

Festool CXS 18 Compact Drill

BY JOHN CARROLL

Back in 2011, Festool developed the 10.8-volt CXS drill, which was smaller and lighter than any other cordless drill/driver then on the market. Festool has since updated it with the CXS 12, which continues to use a 10.8-volt battery but offers several innovative features. The company's new CXS 18 drill is similar to the CXS 12 but uses Festool's 18-volt battery and delivers about 30% more torque than the CXS 12.

Although the CXS 18 is considerably more robust than the CXS 12, it's still a light, compact drill that measures a mere 8 1/4 inches tall and 6 1/4 inches long and weighs in at just 1.54 pounds. Despite its diminutive size, however, it has plenty of power. It doesn't have an impact action, but it drives 3 1/8-inch construction screws into framing lumber with ease, and it's rated to drill 1 3/8-inch-diameter holes in wood. The brushless motor runs smoothly and, in use, it's well-balanced and feels good in the hand.

In addition to its smooth and powerful drilling and driving operations, the CXS 18 comes with an array of clever and useful features. One of my favorites is the LED light. In the remodeling work that I do, I often find myself driving screws in dark, confined spaces, such as inside cabinets or in bays between joists, rafters, or studs. In these situations, the LED light really helps. It can be adjusted for both brightness and duration via the Festool Work App (which is

actuated through Bluetooth). Because the light can be set to stay on for up to 15 minutes, you can use the drill as a makeshift flashlight.

Other Work App functions include changing the trigger to accommodate left-handed users, checking the status of the battery, and ordering repairs. In the area around the light are three magnetized slots about 1/4 inch deep that hold spare bits securely. The drill also comes with a belt clip.

The basic CXS 18 drill comes with a Centrotec tool chuck, which allows you to quickly change hexagonal Centrotec bits without tools. Although standard 1/4-inch drive bits don't lock into the Centrotec chuck, Festool includes an adapter with a strong magnet that enables their use.

In addition to the Centrotec chuck, Festool offers a variety of interchangeable chucks that can be installed via its "FastFix InterFace." The HPC 4,0 I-Set that I tested includes two of these chucks (along with the Centrotec): an AN-XS right-angle bit holder and a keyless 3/8-inch drill bit chuck. Both click securely in place by hand. The right-angle bit holder can be rotated clockwise to fine-tune its orientation to the drill body, which helps fit the drill in tight spaces.

The CXS 18 HPC 4,0 I-Set includes a CXS 18 drill, two 18-volt batteries, a charger, the three chucks described here, and the belt clip mentioned above. All the components are neatly arranged in



Measuring just over 6 inches long, Festool's CXS 18 fits easily between joists and has the power to drive large-diameter structural screws **(1)**. The drill has an adjustable LED work light, handy when you're working in dimly lit spaces **(2)**, and can be fitted with different chucks, including the AN-XS right-angle adapter and FastFix 3/8-inch keyless chuck **(3)**.

Photos by Matthew Navrey

Weigh In!

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a custom Festool Systainer 3 toolbox and held in place by a hard plastic lining that's molded to fit them.

Festool's Systainer system is modular. In addition to stacking neatly with other Systainer boxes, this one houses clear bit cases that clip into the lid. Inside the cases, the drill and driver bits clip into magnetized slots. The cases fit precisely in compartments that are molded in the lid and covered by a clear lid. The result is that 40 or so bits can be neatly and securely arranged and clearly visible on the lid of the Systainer.

All this superb design and engineering comes at a price. The CXS 18 HPC 4,0 I-Set costs \$500. Is it worth it? To me, it is. This set saves time and makes difficult jobs less difficult. And I find it enjoyable to work with such well-crafted tools. festoolusa.com

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The CXS 18 HPC 4,0 I-Set comes with a right-angle adapter, Centrotec magnetic bit holder and chuck, keyless chuck, rapid battery charger, and two 4.0 Ah batteries packed in a Systainer 3 toolbox (4, 5).



Makita ML010G XGT LED Area Light

BY TIM UHLER



For us, jobsite lighting is a must. In 2005, we invested in the first of a series of plug-in metal halide Wobble Lights, switched to battery-powered lights in 2016, and then graduated to the hugely expensive but really good Milwaukee MX Rocket Tower Light last year. Because we have a lot of Makita XGT tools and batteries, I was interested in trying out the company's 40V XGT LED area light (model ML010G).

It has a no-tip design similar to a Wobble Light's—a feature we came to appreciate—but can be operated without a cord, doesn't get hot, and doesn't require a dedicated AC circuit.

Specs. The LED lighting in this unit has three modes: high (5,500 lumens), medium (3,000 lumens), and low (1,500 lumens). It's IP54 rated (protected against dust and water spray) and can throw light at 360° and 180° (either left or right). The light weighs about 38 pounds when fitted with two batteries, though it operates from only one battery at a time. Either 40V XGT or 18V LXT batteries can be used, and they can be mixed and matched, with power drawn from the battery with the least capacity first.

We get about four hours out of a fully charged 5.0 Ah LXT battery, so two batteries give us a day of illumination at full power. This may not sound like a lot, but we are always rotating out our batteries anyway, so we never outrun the charging. Makita says that two 4.0 Ah XGT batteries will provide up to 27 hours at low power. Note: When you buy cordless tools, take advantage of any deals that throw in batteries; you can never have too many. Price: \$700 (without batteries and chargers). makitatools.com

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Makita's ML010G area light (above) can be powered by either XGT or LXT batteries to provide 360 degrees of lighting at three levels of illumination.