

Bosch Bulldog Xtreme Max SDS-Plus Rotary Hammer

by Kyle Dunkley

Over the past few years, I've used a Bosch SDS-Plus Bulldog Xtreme (11255VSR) rotary hammer to bore a thousand $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch to 1-inch holes in everything from 30-day to 30-year concrete. I've tossed the tool around in my truck and on site and exposed it to endless Pacific Northwest rains. Although it isn't the fastest model on the market, it has been a steady workhorse.

Last January Bosch introduced the SDS-Plus Bulldog Xtreme Max (RH228VC) rotary hammer, which is billed as a step up from the Xtreme. I recently poured a foundation that involved pinning some of the footings to bed-rock with rebar dowels and drilling holes for anchoring the mudsills. The job gave me a chance to test-drive the Xtreme Max and compare it head-to-head with my older model. My first impression? The new tool works great.

Features

My Xtreme and the new Xtreme Max share many features. They're both D-handle models, which are longer than pistol-grip and L-shape models and well-balanced for the downward drilling I commonly do as a framer. By using the longest bits available, I can often start my rotary hammer at waist height and bend over slightly as the bit works its way to the desired depth. This makes the job easier on my back.

Bulldog Xtreme Max Specs

Weight (by JLC): 7.5 pounds (including cord, side handle, depth stop)

Length: 17.4 inches

Amps: 8

Rpm: 0-1,230

Bpm: 0-5,460

Impact energy: 2.4 foot-pounds

Maximum spiral-bit capacity in concrete: $\frac{1}{8}$ inches

Optimal spiral-bit capacity in concrete: $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch

Maximum thin-wall core bit capacity in concrete: $2\frac{5}{8}$ inches

Price: \$250 (including side handle, depth stop, plastic case)

Warranty: 1 year with 30-day money-back guarantee

Bosch, 877/267-2499, boschtools.com



On some rotary hammers, you have to loosen the side handle to adjust the depth stop — but the Xtreme Max has a convenient release button. The tool delivers rotary-only, rotary-hammer, and hammer-only action.

Both models have rotary-hammer, rotary-only, and hammer-only modes; an internal clutch that slips when a bit binds or the tool overloads; and a rotating brush plate that delivers equal power in forward and reverse. Both also have a pivoting strain relief on the power cord for improved durability, and a comfortable side handle with a removable depth stop that you can adjust quickly by pushing a release button. And finally, both have a fold-out hook on the handle so you can hang the tool off a ladder, scaffolding, or sawhorses — a feature I really like. Neither model has a trigger lock-on button, which would be handy if you do a lot of chipping.

But the real story is the hammering mechanism inside the Xtreme Max. Like the Xtreme, the new tool uses a piston to launch a free-floating striker, which in turn hammers an impact bolt against the bit. An air space between the piston and the striker compresses and drives the striker forward as the piston advances, then vacuums it back as the piston retreats. The air space also acts as a shock absorber. The Xtreme Max has a longer piston, impact bolt, and air space than the Xtreme, which increases its power and drilling speed while reducing vibration.





The D-handle tool has a long reach for easier downward drilling.

Whereas my Xtreme can handle spiral-fluted bits up to an inch in diameter in concrete with an optimal drilling range of $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch, the Xtreme Max can power $1\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bits, with an optimal range of $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch.

Bosch also gave the new tool an internal counterbalance (to further offset vibration) and a metal gear cover.

Performance

I rode the Xtreme Max hard for several hours on my foundation job, using various SDS-plus Bulldog bits to bore anchor holes from $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in diameter. To better compare the speed and handling of the old and new models, I poured an extra unreinforced pad with the leftover 25-MPa (3,626 psi) concrete and let it cure for 28 days. Then, using new Bulldog bits, I timed how long it took each tool to bore five $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch and $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch holes to a depth of 2 inches. The Xtreme averaged 12 seconds for the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch holes and 19 seconds for the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch holes. The Xtreme Max averaged 10 seconds for the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch holes and 18 seconds for the $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch ones. Although the new model wasn't radically faster than the old one, the results were consistent. As for vibration control, the Xtreme Max was way easier on my body than the Xtreme.

The Bottom Line

There's nothing wrong with the Bosch Bulldog Xtreme rotary hammer I've been using. It's reliable and has no

The Category

The terms SDS, SDS-plus, and TE-C all refer to the same class of small rotary hammers. The bits that fit these tools have identical slotted shanks (see photo, below); to install one, you align the shank so it enters the chuck and push until you hear a click. To remove a bit, you pull back the chuck collar and slide it out. The platform is popular with builders and remodelers because the tools can typically bore common anchor holes in concrete two to three times faster than hammer drills, delivering powerful air-cushioned blows that can pulverize hard concrete and aggregates. The rotary hammers also accept core bits for drilling larger holes in concrete and can be set for rotary-only drilling. Many add a hammer-only mode so you can use bull points and chisels for light-duty chipping, on such jobs as removing old tiles and mortar.



The fold-out hook is deep enough to grab a 2-by or an extension-ladder rung.



A turret allows the cord to pivot where it exits the tool, improving flexibility and durability.

problem drilling common anchor holes in concrete and bedrock, though it's a bit of a rough ride when drilling the larger holes. But with the risk of cumulative trauma disorders just around the corner, I look for any excuse to give my wrists and hands a break. The new Bulldog Xtreme Max is faster than my Xtreme while neutralizing much of the vibration. If I were in the market for an SDS-plus rotary hammer right now, I'd buy the Xtreme Max.

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