

## Weigh In!

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# TOOLS

OF THE TRADE

## Metabo HPT 8-Gallon Trolley-Style Compressor

BY TONY BLUE

**Cordless jobsites?** Not quite ... at least, not today. It's hot, probably 90°F. Locusts buzz in the nearby remaining pine tree. We're just outside Lake George, N.Y., in an early 2000s suburban neighborhood, the kind with no sidewalks on a road that purposefully meanders back and forth. Our company was hired to fix significant damage to a house, mainly the front porch and garage, caused by a large pine tree crashing down onto the roof earlier in the summer.

My guys will perform all the work themselves: framing, siding, roofing, decking, and so on. Rick's white work van is parked on the side of the road, a little rust in the usual spots. He opens the squeaking rear doors and grabs the rolled-up polypropylene hose off the hook. Rick is older; he's been around the block more than once and has built hundreds of houses. Jon is younger, more life left in his body. "I already got my battery nailer out, old man," Jon jokes. Rick replies, "You can use it—that damn thing is too heavy."

A couple of months earlier, I had been asked if I had some projects in the works on which I could try out Metabo's new electric 8-gallon wheelbarrow compressor. While I didn't have a specific project in mind, I knew we would use it. What I didn't realize was how perfect a compressor it was going to be for us, already replacing our workhorse gas compressor on a couple of jobsites.

We perform most of our work in-house, and for small jobs, our cordless framing nailers are spot on: not much setup, with extra batteries already on the site. Sure, they are heavier than our pneumatic nailers, but for occasional use, their weight is not enough of an issue to bother us. After a couple of hours or more of continuous nail-gun use, though, weight and speed of the tool become a concern.

**Specs.** In the past, we have had to pick between the lesser of two evils: a small pancake compressor that runs all day just to keep up and even then may not have enough power, or a powerful gas compressor that we have to listen to just the same, as well as purchase fuel for every couple of days. Queue "The Tank," the name that Metabo has given its model EC1315S mobile, electric wheelbarrow compressor. A single-tank, 8-gallon, 225-psi high-capacity compressor that we can plug into a standard outlet? Well, that porridge is just right, my friend.

We still use a compressor to power positive placement and framing nailers, as well as roofing, flooring, and coiled siding nailers for clapboards. Having one that is somewhat mobile and not too large is important to us. Although the Metabo is a little heavy—at 93 pounds—for one person to load into a work van or trailer, when stood upright, it fits in well with our other equipment.

**Performance.** In use, it held all the air we needed to run two nailers of any kind without continuously kicking on and off. In our

experience, 5 cfm at 90 psi is pretty good for a portable electric. In our testing, the compressor went from zero to shut off (225 psi) in a little over three minutes. During operation, recharging from 175 psi to 225 psi took about 39 seconds. At a reported 76 dB, it is noticeably quieter than our gas compressor.

One day, I swung by the site to empty the dump trailer. A couple of the old tires were squatting and the Metabo made quick work of standing them up again, even with the weight in the loaded trailer. Eight gallons is comparable to most gas compressors. Starting at 225 psi, I should not have been surprised at the volume of air it sent into the tire before kicking on.

The rubber tires and metal handle feel sturdy and well built. We would, however, like to see the drain valve more accessible toward the outside without the user having to flip the compressor upright. And I would also love to have some type of holder for an air hose and connections; what stays attached to the compressor won't get forgotten and left on a nearby shelf.

Whether or not you are a Metabo loyalist, I think this compressor is a good value. For a powerful, portable, reliable jobsite compressor, \$460 is a reasonable amount to pay. [metabo-hpt.com](http://metabo-hpt.com)

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With multiple nail guns in action, the author would typically need to use a gas compressor on this site, but the Metabo HPT 8-gallon portable compressor suits his needs perfectly.

# Mullet M5 High-Speed Cyclone Dust Collector

BY TOM O'BRIEN

**Thanks largely to tool-triggered** vacuums and HEPA filters, today's jobsites are much cleaner and safer than back when I got started. The only thing I don't care for is the expense of replacing filled dust bags and clogged filters.

To minimize this problem, cyclonic devices that pull dust particles out of the air ahead of the filtration have been standard equipment in woodworking shops for decades. Thankfully, this technology is finally making it to the jobsite. Earlier this year, I reviewed a portable cyclonic air scrubber (see "Filter-free Air Scrubber," Apr/22). Soon afterward, I had the opportunity to test the Mullet, a cyclonic dust separator that's designed to easily attach to most wet/dry vacuums (1).

**Putting it together.** Upon opening the box, what struck me was that the Mullet's entire body is molded from a single piece of sturdy plastic. Company co-founder DJ Bell told me that it's manufactured using a process called "rotational molding," in which the raw plastic is placed inside a metal mold, heated up, and slowly rotated, causing the softened material to adhere to the inside walls of the mold and gradually form the desired shape. Besides affording the op-

portunity to make the unit lightweight and practically unbreakable, rotational molding enables the cyclone separator portion on top to have curved parabolic walls as opposed to the straight cone shape typically seen on dust separators. This tornado shape is more effective at spinning dust particles out of the air before they reach the vacuum, Bell said.

Assembling the unit simply required screwing casters to the base and connecting the exhaust to the vacuum's inlet port using 1½-inch PVC pipe. All the fittings necessary to make a rigid connection with almost any shop vacuum were included in the box, as was a self-adhesive template that ensured I cut the vertical pipe in exactly the right places. The pipe fittings are pressure-fit, not glued, so if anyone wanted to use the Mullet with more than one vac, they could order an extra pipe from the manufacturer or use standard 1½-inch Schedule 40.

Wheeling the conjoined twins around the work site was no problem—the integrated outlet pipe on top made a perfect handle—and separating them for transport required only the turn of a thumbscrew (2).

**Does it suck?** I put this device through rigorous testing in my home shop and on various jobsites. Freed from concerns about

running up the costs mentioned previously, I soon found myself breaking out the vac when the day before I might have reached for a broom, or settled for a tool-mounted dust bag, or cut the MDF in the driveway.

Inserting a middleman into the dust collection process never resulted in any noticeable loss of suction, even when the 5-gallon dump bin was filled to the brim (3). After I had twice emptied the bin, the dust bag in my vac felt as empty as when I started testing.

When full, the bin is emptied by unscrewing the lid and pouring the contents into a trash bag. To prevent dust from escaping, Bell suggested using a rubber band or duct tape to fasten the trash bag over the opening or adding water to make a slurry. When a torrential rainstorm flooded my normally dry shop space, I was glad to find out that the Mullet also excels at wet vacuuming.

The Mullet is made in the U.S. and is available directly from the manufacturer for \$250, shipping included. As of this writing, it has not been certified for work covered by RRP or silica rules, but testing is ongoing. [mullettools.com](http://mullettools.com)

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The parabolic cyclone that forms the top section of the Mullet M5 Cyclone Dust Collector scrubs dust particles out of the air before they fill up the vacuum cleaner bag or clog up the filters (1). A simple thumbscrew connects and disconnects the Mullet from the vac with ease (2). Every time the 5-gallon-capacity dump bin fills up, a dust bag lives to fight another day (3).

Photos by Tom O'Brien

# A Value-Priced Track Saw

BY MARK CLEMENT

The Ryobi PTS01 One+ HP brushless 6½-inch track saw is not the most powerful or rugged one on the market. But at \$300—which includes the saw, a blade, two 27½-inch tracks, an 18-volt 4.0-Ah lithium battery, a charger, and accessories—it’s a great value.

If you’re a power user, you could (and probably should) spend hundreds more for a “pro-grade” track saw. But not everyone needs pro-grade quality for what I consider to be a specialty tool for occasional use. What’s important is having a tool that works for the job at hand. Before track saws began to make their appearance on jobsites, I used a wormdrive saw and a shooting board to make straight cuts; with a small investment in the Ryobi saw, I can make those cuts much more quickly, accurately, and safely.

**Performance.** Having used the Ryobi track saw on several projects, including a couple of decks and an interior trim job, I’ve found that power is not this saw’s forte. However, if the only thing standing in its way is 32 feet of composite decking or a door that needs resizing—both of which I tested the saw on—it’s smooth sailing. I also used the Ryobi to trim the edges of a 16-foot-deep pressure treated deck, with great results (Ryobi claims that the saw can rip up to 260 lineal feet per charge). Sure, other saws have longer tracks, or longer battery life, or are corded, but for 16 feet? The Ryobi handled the job easily.

The plunge mechanism is the same as on every other track saw I’ve seen and works smoothly. The shoe is plastic but seems plenty durable for occasional use, while the blade height adjustment is just as finicky as on saws that cost 30% more. One quibble is the saw’s rear-facing, nonadjustable dust chute: Without a hose attached to it, the port shoots dust onto both the track and the user; when attached, the hose sticks out right next to your hand. This is a minor chafe, however, as I work mainly outdoors.

**Cutting capacity.** When the saw is used with the track, its cutting capacity at 90 degrees is 1 15/16 inches; without the track, cutting capacity is 2 1/8 inches. You can cut bevels up to 48 degrees; at 45 degrees, the cutting capacity is 1 7/16 inches with the track and 1 9/16 inches without it. While the thumb release takes some getting used to, the bevel adjustment works fine.

The saw comes with a decent 40-tooth carbide-tipped blade, and the kit includes two 27½-inch tracks that bolt together to form a single 55-inch track (additional sections can be bolted together to form a longer track). The tracks are on par with most others in the category in terms of functionality and are gummy enough to stay in place when you’re breaking down sheet goods, cutting door bottoms, or trimming composite or PT decking. As far as I know, though, the tracks can’t be used with any of the other tools in Ryobi’s 18-volt One+ system. ryobitools.com

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The Ryobi 18V One+ HP track saw has a brushless motor powered by a 4.0-Ah battery that spins the blade at 4,300 rpm (1). The 6½-inch saw has a rear-facing dust port that ejects sawdust directly behind it when not connected to a vacuum system (2).