

Highlights of the National Hardware Show



New Tools for 2002

by Dave Crosby

The changes in our industry were more apparent than ever at the National Hardware Show. Three years ago, it was the nation's biggest tool show. This year, many major manufacturers chose not to attend. As a result, better-quality tools, equipment, and products for the building trades were not as prevalent as they once were, while cheap imports and obvious knock-offs from the Pacific Rim were everywhere. Among these signs of a changing economy, there were still plenty of exhibitors with products worth traveling to Chicago for — more than we could fit into one feature. A brief summary of some of the highlights follows.

Klein Tools

Renowned among electricians for its top-quality tools, Klein has now added a line of pliers. The *Journeyman* series features the latest innovations in handle design, including a dual-material molding process for a comfortable yet durable grip. Thirteen new models are available, including a selection of six side-cutting pliers, some with fish-tape puller or crimping features, four diagonal-cutting pliers,



Klein Journeyman

two long-nose side-cutting pliers (one will strip 12-gauge wire), and a cable cutter that will handle up to 4/0 aluminum. Prices range from \$23 to \$36, depending on the style.

Makita

As usual, these guys came out loaded for bear. With over two dozen new power tools and seven new category additions to the accessories line, there were more cool tools in one booth than we can cover in one article.

For the ultimate in versatility, the *Model RF1101KIT* 2¹/₄-Horsepower Router features both a fixed and a plunge



Makita Model RF1101Kit

base and comes with a dust nozzle, a straight guide, a clear sub-base, 1/4- and 1/2-inch collets, wrenches, and a case. The soft-start variable-speed (8,000- to 24,000-rpm) motor has externally accessible brushes and a flat-top housing for easy bit changes. At \$299, this deal is going to be hard to beat.

Six new angle grinders (4-, 4¹/₂-, and 5-inch) make up the new *9560 Series*, all featuring the new Super Joint System, which is designed to prevent kickback and gear damage, resulting in a safer, more durable tool. The grinders also feature tool-free guard adjustment and a variable-speed dial for

a variety of work settings from sanding and polishing to grinding and cutting. Prices will range from \$150 to \$195.

Makita's extensive line of demolition tools is now rounded out with the addition of a 1³/₄-inch SDS-max rotary hammer. The variable-speed *Model HR4500C* delivers 1,250 to 2,550 blows per minute at 120 to 240 rpm and can be switched from "hammering with rotation" to "hammering only" mode. This new hammer features what the manufacturer calls a Ball-Clutch Torque Limiter System, which is designed to stop the bit if it hits rebar or is otherwise bound in the hole, while delivering continuous power through aggregate or variations in concrete density. The 17-pound tool comes with a straight handle and a D-handle and a depth gauge in a plastic case for \$759.



Makita Model HR4500C



Makita Impact Driver



**Makita Diamond
Fiber-Cement Blade**

If you haven't discovered the joys of impact drivers, now is the time. Among a new line of impacts is the 12-volt *Model 6916DWDE*. At 887 inch-pounds, this 3.3 pound 6⁵/₈-inch-long \$299 tool delivers roughly triple the power of most 12-volt driver drills, according to the manufacturer. If 12-volt doesn't do it for you, there are also several new 9.6- and 14.4-volt models.

On the accessories side, the new 7¹/₄-inch *Polycrystalline Diamond Fiber-Cement Blade* is said to last six times longer and cut 2¹/₂ times faster than previous diamond-tip blades, while leaving a smoother finish than ever before. The blade, which is approved by James Hardie Building Products, is expected to make about 15,000 cuts and is intended to complement the *Model 5057KB* saw for a nearly dust-free work environment. Suggested retail is about \$65.

Paslode

With the introduction of the new Impulse 18-gauge finish nailer, finish carpenters can now get through the day without ever plugging in a hose. The *Model IM200-F18 TrimMaster-18* drives fasteners from $\frac{5}{8}$ inch to 2 inches long at a rate of up to three nails per second. The 4.9-pound internal combustion nailer features depth-of-drive adjustment, a



**Paslode Model
IM200-F18**

quick-clear nose, and two types of no-mar tip (soft and hard) for precise fastener placement. For user convenience, fasteners are now offered in "Fuel + Nail Packs," which come with 2,000 nails and two fuel cells. The tool drives 1,200 fasteners per fuel cell and 4,000 fasteners on each battery charge. Suggested retail for the tool with battery, charger, case, and accessories is \$429.

Porter-Cable

Innovative design was readily apparent at the Porter-Cable booth, evidenced in the world's first cordless router. Powered by the 19.2-volt Network battery, the *Model 9290* is the cordless version of the popular Model 690. As such, it is compatible with the standard base, plunge base, D-handle base, and router table common to the 690.



**Porter-Cable
Model 9290**

The manufacturer says this new router will provide a clean cut in over 100 feet of oak or 200 feet of pine on a single charge using a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch roundover bit. Moreover, the charge technology is said to extend battery life beyond 1,000 charges. Featuring a spindle lock and auto-release collet system, the $\frac{7}{4}$ -pound router comes with a standard base, one battery, a charger, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch collet, wrench, and a case for \$249.

The AC version of the Model 690 just got an upgrade as the *Model 690L*. The new $\frac{1}{4}$ -peak-horsepower router is fully compatible with the standard 690 base options and features a long-awaited lever release (yes!) and a dust-protected rocker switch. The 690L with standard base, $\frac{1}{4}$ - and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch collets, and wrenches will retail for about \$159. Expect to see a variable-speed model by early next year.

Also new to the 19.2 Network is Porter-Cable's first cordless jigsaw. The *Model 643* offers the Quick-Change blade clamp for easy blade changes, a wrenchless locking mechanism for quick base adjustment, and a choice of metal or



**Porter-Cable
Model 643**

plastic sub-bases. With a 1-inch stroke and variable speed from 0 to 2,200 strokes per minute, the saw also has a four-position orbit selector and an on-off switch for the dust blower. An accessory dust collection kit, edge guide, and anti-splinter insert are also available. Expect to pay approximately \$249 retail.

On the pneumatic side of the house, three new direct-drive air compressors and 18 new air tools made their debut. The new compressors feature low-amp capacitor start motors to reduce the likelihood of tripping circuit breakers and reduce wear and tear on the motor. With improved lubrication for operation on sloped surfaces, these 150-psi compressors also have higher cut-out and cut-in pressures and use high-flow regulators and quick connects for maximal air delivery. Prices range from \$299 to \$349 for the new trio, which will be available in November.

There is more to pneumatic tools than nailers; in this case, four impact wrenches, one ratchet, two drills, one air hammer, two sanders, three grinders, three spray guns, a reciprocating saw, and a shear. These low-cost, high-performance tools, common in shops, are not yet widely accepted in field use but are well worth a look. If you can supply enough air to

**Porter-Cable
Model
CPLDC2401
compressor**



keep these tools running, they'll do an awful lot of work safely and efficiently in situations where you might not want electric tools.

Stanley-Bostitch

Like never before, our livelihoods depend on reliable delivery of compressed air. As you may have noticed, a lot has changed in the world of air compressors recently. Stanley has just introduced a line of stack-tank, pontoon, and wheelbarrow compressors with roll-cage protection and integrated control panels. Clearly, the engineers were talking with the guys in the field when they designed this line.

The *CAP5580WB Gas-Powered Wheelbarrow Air Compressor* is powered by a 5.5-hp Honda engine and features an oil sight glass, recessed gauges, and a three-outlet manifold. A foot-activated drain valve allows users to drain moisture from the tanks simultaneously, so when you don't want to bend down one more time at the end of the day, you can still take



**Bostitch CAP5580WB Gas-Powered
Wheelbarrow Air Compressor**

**Bostitch CAP2045ST-OL
2.0-Horsepower Stack
Air Compressor**



good care of your compressor. The compressor will run three framing nailers, four roofing nailers, or six finish nailers, and will be available this fall for \$1,099.

For those with more modest air requirements under equally tough conditions, the *CAP2045ST-OL 2.0-Horsepower Stack Air Compressor* features a full roll cage, skid plate, and Baja-style gauge guards for protection under extreme conditions. A removable oil sight glass and patented oil fill and drain funnels cast into the crankcase are designed for easy maintenance, while a pull-cord allows for simultaneous activation of drain valves. With a 4.5-gallon tank, the compressor will run one framing nailer, two roofing nailers, or four finish nailers, and will retail for \$399.

In the world of hand tools, the FatMax line is still growing. The new *100-Foot Chalkline Reel* features a 3:1 gear ratio on the rewind and a polymer-braided line for extra strength. The new reel has a slip-resistant grip, holds up to four ounces of



Stanley 100-Foot Chalkline

chalk, and is reasonably sized to fit in a nailbelt pouch. For \$10.99 you get the chalk line; for another \$2 you can get the set, which includes the chalk line, a four-ounce bottle of chalk, and an aluminum level.

Innovative Products From the Field

One of the satisfying aspects of this show is seeing good ideas from the field get turned into useful inventions. At the top of the list this year is the *Rocket Anchor*.

With this little device, you'll never again have to ask your helper to hold the other end of the chalk line on OSB, plywood, lumber, dry-wall, siding, shingles, or almost anything else softer than masonry. For steel, masonry, or concrete, the Rocket Anchor is easily removable.

A hardened-steel needle is secured in a small plastic handle that attaches to the end of your chalk line using the existing metal clip. You push the needle into the material to be marked at a slight opposing angle, and it acts as an anchor for the line, holding it accurately and securely in place. The anchor is quickly and easily removed



Rocket Anchor



Douglas Hammer



Stiletto AA14MC



T-Bone



with minimal damage to the material. If necessary, the adjustable needle can be resharpened. At \$14.99, it probably costs more than your chalk line, but it's still less than paying someone to hold the other end of the string.

Despite the veritable plethora of hammers that has appeared over the past year or so, there have been only a couple of genuine innovations. In the world of wooden handles, there is the *Douglas*, formerly known as the Hart Woody. The founder of Douglas Tool designed and patented this hammer, which was licensed to Hart Tool until late 1999. Now the hammer is available from the manufacturer with some refinements, including changes for reduced handle breakage, and a "traction face" designed to hook up with nails like any other framing hammer but without the wear that mill finishes suffer. A new 20-ounce version of the hammer was introduced at the show at a retail price of \$60. The 22-ounce model will be available while supplies last at \$55. Look for a 23-ounce model and an 18-ounce model to be on the street by the end of this year. Replacement handles for these new hammers and the old Hart Woody are also available for \$15.

As for metal handles, one hammer is in a class by itself. The *Stiletto AA14MC* 14-ounce framing hammer, with its hollow aluminum-handle, titanium-head, and steel-face, has revolutionized the state of the art. This hard-hitting, lightweight piece of design genius has proved invaluable for women in the

trades who have struggled with tools designed for men, and for carpenters who suffer from shoulder or elbow problems. Now the manufacturer has taken the design even further, with the introduction of the *T-Bone*. The head and handle are one-piece cast titanium, with a removable and replaceable steel face. This hammer is designed to withstand serious prying, brace removal, and nail pulling and maintain a high level of protection from shock and vibration while nailing. Suggested retail is \$125 for the AA14MC and \$165 for the T-Bone.



Dave Crosby is a custom builder in Santa Fe, N.M., and a former associate editor at The Journal of Light Construction.

Tool Manufacturers

Klein Tools

800/553-4676
www.kleintools.com

Paslode

800/682-3428
www.paslode.com

Rocket Anchor Manufacturing

208/642-8156
www.rocketanchor.com

Stiletto Tool Company

800/987-1849
www.stilettotools.com

Makita USA

800/462-5482
www.makitatools.com

Porter Cable

901/668-8600
www.porter-cable.com

The Stanley Works

800/782-6539
www.stanleyworks.com