

Weigh In!

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TOOLS

OF THE TRADE

DeWalt DCD443B Cordless 20-Volt Stud and Joist Drill

BY IAN SCHWANDT

For drilling big holes in studs and joists, a corded heavy-duty right-angle drill has long been an important day-to-day workhorse for plumbers and electricians. But for carpenters and smaller general contractors, these big, powerful drills are often a luxury item, and a heavy, bulky one at that. Over the last five years, though, advances in cordless tool motor and battery technology have given us lighter weight and less expensive options that are within purchasing reach of even DIYers. Recently added to this list of cordless options is the DeWalt 20V Max XR DCD443B Cordless Stud and Joist Drill, which we tested at several TDS Custom Construction jobsites. Our crew already owns a range of DeWalt tools that work on the company's 20-volt battery platform, so we were interested to see if this heavy-duty drill would be worth its \$280 price tag (bare tool only).

The DeWalt Stud and Joist Drill is part of DeWalt's XR line of tools within the larger 20V Max platform. We were able to power the drill with our existing DeWalt Flexvolt batteries, but this particular model drill is optimized to work with the 20V XR series battery. Our drill was fitted with a 7/16-inch hex quick-change chuck that requires compatible drill bits. Another version of the drill (model DCD444B) is fitted with a conventional 1/2-inch keyed chuck and is designed specifically for use with Flexvolt batteries. We did not test that model.

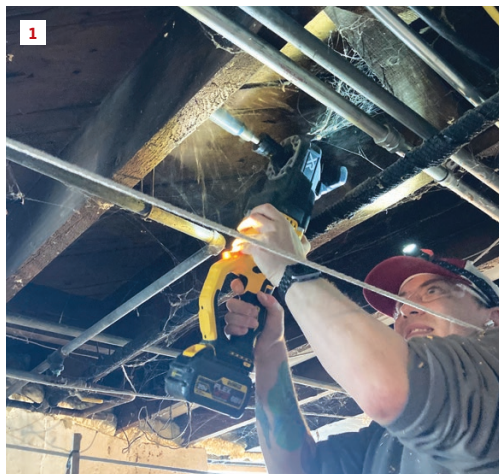
In addition to testing the drill on some typical carpentry tasks, we used it on a bathroom remodel project, where we had to change

the rough-in locations for all of the fixtures. This job required several 5-inch-diameter holes to be drilled in LVLs and 2x10 joists, a challenge for any drill. One thing we noted right away was that the drill's light weight of 8.75 pounds and compact length made it easy to maneuver in the tight joist cavities of the bathroom remodel. When we handed it off to our plumber to give it a spin, he noted that the drill had plenty of power and the brushless motor did not bog down or engage the E-clutch while drilling the 5-inch holes. He also liked the LED light but pointed out that the drill's lack of a rafter hook would make it challenging to use while working off a ladder.

In our use, battery life of the drill was a nonissue; when used in remodeling work, this type of tool doesn't see the sustained long periods of use that a circular saw or an impact driver would. According to the manufacturer, the DCD443B can drill up to 400 holes on one charge with a 7/8-inch-diameter auger bit in 2-by framing lumber when the drill is powered by the 8-Ah XR battery.

For plumbers, electricians, and carpenters who specialize in rough framing and new construction, this heavy-duty DeWalt drill offers plenty of power in a compact package for demanding day-to-day use. It would be handy for both small contractors and DIYers alike to have around for general remodeling work and is an especially good value if you already have DeWalt 20-volt batteries that are compatible with the drill. dewalt.com

Ian Schwandt is operations manager for TDS Construction in Madison, Wis.



DeWalt's 20-volt DCD443B right-angle drill has a compact design that fits easily between joists and studs for drilling big holes through framing (1, 2). It has an electric clutch to prevent the powerful brushless motor from kicking back if the bit binds up and a 7/16-inch hex quick-change chuck (3). The drill is also available with a 1/2-inch keyed chuck.

Photo 1, Kevin Hayes-Birchler

Festool FS-WA Angle Stop and FS-WA-VL Guide Extension

BY TOMMIE MULLANEY

In my work as a finish carpenter and custom woodworker, I value tools that provide precision and help me operate more efficiently. That's why I'm such a big track saw fan, which I use on a daily basis on my jobs. With the ability to produce clean, crisp, and accurate cuts in any location, this tool really excels, but efficiency suffers when it comes time to make repetitive or angle cuts. These cuts are easy to make on a miter saw when you're working with narrower stock but not with a track saw when you're cutting very wide stock or large sheet goods.

For many years, I used a TSO GRS-16 guide rail square (tsoproducts.com), an aftermarket accessory that works with Festool, Makita, and Triton track-saw guide rails, to make 90- or 45-degree crosscuts with a track saw. But with Festool's new FS-WA angle stop, now I can make angled crosscuts up to 60 degrees in either direction, and with its specified detents, the stop can be quickly and accurately set to the most commonly used angles. Admittedly, it's not all that often that I find myself cutting sheet goods at an angle other than 90 degrees, but with this newfound ability, new ideas have come to mind, and I recently found myself using the angle guide's "common angles" when cutting plywood to

skin over a textured ceiling for an applied architectural detail.

Attaching an FS-WA angle stop to a Festool guide rail entails sliding it onto the rail's top and bottom groove, with no modifications to either the saw or to the guide rail. This angle stop can be placed anywhere along the guide rail, then locked into position with a quick clamping lever, allowing you to adjust it according to the width of the stock and the length of the guide rail. Once the angle stop has been secured to the guide rail and the guide rail placed on the material, you will notice a small foot on the side of the angle stop. This prevents the angle stop from falling off of the material and acts as a clamping surface, if necessary.

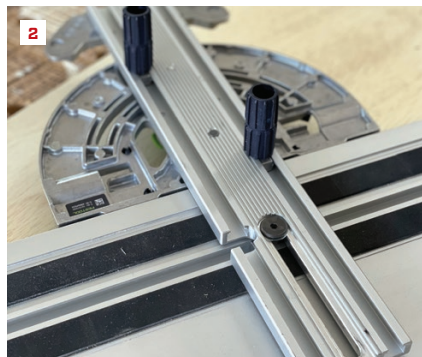
The FS-WA can also accept a clamp inside the T-slot underneath, though in the months I've been using the stop, I haven't taken advantage of this feature. I've found that the nonskid strips on the guide rails have sufficient holding power, while the wide surface area of the angle stop provides additional stability. But if you do need more holding power or are trying to reference the assembly off of a large radius, there are a pair of black positioning bolts attached to the top of the angle stop that can be slid up and out and repositioned anywhere along the bottom of the stop's T-track. And

if you're using any of Festool's MFT tables, these positioning bolts fit snugly into the 20mm holes on the MFT top.

The angle stop works with Festool's new FS-WA-VL guide extension to add repeatability to the mix. This accessory extends the angle stop up to 1,160mm (roughly 45½ inches), turning it into a parallel edge guide that allows you to easily make repeatable, accurate cuts. The guide extension has a scale and an adjustable stop and connects to the angle stop with Festool FSV/2 connectors using the self-aligning T-slots on the angle stop. This guide-rail connector is secured with eight 5mm bolts (four on each side) and is laser engraved to ensure that the connectors are in the correct order.

The FS-WA angle stop is available from Festool for \$175. The stop is also available as part of the SYS3 M 137 FS/2-Set—along with two screw clamps, a guide-rail deflector, a limit stop, two of the new FSV-2 guide-rail connectors, and the new style SYS3 M137 Systainer—for \$300. The FS-WA-VL guide extension for the angle stop costs \$90. festoolusa.com

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Fitting a Festool track-saw guide rail with the FS-WA angle stop and FS-WA-VL guide extension gives the saw the ability to make repeatable miter cuts at angles up to 60 degrees (1). The angle stop includes a pair of black positioning bolts that can be locked into the stop's T-track slots (2). The FS/2-Set includes the stop and other accessories and a Systainer (3).

Photos: Tommie Mullaney

PamFast Cordless Autofeed Screw Gun

FastenMaster has added a pair of cordless motor options to its popular PamFast autofeed screw gun. A corded Milwaukee version of the tool is still available, but users who already are on the Makita LXT battery platform now have a cordless option powered by Makita's XSF05 18-volt LXT 2,500-rpm screw gun. Users who are on DeWalt's 20-volt Max platform can choose a PamFast tool powered by DeWalt's DCF622 20V Max XR Versa-Clutch 2,000-rpm screw gun.

When *JLC* contributing editor Tim Uhler reviewed the PamFast, Grabber SuperDrive, and Simpson Strong-Tie Quik Drive autofeed screw guns for *Tools of the Trade* back in 2017, he found the PamFast to be solid, reliable, and easy to adjust, as well as faster than the other two screw guns. He especially liked the proprietary PamDrive fasteners that the tool uses, which have a six-lobe design that increases the contact area between the bit and the screw head. In use, Uhler found that this reduced cam-outs and provided longer bit life compared with the fasteners in the other screw guns.

Uhler reports that the prototype version of the cordless PamFast screw gun fitted with the Makita LXT driver that he's been using for the past couple of years performs just as well as the corded version of the tool for installing subfloor sheathing. The tool comes with both a short driver for drywall fasteners and a longer extension for stand-up work installing sheathing or decking. Suggested list price is \$450 for the DeWalt version and \$500 for the Makita version. fastenmaster.com —*Andrew Wormer*



The PamFast cordless autofeed screw gun is powered by either Makita or DeWalt drivers (left) and comes with long and short extensions (below).



New additions to the Milwaukee hammer lineup include a smooth-faced 16-ounce curved claw hammer (left) and 20-ounce straight-claw hammer (middle), and a 28-ounce straight-claw hammer with a milled face (bottom right). All three hammers have a magnetic nail-set (top right).

Milwaukee I-Beam Hammers

Though perhaps best known for its corded and cordless power tools, Milwaukee has been expanding its hand tool offerings in recent years. As part of that effort, the company is building a new \$26 million manufacturing facility in West Bend, Wis., to produce tools for electricians and utility line workers. I don't know if Milwaukee plans to produce any hammers there, or if it makes them in any of the company's other U.S. facilities, but its steel hammers are well-engineered and have earned high marks from several online "influencers," who say that they are surprisingly vibration-free for a metal hammer.

In addition to the eight hammers currently in its lineup, the company is adding three new models, bringing its total offerings in this essential tool category to 11. All three have a steel I-beam handle design and what the company calls a Shockshield grip, said to reduce vibration. Another feature shared by all three hammers is a magnetic nail set, which allows you to set and drive a nail with one hand, a useful feature when working in tight quarters or in an awkward position. Milwaukee says that its hammers are engineered with an asymmetrical anti-ring claw design to reduce noise when striking hard objects.

The new 16-ounce hybrid claw hammer (model 48-22-9018) has a smooth face for finish work and is the lightest hammer that Milwaukee offers. It retails for \$20. Also new is a 20-ounce smooth-faced hammer with a straight rip claw, which retails for \$25. For heavy-duty work, there is a new 28-ounce framing hammer with a milled face, which retails for \$30. milwaukeetool.com —*A.W.*