

## Hitachi C12LSH Sliding Compound Miter Saw

by Thomas Pedemonte

**B**efore sliding miter saws existed, I cut stair treads with my sweet little 12-point handsaw and a marking knife. After that I used the Delta Sawbuck for a while, a truly awful tool that was like a Skilsaw riding on two rails.

In the years since then I've been through a number of miter saws; for the last five, I've been doing my stair-building work with a 12-inch Hitachi C12FSA sliding compound miter saw. From the beginning, I liked this tool; I figured, hey, what else could you want from a saw?

Well, I found out the answer to that question last summer and fall, when *JLC* loaned me a Hitachi C12LSH dual-compound sliding miter saw.

Like many large sliding miter saws, this tool has excellent cutting capacity and comes with a laser marker. But it also has two features not found on other saws: a digital display that shows miter and bevel angles, and a slide system that allows you to position the tool close to a wall.



### Unusual Slide System

One of the qualities I'd appreciated in my previous saw was how light and easy the slide and chopping action felt. The C12LSH retains that excellent action — even though the slide system is completely different.

The new system allows you to lock the rails so that they don't slide out the back. In this way the tool is similar to a radial-arm saw; the motor and blade move but the rails are fixed, so you can sit the tool against the wall. My older saw — which doesn't have this feature — takes up twice the room and never seems to fit anywhere.

Its slide system makes the C12LSH ideal for shop use because it can be assigned to a fixed station in line with other machines. The feature would also be great on job sites where space is at a premium.

### LCD Display

Another unique aspect of the C12LSH is its LCD display, a digital readout



### Hitachi C12LSH Specs

**Saw blade:** 12 inches  
**No-load speed:** 3,800 rpm  
**Maximum cutting depth at 90/45-degree bevel:** 4<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches, 2<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches  
**Maximum cutting width at 90/45-degree miter:** 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches, 8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches  
**Bevel cuts:** 0–45 degrees L and R  
**Miter cuts:** 0–46 degrees L; 0–57 degrees R  
**Bevel stops:** 0, 45 degrees (L/R)  
**Miter stops:** 0, 15, 22.5, 31.6, 45 degrees (L/R); 57 degrees (R)  
**Motor:** 15 amps; belt drive  
**Weight:** 66 pounds  
**Street price:** \$650

Hitachi Power Tools  
800/706-7337  
[www.hitachipowertools.com](http://www.hitachipowertools.com)



In addition to the usual scales, this saw has a digital display that indicates miter and bevel settings down to the nearest .5 degree.

attached to the top of the tool with a flexible fitting. At first, I considered this feature a gimmick — but I changed my mind the first time I had to cut a whole bunch of stair balusters at 33.5 degrees.

Early in my career as a stair builder I used a bevel gauge to measure the angle on the tops of balusters and to transfer that bevel to the saw. But several years back, I learned an incredibly useful piece of geometry: The inverse tangent of rise/run is the slope of the stairs (or any right triangle) in exact degrees. Knowing this, I can go straight from the calculator to setting the angle on the saw for baluster and skirt cuts.

I could also use the miter gauge, but viewing the numbers on the display is faster and easier; there's no need to count off graduations or to eyeball the halfway point between them. Using the display is simply a matter of flipping a switch to turn it on, swinging the table left or right, and reading off the miter cut.

The digital readout makes it

possible to cut multiples of the same thing, stop to cut something else, and then quickly go back to the original angle setting.

The left side of the display is for miter settings, and the right side is for bevels. The readout is especially handy for setting bevels because the bevel scale is small and hard to read when you're balancing a heavy part of the machine. The display

is at eye level and shows an absolute number. Its only shortcoming — a minor one — is that the smallest increment it will do is .5 degree.

Of course, there's no need to use the display for every cut; if you want, you can turn it off and use the regular scales and detents.



When activated, a built-in laser projects a visible beam in line with the blade.

## Laser Marker

One of the hottest new features on miter saws these days is the laser marker. When the laser is on, it projects a visible red beam across the stock in line with the blade.

Initially, I found the glow a distraction, and I'd often turn the laser marker off. But the more I used it, the more useful I found it to be. I now rely on it regularly for certain tasks.

For example, sometimes I need to trim an uneven strip off the end of a piece to make something fit. The particular angle doesn't matter — I just want to make the blade hit the line I drew on the material, or clip one edge and miss the other. The laser makes it much easier to do this, because the beam shows in advance exactly where the blade will go.

## Micro-Adjustments

For years, when I needed that one-degree change in miter angle, I would tap the saw over by banging on the handle. The saw never stopped quite where I wanted it to.

Now, with the C12LSH, I can calmly watch the miter display and make slight adjustments by turning the micro-adjustment knob on the front of the saw. The knob — which is connected to a rack-and-pinion mechanism — allows you to make fine adjustments easily and accurately.

There is a similar mechanism on the back of the saw for setting bevels. In some ways it's even more useful than the one for setting miters; normally when making fine adjustments to the bevel angle, you have to fight gravity, but with the C12LSH's micro-adjustment knob, you can simply dial in the exact setting you want.

Both knobs work well with the



A knob connected to a rack-and-pinion mechanism makes it easier to make fine adjustments to bevel settings. A similar micro-adjustment mechanism on the front of the saw controls miter settings.

digital display: To make fine adjustments, you turn the knob and watch the display. I do have one gripe, however, which is that the knob for adjusting the miter would be easier to use if it were larger.

### Final Judgement

In terms of power and cutting capacity, the C12LSH is on par with competing models. What really stands

out about the saw, though, are its features and how well they work together — particularly the micro-adjusting knobs.

In fact, I found it hard to let go of the C12LSH at the end of the testing period.

It's a fantastic saw for use in the shop and an equally good saw for use on site — the only problem being that at 66 pounds it's one of the heavier models around. (Bosch's top-of-the-line model weighs 59 pounds and DeWalt's and Makita's weigh 53 pounds apiece.)

The weight is not a problem for me because I do most of my cutting in the shop, and when I go on site there are usually people around to help me load and unload. But for someone who works alone and has to haul his tools in and out of the truck every day, this otherwise excellent saw may not be as suitable.

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**Short Cut.** Since you probably hardly ever use your 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch circ saw's full depth-of-cut capacity anyway, why not save your arm and downsize? At 8 pounds, Ridgid's new *Fuego 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-inch Framing Saw* (model R3203) is the lightest corded framing saw available, says the maker. A smaller-than-average blade, a magnesium blade guard, and a composite shoe help keep the weight down. The saw cuts up to 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches at 90 degrees and up to 1<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches at 45 degrees. It costs \$140.

**Ridgid**, 800/474-3443, [www.ridgid.com](http://www.ridgid.com). **Circle #7**

**High-Power Cordless.** Way back when, my first cordless circular saw was capable of little more than cutting pine shelving. Fortunately, times have changed: DeWalt's newest cordless model has the muscle and runtime to serve as a real alternative to your corded saw. Powered by a 36-volt lithium-ion battery pack, the 7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch *DC300K* makes up to 116 cuts in a 2x10 and can easily slice through tough materials like LVL and treated lumber, says the maker. Additional features include a toolless blade clamp and a lightweight magnesium shoe. With a plastic case, charger, and one battery, the saw sells for \$380.

**DeWalt**, 800/433-9258, [www.dewalt.com](http://www.dewalt.com). **Circle #8**



**Square Deal.** When it comes to getting more bang for the buck, Hitachi's *C7SB2* — which commonly sells for less than \$90 — is hard to beat. Even putting price aside, I consider this pro-duty sidewinder a stellar performer. It's well-balanced and powerful, and it bevels to 55 degrees. The price includes a case.

**Hitachi**, 800/706-7337, [www.hitachi.com/powertools](http://www.hitachi.com/powertools). **Circle #9**



## Toolbox | Back-Savers

**Crank it Up!** When it comes to lifting a steel beam or other heavy building component, your first inclination may be to bring in some additional help — but even with extra hands, lifting weighty objects 8 or 10 feet is extremely risky. Instead, be smart and use a material lift like Genie's *Superlift Contractor*. With its 650-pound capacity, the mechanical lift can reach up to 24 feet (depending on the model). The manufacturer says it fits through a 3-foot door and can be hauled in the back of a pickup. Prices start at \$1,435 for the 12-foot model and \$2,255 for the 24-footer (based on 2006 pricing). You also might be able to lease the product from your local rental yard.

**Genie**, 800/536-1800, [www.genieindustries.com](http://www.genieindustries.com). **Circle #10**



**Cart Blanche.** Perhaps back in your youth you could muscle around solid-core doors and sheets of 12-foot drywall, but today it might make more sense to use a *Troll Panel Handler 112*. The cart has a 250-pound capacity and holds up to four 1/2-inch-thick panels. An adjustable clamp on the handle keeps the load secure; two casters — one straight and one swiveling — make the cart to easy to maneuver in tight spaces and long hallways. It costs \$150.

**Telpro**, 800/448-0822, [www.telproinc.com](http://www.telproinc.com). **Circle #11**

**Reach Higher.** No tool spares your back like an all-terrain forklift. Bobcat's newest machine, the *V638 VersaHandler*, boasts a maximum reach just shy of 39 feet and a 6,700-pound capacity (850 pounds at maximum reach). Hydrostatic transmission allows the operator to shift on the fly, and an optional heated and air-conditioned cab maximizes comfort. Prices start at about \$80,000.

**Bobcat**, 800/743-4340, [www.bobcat.com](http://www.bobcat.com). **Circle #12**

