.

The radio, which is protected by a shock-mounted roll cage, proved to be very durable. It kept working even after it was kicked and dropped and showered with falling objects.

The unit contains a one-hour charger that accepts most DeWalt batteries. It can charge the battery or run off of it. The DC011 sells for about \$130 and is the radio to get if you are a heavy user of DeWalt's cordless tools.



Milwaukee 49-24-0200 Job Site Radio

It's obvious that Milwaukee spent some time designing this radio. It has a lot of features, produces excellent sound, and is made to withstand job-site conditions. The steel handle doubles as a roll cage; the shell is made from impact-resistant plastic. The antenna is flexible and would be difficult to break. According to Milwaukee, the radio can survive an 8-foot drop onto concrete. We tried this and the fall did not cause any damage. This radio also endured being kicked and left out in the rain overnight.

The AM/FM digital tuner works very well and allows you to store 10 presets for each frequency. There's also a weather band for picking up National Weather Service broadcasts. Milwaukee's radio is equipped with a 12-volt output jack for powering a CD player or charging a cell phone. An auxiliary input jack allows you to use it with a separate CD player or MP3 player. The 10-foot cord has a pass-through-style plug so you can plug it in without tying up the outlet. A storage bag on the back of the radio can accommodate a cell phone, an MP3 player, or CDs.

The radio won't charge batteries but can be run off the same batteries that power Milwaukee's cordless tools. I was told the manufacturer left out the charger because charging lowers sound quality. I don't own any Milwaukee cordless tools, so this wasn't an issue for me. Even if I did, though, I'd opt for

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better sound over another place to charge a battery.

Sound, in fact, is the best thing about this radio. It has weather-resistant polypropylene speakers with separate tweeters and is powered by a Rockford Fosgate sound system. Rockford Fosgate produces high-end audio systems for cars, so this radio is loud and very clear, even at high volume. I never expected a job-site radio to sound this good. The Punch EQ feature allows you to boost the level of bass. Personally, I think when you turn up the bass the sound suffers, but it sounds great on the lowest setting. Milwaukee's radio costs about \$90, so it's significantly less expensive than the other models we tested.



Bosch PB10-CD Power Box

We couldn't wait to get our hands on the Power Box, because it's equipped with a ton of features. It has a digital AM/FM radio and a built-in CD player that will accept regular CDs and MP3 disks. Other features include the ability to charge or run off Bosch batteries, 20 FM and 10 AM presets, an equalizer with four presets, and an auxiliary input jack for an MP3 player. A protective metal cage encloses the cube-shaped unit.

The best thing about this radio is the built-in CD player. I burned an MP3 CD with 40 songs, so we can go almost all day without hearing the same song twice. It's much more convenient to play a disk in the Power Box than to haul around a separate player. The CD player will not skip, even if you hit or drop the unit.

Another feature we like is the four built-in GFCI outlets. Power is always in short supply on the job site, so it helps

to have this extra space for plugging things in. The Power Box is well-designed and has become a regular part of our tool kit. It's the first tool we take out in the morning and the last one we stow at the end of the day.

The one thing we don't like about the Power Box is the quality of sound. It's not bad for a portable radio, but it doesn't sound as good as the Milwaukee radio or the most recent model from DeWalt. When the Power Box first came out, it had an internal antenna, so the AM/FM reception was pretty poor. The current version is equipped with a flexible external antenna, which has improved the reception. Still, it could be better. Based on sound alone, I would not buy this radio, but after using it for a few months it would be very hard to give up the built-in CD player and the GFCI receptacles.

Bosch makes two versions of the Power Box. The one we tested contains a CD player and sells for about \$180. The other costs about \$150 and has a radio but no CD player. Since the CD player is the best thing about the Power Box, there's not much point buying the model that doesn't have one.


Comparisons

Even though we used these radios for a few months, it was difficult to pick a clear winner. The DeWalt DC011 produces good sound and charges DeWalt batteries. I own some DeWalt cordless tools, but I would not automatically select this radio. It doesn't sound as good as the Milwaukee and it lacks some of the features found on the Bosch.

The Milwaukee radio has far and away the best sound. We wear earplugs on our job site; when we turn the Milwaukee up high enough to hear, the sound stays clean. With other radios, the sound becomes distorted at high volumes. A possible negative, however, is that the Milwaukee unit doesn't charge batteries. It's not a problem for us, because we're framers and rarely use cordless tools.

If I hadn't heard the sound produced by the DeWalt and the Milwaukee systems, I might have thought the Power Box was the ideal job-site radio, thanks to features like the built-in CD player. I would not want to go back to using a separate player. But its quality of sound just isn't up to the level of the other models we tested.

Even so, I would still have to say that the Power Box is my favorite radio, because of the CD player and the GFCI outlets.

If I could create the perfect job-site radio, it would have the overall design and features of the Bosch but the sound system and radio reception of the Milwaukee. 

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