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Cadex CPB23.50 23 Gauge Pinner and Brad Nailer - Review



Pin nailers have been around for a bit, but only in the past few years have they started filtering down into the hands of the non-specialist and the day-to-day carpenters. They're little guns (smaller than a brad gun) and they shoot very small pins that don't even have any heads. Because of the size of the fastener, the guns are ideal for some very delicate operations. At the moment, most of the major pneumatic brands have pinner available. We had read good things about the Cadex CPB23.50, but weren't ready for just how nice of a tool it is.

Awhile back, we reviewed Grizzly's H5527 Brad Gun and gave it some high marks for being a solid no-frills gun at an affordable price (\$25), well now we're on the other end of the spectrum; with Cadex's new gun they've created a perfectly tuned, versatile nail gun that manages to raise the bar on all pin nailers.

First, the stats. The Cadex CPB23.50 shoots both 23 gauge headless pins and 23 gauge slight headed pins (an unusual feature in pinner – most just shoot headless). It can handle lengths from 5/8" up to 2" (another unusual feature). The gun comes with two no-mar tips that easily fit onto the nose of the gun as well as a small container of gun oil and three different hex wrenches that fit the various fittings on the tool. There is a dry fire lock-out feature and a nice little viewing window to see how many pins are in the gun. It's got a built-in belt hook, a swivel coupling, and a little thumb operated blow gun that you can use to clear your work piece of dust and debris. The whole package comes in at just a hair over 2-1/2 lbs.



If you aren't used to the unique trigger system of a pinner, you'll have to take some time and get the hang of it or you're likely to fire a few pins across the room by accident. Gone is the traditional pneumatic safety check of the compression tip that prohibits firing. Instead, there is a secondary trigger, set below the main trigger that needs to be pulled in order to release the primary trigger. The operation is simple and once you get used to it, natural. Because of the size of the pins and the likely size of the work pieces that you'll be dealing with, the traditional compression tip is too bulky and pushing the nose of a gun into small little pieces creates too much pressure and shifting around. This way, the pinner barely has to be touching the work piece (and it doesn't have to be doing even that, really) for the pin to shoot off. It's a situation that affords far more finesse with pin placement.



And as far as pinning small pieces of wood together, it's hard to describe how precise and delicate the CPB23.50 is. With or without the no-mar tip we had no problems placing the pin exactly where we wanted it. To test out how it would handle teeny pieces of wood, we searched around the shop until we found the driest most splinter prone piece of molding that

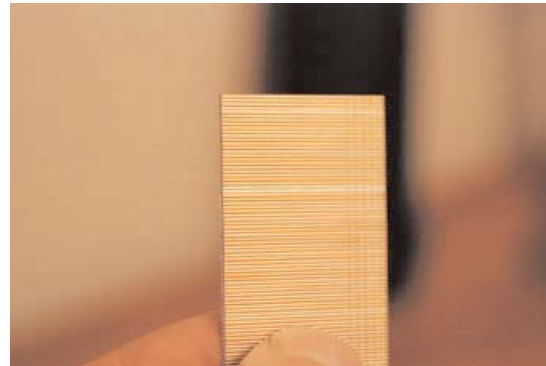


we had. We cut a piece and a corresponding return (which took quite a while – the wood kept blasting into pieces on the miter saw). We set the return in place and with two quick little trigger pulls, the return was in, with barely any mark where the two pins went in. Not a crack or a split anywhere. We then tried it on a few chunks of mahogany and the Cadex had no problem burying the pins in that also. We had perfectly set pins every time.

To give you an idea how tiny the pin holes are, we set up a piece of wood with a variety of nails in it; from 15 gauge finish nails all the way to the 23 gauge headless pinner. As you can see, they're very small, making the brad nails look big. There is a slight difference between the slight head pin and the headless pin, but not enough to really choose one over the other. If you are concerned about holding power, then the slight head pins are going to be a better choice.



One thing worth noting is that 23 gauge pins aren't all that easy to come by. Like we said earlier, the pin nailer is only now gaining popularity, and a lot of the stores have yet to catch up with them and carry the appropriate fasteners. We had no luck at our local hardware store and none at Home Depot. We finally decided to order some directly from Cadex online. Their pins are a bit more expensive, but they've got slightly rounded edges, which we felt is worth the extra money. A few days after placing our order, we heard through the grapevine that Home Depot just started carrying a Porter-Cable pinner and the corresponding pins. We didn't follow up on this, so we can't tell you whether it's true or not.



After using the Cadex for a few days we picked up our Porter-Cable brad gun and it felt as bulky and awkward as a framing gun. Of course we'll still use it from time to time, but if the job is something that the Cadex can handle, it's a no-brainer as to which gun we'll be using. As far as differences between the Cadex and other pinners go, this gun has some features that most of the others don't (the blow gun, 2" pin size, etc.), but it comes down to that hard to describe quality issue; that feeling you get when you hold the tool, the way it fits in the hand, the way it feels when a pin shoots out and plunks into a piece of hardwood. It just feels like quality, there's no other way to put it. No picture frame is too delicate and no apron return too tiny for this gun. We can't imagine having the ability to get any more precise than the Cadex CPB23.50

The Cadex sells for about \$300, which may seem like a lot, but once you hold this tool in your hands, you'll wonder how you got such a good deal on it.



Cadex Tools and Fasteners are available from

Direct Sales Ltd.
Ph. 604.876.9909 Fax 604.876.3914
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