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EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW



Makita LS0714 Sliding Compound-Miter Saw

BY STEVE DEMETRICK

As a residential remodeling contractor, I'm always on the go. My tools need to keep pace by being portable, accurate, and easy to use. The Makita 7 1/2-inch sliding compound-miter saw (model LS0714) has been an asset to my work in all of these regards. I've been using the saw for cutting everything from light framing to interior trim since Makita introduced it in 2005, and it's still on the market.

EASY CARRY

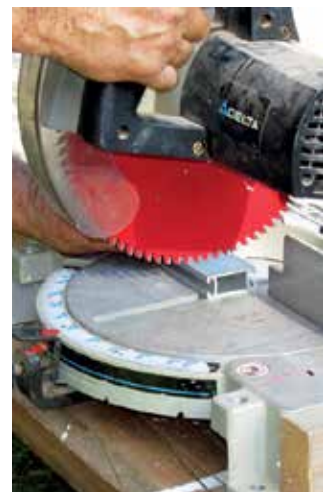
The LS0714 weighs only about 29 pounds, or about half as much as a comparable 10-inch or 12-inch slider. It's never an issue to drag it out for a couple of cuts, and when trimming interiors it's normally more productive to move this compact saw from room to room

than to set up a fixed high-capacity miter-saw station and walk back and forth for every cut. Because I can lift the saw with one hand, I can easily bring it up a ladder and set it on staging for cutting siding or trim.

The cutting capacity is tremendous for such a small saw. For example, when building staircases, I use the saw for everything from crosscutting 1x12 skirtboards and 1x oak treads to fitting the cove moldings and balusters. I can also cut crown moldings up to about 3 inches wide by nesting them against the fence in the usual upright, upside-down position and adjusting the miter angle for a perfect fit. Wider crown needs to be cut on the flat, which forces you to adjust the bevel angle every time you tweak the miter angle. That's no trouble if I'm only making a few cuts in a

CONVENIENT METAL-CUTTING MITER SAW

When I recently upgraded to a new compound-miter saw for trim and general carpentry, I outfitted my old Delta 10-inch miter saw with a new 80-tooth Diablo D1080N Non-Ferrous/Plastics saw blade (diablotools.com). The Delta is now my dedicated saw for cutting aluminum track for rolling doors, aluminum window-screen frames, and other non-ferrous metal materials. It sure beats the hassle of using a hacksaw or an angle grinder, and the thin-kerf blade's triple-chip grind delivers clean, burr-free cuts. I even accidentally cut a mild-steel grid for a suspended ceiling with this blade, and it didn't damage it. That might be because of Diablo's special high-density carbide teeth and tri-metal shock-resistant brazing. The blade costs about \$60 at homedepot.com. —John Carroll is a remodeling contractor in Durham, N.C.





The author's complete rig includes a compact DeWalt stand and a Festool vacuum.



The lightweight saw can easily be set up on staging so it's close to the work.

room, but I'll use one of my bigger sliders if I need to run wide crown in an entire house.

MITERS AND BEVELS

The LS0714 can miter 47 degrees to the left and a generous 57 degrees to the right. And although a detent override allows for a bevel up to 5 degrees to the right (a feature I often use to back-cut wide pieces), it's basically a single-bevel saw and can only bevel 45 degrees to the left. That doesn't help when trimming out-of-square old houses, and it sometimes means having to flip the stock end-for-end when cutting bevels or compound angles. (With dual-bevel saws, instead of flipping the stock, you can tilt the cutting head to either side—helpful when cutting long pieces in tight quarters.) But this beveling limitation has never been an issue for me; I plan my cuts, so I seldom have to flip the stock.

HELPFUL ACCESSORIES

I like the saw's small 7 1/2-inch blade diameter because it limits deflection and wobble. Instead of the stock 40-tooth Makita blade, though, I use a 60-tooth Forrest Chopmaster blade (model CM07H606100), which costs about \$107. It's about 50% thicker than Makita's blade and safely makes very clean cuts in the tiniest of moldings. My larger miter saws tend to grab small pieces even when using a wood backer, but my LS0714 never does. It can also use common 7 1/4-inch blades in a pinch.

I normally mount the saw on DeWalt's compact model DWX724 universal miter-saw stand equipped with extra-wide DW7029 work supports. The stand has a quick-release saw

mount and folds for transport and storage. Together, saw and stand weigh under 60 pounds.

For dust collection, I hook the saw to a Festool CT Midi vacuum. Festool's 1 7/16-inch hose end would normally fit loosely over the plastic dust port, but a few wraps of duct tape around the port expand the outside diameter to create a snug fit. I've never measured the amount of dust collected, but would conservatively estimate it to be about 80% to 85%.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I wish the LS0714 could bevel a bit past 45 degrees, but that's my only complaint. After using the saw for eight years, I know it's built to last. It's my go-to saw for almost every aspect of my work, from light framing to finish.

LS0714 SPECS

Blade: 7 1/2 inches; 5/8-inch arbor
 Weight (by mfr): 28.9 pounds
 Amps: 10
 No-load speed: 6,000 rpm
 Cutting capacity, 0° miter/bevel: 2 1/16 x 11 3/4 inches
 Cutting capacity, 45° miter/bevel: 1 9/16 x 8 3/8 inches
 Max. miter angle: left 47°, right 57°
 Max. bevel angle: left 45°, right 5°
 Price: \$450
 Warranty: 1 year, 30-day satisfaction guarantee

Makita / 800.462.5482 / makita.com

Steve Demetrick is a residential remodeling contractor in Wakefield, R.I.

LOST SOLES

I was just about to write a rave review of the Keen Industrial "California" work boots that I've been wearing for more than a year. Now, I have a gripe instead: I just learned that the boots are being discontinued.

With welt construction, a rubber toe guard, and an extra-wide front end that helps prevent me from twisting my ankles—as I am prone to do—my California boots were comfortable right out of the box. Other Keen work boots also have those features, but only the California boot has wedge soles, which I consider mandatory. The soft soles don't collect debris or mark floors, and they give me enough traction to sheath an 8:12-pitch roof. What's more, the boots are still in great shape after I've poured several foundations under existing cabins, grinding my boots against rocks and tree roots. Based on that performance, I expect the boots to last at least another year, or about twice as long as my boots have usually lasted over my 37-year building and remodeling career.

Keen says it is discontinuing these boots because wedge soles don't sell well anywhere but in California. I hope it reconsiders, because the boots are the best I've owned. —*Mitch Greenlaw, owner of Greenlaw Construction, Twain Harte, Calif.*





Speedy One-Handed Clamps

My favorite jobsite clamp is the Stanley FatMax Xtreme Auto Trigger Clamp. It delivers a potent 450 pounds of clamping force and is spring-loaded to snap the jaws against the work at the press of a button. You only have to pull the trigger once or twice to apply the force. That's especially handy when you're holding up a material with one hand while clamping with the other, such as when clamping a temporary brace to a fence post or a guardrail newel to a deck joist. The clamp also converts to a spring-loaded spreader in a heartbeat.

All good, except that Stanley Black & Decker recently replaced that clamp with the new DeWalt Rapid Return Bar Clamp. Like the Stanley, it comes in a 6-inch and a 12-inch version. I tried both sizes to see if they work as well as their predecessors.

According to the specs, the DeWalt clamps deliver 350 pounds rather than 450 pounds of clamping force, though I couldn't really tell the difference in my limited trials. The DeWalt's throat is about 3/4 inch deeper for a better reach. Like the Stanley, the DeWalt uses a coiled steel spring to speed the closure.

In use, the DeWalt 6-incher worked as well as the old one, consistently springing the jaws shut when I pulled the release lever. But the 12-incher sometimes stalled and needed a manual assist. That might be because the new spring is about 1/16 inch narrower than the old one, though there also seems to be more friction in the new design. DeWalt says the sliding action should improve with use. I've seen the two sizes priced as low as \$20 and \$22 online. —Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC.



New & Noteworthy

The Stanley FatMax Powerclaw is a unique power strip that clamps to framing, ladders, or elsewhere to keep it off the ground or floor while conveniently positioning your power source. It has three grounded outlets and a 15-amp breaker, and costs about \$25. Search "Stanley FatMax Powerclaw" at youtube.com to view a video. —B.G.



RUGGED, WASHABLE DROP CLOTH

Josh Dunlap, production manager of Consolidated Design & Construction Group, a residential design/build remodeling contractor in St. Louis, reports that his company has been using Trimaco's Old School Heavyweight Butyl drop cloths (trimaco.com) for years with excellent results.

Made in the U.S., the washable drop cloths consist of a tightly-woven polyester/cotton fabric with a triple-coated butyl-rubber backing that helps prevent liquids from leaking through while also resisting slippage on hardwood and other solid surfaces. Dunlap says that his drops have endured countless machine-washings without delaminating, and that small tears can be repaired by patching both sides with Tyvek tape (which can also handle multiple washings).

The drops come in four sizes, but he finds the 4x15 and 9x12 versions to be the most useful because they're easy to wash and can collectively protect everything from hallways to large rooms. At homedepot.com, the 4x15 costs about \$16, the 9x12 about \$28. —B.G.

Photo: bottom, David Frame