Hands-on with the Metabo maX 12 Cordless Combo Kit PowerMaxx

Written by Mark Hunter on February 23, 2011

This is a guest post written for the Toolstop blog by Olly Parry-Jones.

For a long while, I’d been looking to purchase a combination of a 10.8v drill/driver and impact driver.

As a furniture maker, I think there are many benefits to be gained in owning two compact drills where you can use one for driving the screws and the other set up for drilling pilot holes.

Of all the options available, I was most impressed with the Bosch package and, in particular, the compatibility of their batteries across their entire 10.8v range. I also liked the tidiness of the L-Boxx containers.

But then, shortly before Christmas, Metabo brought out a couple of their own drills – just as I was ready to purchase the Bosch package...
It didn’t take much more than the inclusion of an angle driver attachment for the drill/driver to make the decision for me.

For the last three-years, I’ve owned a smaller 4.8v drill from the PowerMaxx range and the angle attachment supplied with that tool was excellent. It’s only a shame that drill was lagging behind, with its pre-dated Ni-Cd batteries, lacking the torque of larger cordless drills.

That particular accessory was important to me because one of the first jobs I had planned for 2011 involved fitting a suspended floor (for storage) in to the pitched roof-space of my single-car garage/workshop.

Without taking the roof off, I knew I was never going to be able swing a hammer close to the eaves where I need to drive fixings in to the top of each joist hanger (sixteen, in all).

None of my larger drills would fit in to this acute angle but, for the Powermaxx MaX 12 Drill/Driver with the angle driving attachment fitted, I was able to secure each hanger with four 1in long stainless steel screws.

See the above image to illustrate how effective the attachment is.

You don’t need to put a lot of pressure on this drill, either; certainly not as much as with the old 4.8v tool.
If these wall plates were made of a hardwood, I might have needed to pre-drill the holes for each screw, which would have been tricky. This attachment locks on to the collar of the drill using a tool-free, cam-lever configuration whereas, on the previous model, you always had to use an allen key.

Lithium-ion technology plays its part in giving the drill driver that extra bit of 'oomph' needed.

They also last so much longer than batteries using older technology – for example, on this job, using both drills; I've only had to recharge the batteries twice – and that was only after trying to drill a 10mm hole through 4in of old pine!

It was interesting to note though, that the drill stops and beeps at you before you run the battery completely empty and risk over-heating the unit, on both occasions.

Up until this purchase, I've been using a pair of old 9.6v combi. Drills. Even with brand-new brushes fitted, they don't feel as powerful as Metabo's new drill/driver.

Its compact design allows it to fit in between joists (see above images), ready for drilling access holes for cables and wires, if you’re an electrician, or pipes, if you’re a plumber… Or, in my case, if you’re hopeless at hitting a 4in nail and need two 5mm clearance holes in the face of each joist to save you half the work when it comes to fitting the noggins!!

Where Bosch (and others) missed the trick initially with the inclusion of a 6mm hex chuck and nothing more, you can instead fit a keyless chuck to the Metabo drill/driver for holding drill bits up to 10mm in diameter.
As the drill/driver alone is more than capable of driving screws in to softwood, I haven’t made extensive use of the impact driver on this project. **However, I have found that, when fitted with the correct bit, it is excellent at removing machine screws from power tools** – as I found out when my Hitachi C9U2 circular saw decided to die on me, without warning!

You probably know the type of screw I mean; they’re fitted ridiculously tight in the factory!

One slip with even a hand screw-driver can be enough to damage the head. **It’s also got plenty of torque for removing old, corroded or stubborn screws from walls of my workshop, when it came to removing old storage units and electrical sockets at the start of this build.**
Built-in LED lights illuminate the area ahead of the chuck, which is ideal for when you’re working in a confined space.

I had to remove all the lights in my workshop before I could begin fitting the joists so; again, this was another essential feature to have. It does make me wonder why, like several other manufacturers, they’ve included a small torch in this set as well. In my mind, a third battery would have been of more use in a package like this.

Everything in the screwdriver bit set, including the magnetic holder (once you realise how it works!!), is of high quality, all made to last.

I’m even warming to the idea of the holdall-style tool bag, as I’ve realised that I can squeeze several other tools in to this same bag, meaning I don’t have to carry as many space-wasting tool boxes along to future jobs. Even if it doesn’t clip on to other units, like Festool’s Systainer system.

Although I’ve still yet to fit the chipboard floor (I’ll have to stop climbing over my Workmate and tools and buy a proper step-ladder for that!!), I really could not have got this far, on a job I’ve been contemplating since 2008, without these two drills (the drill/driver, in particular).

Metabo build their tools to last and, for added peace of mind, you can even upgrade to a three-year warranty (not that I’d expect you’d ever need to use it!). I’m glad I didn’t rush out and buy the Bosch.

These two drills were well worth the wait and really made my Christmas! Now, I only wonder how long it might be before Metabo decide to enter the plunge-saw-and-guide-rail market…!

You can learn more about Olly Parry-Jones, his furniture making business and other projects on his website.