

## Nailing With Nitrogen [CONTINUED]

done either in the shop or on large multiday field projects, the answer is probably no. If, on the other hand, you do a lot of small jobs, work in high-rise buildings, or are in the market for a second trim setup now, my answer would be yes.

As a complement to my pneumatics, both Fusion tools serve a valuable purpose as go-to tools for

punch-list work and small installations, but I for one would not swap out my air nailers for battery-powered tools just yet. It's nice not being tied to a hose when up on a ladder or when you have to jump around from the lower level of a house to the upstairs — but reliable old pneumatics will still be a mainstay of the full-time cabinetmaker's

and trim carpenter's business for a while longer.

*David Getts is an architectural woodworker, remodeler, and author. He owns David Getts Design in Seattle.*

*Note: A third Fusion tool — the FN65RHA 16-gauge angled-magazine trim nailer — will make its debut in 2011.*

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# Two-Handed Sanding

HANDLES ADD CONTROL AND COMFORT TO MAKITA'S NEWEST 5-INCH SANDER

Just after we completed our 5-inch random-orbit-sander tool test for the Winter issue, Makita announced the release of an updated model. Normally we wouldn't First Test a tool from a recent test category so soon, but when we saw the tool we just had to get our hands on it. And we had the perfect candidate to help us test it: the shop that had worked on the original tool test just a short time before.

The BO5041 sander is a 5-inch random-orbit sander with a fixed rear handle like the one you'd find on a half-sheet sander, and a positionable front handle like the one you'd find — well, only on this tool. There are a few random-orbit sanders out there that have both rear and front handles — mostly larger 6-inch units — but Makita's movable front handle seems unique to this tool.

The grip positions on standard hourglass-shaped random-orbit sanders are limited to the top grip and the body grip. Most of the time, users hold the tool at the top, but the body grip is helpful for applying even pressure down low — especially when irregularities in the wood surface cause the sander to track wildly off its intended course. Holding the tool by the handles on both sides makes it easier to guide through these squirrely areas until they are flattened. Holding the tool with both hands also allows you to apply downward force without enduring as much arm and wrist strain.

With the BO5041 sander, versatile grip options abound. The shape of the tool provides a comfortable top grip. And by unscrewing the rotating front handle and removing the clamp



that grips around the sander, you can get a decent body grip too. Just about the only grip that doesn't work well is holding the rear handle only. Without pressure centered over the sanding disk, the tool tips easily.

The sander has a speed range of 4,000 to 12,000 rpm, which is controlled by a dial at the junction of the tool's top and rear handles. We worried that changing hand grips during sanding might

inadvertently move the speed dial, but this didn't happen. The tool's two-finger trigger is comfortable enough, but using the lock-on button is the key to preventing finger fatigue.

Even though this new sander has the same speed range, 3-amp motor spec, and average-sized 1/8-inch orbit as the Makita model in the category test, it feels more powerful. It has a low hum and proved very

## Two-Handed Sanding [CONTINUED]

difficult to slow down, even if you really lean on it.

Taking a page from the Winter-issue sander test, we used some of the same performance criteria when evaluating the BO5041. We sanded a hard maple board for three-minute intervals with a fresh 100-grit disk to determine both stock removal and dust-collection efficiency. By weighing the board and dust container before and after each trial, we were able to measure the amount of wood removed as sawdust as well as the percentage of that sawdust cap-

tured by the tool's on-board dust container. Because it was the same board we used in the prior test, we ended up with values that were directly comparable to those measured from the other sanders. With an average of 10.6 grams of stock removed, the BO5041 outperformed all the tools in the previous test. Its 78.3 percent rating nearly equaled the second-best sander in collection efficiency. This is especially good news in light of the fact that it's nearly impossible to connect the tool to any com-

mon vac hose for dust collection. User-felt vibration was very good, as was the quality and coverage of the sanding scratch pattern.

### THE VERDICT

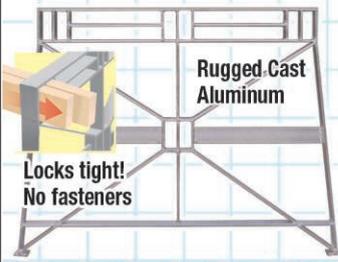
The Makita tool in our Winter full-category tool test took a respectable fourth place, and we liked this one even better. The extra stability provided by the front and rear handles enhanced our feeling of control, and the variety of grip positions was a welcome comfort feature during marathon sanding sessions. Add

to that the tool's very efficient dust collection and class-leading stock-removal power, and you have yourself a mighty and versatile sander.

*Professional woodworker  
Karsten Balsley of Boulder,  
Colo., contributed to this test.*

<b>Makita</b>
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—Ron Spink, Publisher 9/30/10