

WOODSHOP NEWS

May 2007

The News Magazine For Professional Woodworkers

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Why you need a 23-gauge pinner

Versatile tool earns its keep
in the shop, on the job site

The key to a consistent finish

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On a roll

You would expect a business based near Reno, Nev., to have a gambler's mentality. But that's not the case with Victory Woodworks, an architectural millwork firm, which plays it safe and smart by meeting deadlines and delivering high-quality work.

WHY YOU NEED A PINNER



The 23-gauge pinner has earned a place in the shop and at the job site.



Long a staple in high-production furniture and cabinet plants, pinners have drawn new fans in the last few years

BY TOD RIGGIO / EDITOR

For years, pneumatic nailers have been widely used for attaching a variety of wood and composite components. But for fine-finish work, standard gauge nailers (15-, 16- and even 18-gauge) leave an objectionable hole and will often split the material. Enter the 23-gauge pin nailer.

Headless pins, although not designed to hold large pieces on their own, should be in every woodworker's toolbox, according to cabinetmaker David Getts. "The versatility of the pinner makes it a viable option for even the most serious woodworking purist. The small hole the pin makes is easily concealed. And because the pin has no head, it eliminates wood splitting, which is common with larger-gauge nails. The small pins can also be used in place of a clamp while gluing together awkward joints," he said.

Other advantages of a pinner include holding small pieces in place for gluing, attaching small moldings without splitting, and eliminating the need to putty or fill.

"Four or five years ago this category didn't really exist. But it's really taken off," said Lee Zinsle of Senco, a manufacturer of pneumatic fastening tools. "Woodworkers are like a kid in the candy store when they find out about a new tool, and they find the pinner is a very useful tool in the shop, whether it's for attaching a

rosette while the glue sets or putting on some molding.

"A 23-gauge pin leaves a hole so small you don't even need to fill it."

"One application that most people don't realize is that these 23-gauge pinners are pretty useful for crown molding. Even though it's such a small pin, and it doesn't have a head, it still has very good holding power," said Tracy Wong, general manager of Grex Power Tools.

Who buys them?

Turns out, everyone. The pinner has long been a staple in high-production furniture and cabinet plants, but over the last four or five years it's become the tool of choice for installers of high-end millwork.

"The other night I'm talking with this guy who builds \$2 million homes, and he says, 'We only use 23-gauge pinners. We won't allow our guys to use 18-gauge brad nails because they're like using a spike,'" said Jamie Sikorski of Direct Sales Ltd., a distributor of the Cadex, Omer and Nikle brands of pinners. "If you've ever seen shoe molding that's put on with an 18-gauge brad nailer, you can always see where all the filler has been applied. That's never an issue with a pinner."

"Pinners have begun to change the job," said Todd Langston, director of brand management for Stanley

What to look for

Professional cabinetmaker David Getts offers features to consider when buying a pinner:

- **PIN LENGTH** — while early pinners only shot 1/2"- to 1"-long pins, newer models shoot pins up to 2" long.
- **DIRECTIONAL EXHAUST** — useful for blowing air away from your face.
- **BELT CLIP** — especially useful on the job site.
- **NON-MARRING TIP**
- **SHOOTS PINS AND BRADS** — provides more fastening options; the small heads on brads provide additional holding power.
- **SAFETY RELEASE FEATURES** — Most guns require pressing a second trigger as a safety release. Some are more awkward than others. Choose one that releases pins easily for the jobs you'll be doing with it.
- **SIZE AND SHAPE OF TOOL BODY** — Most of the guns weigh between 2 and 3 pounds, but do not overlook the differing body configurations. Choose a gun that both feels comfortable in your hands and is right for your particular application.

IN YOUR SHOP

Fastening Systems, which produces the Bostitch brand. "We were really surprised to see trim carpenters using them so often. If it's not in their right hand, it's in their left hand. It's one of their favorite tools to use."

"It's the next frontier for woodworkers. Years ago people came across brad nailers, and then they got into 16- and 18-gauge. Now they've got a pretty full workshop and the one thing they don't have, which has a lot of benefit to them, is the pin nailer. Of all the tools for woodworking, this makes the least-noticeable mark."

So many choices

There are at least 10 brands of pinners available. The most unusual — and versatile — is the Cadex model CPB23.50, which shoots pins and brad nails from 5/8" to 2".

"No one else in the industry (except Nikle Tools, see below) can also shoot 23-gauge brads," said Sikorski.

"But it does it without making a bigger mark. We didn't have to increase the size of the driver blade so it doesn't leave a bigger scar, so to speak, on the wood."

While the applications for shooting 2" pins are somewhat vague, the new Cadex pinner, which retails for about \$350, has some other unique features, according to Sikorski.

"It has a built-in blow gun. When somebody's doing trim and molding, they can just spray the dust out of the way and work along. They don't have to disconnect the gun and put a blow gun on there."

"It also has a lock-out device. Once you run out of fasteners, you can't continue firing. The fasteners are kind of countersunk and they're really hard to see, so a lot of times a guy runs out of fasteners and doesn't know it, and meanwhile has left all these little marks. The dry fire mechanism, as it's known, is a real benefit. When there's only three fasteners left, it lets you know that it's time to put another strip in."

Old standbys

Porter-Cable has offered the PIN100 for several years with good success.

"It's been very reliable," said Jorge Silveira, Porter-Cable's director of marketing, nailers and combo kits. "We only hear very good things about it with the power, quality of drives, the balance, keeping the air exhaust off the work surface, making it easy to load nails, and having a completely enclosed magazine with a bottom load feature."

"What sets it apart is it's easy to load. On a lot of other pinners, when you put the nails into the magazine, you also have to make another adjustment for the length of the nails. Typically, they're held in with a pusher against the nose of the tool. There's no track that the nail heads run in because the pin nail is headless. Our system automatically adjusts for the different sizes, from 1/2" to 1". And if you have a nail that's slightly out of spec — slightly larger or smaller — our magazine will adjust to that particular nail's size. It will capture it more securely and give you a better quality of drive."

The PIN100 also has the safety on the trigger —

rather than on the nose — and a rear exhaust, which keeps the air away from the end-user's face and the work surface.

"We also wanted to make sure it had sufficient power to drive a 1" nail into solid oak ... and we do," added Silveira.

The PIN100 retails for about \$119 with a carrying case and 2,000 3/4" pins.

Another highly-rated pinner is the Bostitch HP118K.

"It was designed to be an industrial tool and that probably makes a big difference," said Langston. "When [woodworkers] pick it up and use it, they find a tool that's made to last and work in a production setting. It's going to have a long life and a comfortable feel to it."

"It's not something we designed for the DIYer. It's actually something we stumbled upon. We've had it in the line for a while and then realized

guys were buying this to do woodworking. We created a kit version and people have really taken to it."

The HP118K features a control that allows the user to set the pin depth without having to change the compressor setting and a low-profile nose. It shoots 1/2" to 3/16" pins and also retails for about \$119.

— Lee Zinsle, Senco

Recent introductions

The market seems to be clamoring for pinners that shoot longer pins, and several manufacturers have answered the call.

Senco has very recently introduced the FinishPro 11, which drives headless pins only from 1" to 2" in length.

"It's brand new. Actually, you can't even buy it yet, although we are selling it in Asia," said Zinsle.

It will be available soon to the U.S. market, retailing for about \$270. Senco also offers the FinishPro 10, which shoots 1/2" to 1" headless pins. Both models feature a rear exhaust, hardened alloy steel driver, and a straightforward approach to adjusting for fastener length.

Grex has added the ability to shoot longer pins with its latest model, the P645L, which offers a fastener range of 1/2" to 1-3/4" and sells for about \$275.

"All of our pinners have a self-adjusting magazine so if you need to switch between a fastener length, it's not done manually," said Grex's Wong.

"The P645L has a [new] lockout mechanism feature, which locks the trigger when there are six or seven pins left in the magazine and eliminates dry firing. We already have a fastener indicator on the front of the magazine, but this is another good reminder that it's time to reload."

Grex also moved the exhaust to the rear on the P645L and added a silencer.

The Grex pinners, which also include model P635 (3/8" to 1-3/8" fastener range, about \$200) also feature a quick-release nose cover, which is a big help when jams occur, and a no-mar rubber tip that can be removed to reach corners or tight areas.

continued on next page



CADEX MODEL CPB23.50



PORTER-CABLE MODEL PIN100



DUO-FAST'S SURESHOT MODEL 2336



SENCO FINISHPRO 11



SENCO FINISHPRO 10

Duo-Fast introduced its first pinner about six months ago. Its SureShot model 2336 shoots pins from 5/8" to 1-1/8" in length and is built to last, according to Dick Pope of Duo-Fast/Paslode Industrial Group.

"Our tools are developed for industrial use. They're not found at a retail storefront. We make our tools basically for high-volume uses within a manufacturing facility. Our casing is aluminum; we do a rear exhaust so we keep it away from the work space, and we have a long nose for maneuverability.

"A lot of our competitors will use a plastic magazine; ours is extruded aluminum so it's easy jam clearing and easy loading. And all of our fasteners are made specifically for our tools, which those tight tol-

erances allow for decreased service and minimal jamming while in use."

Other choices

Grip-Rite offers one of the lightest pinners at 2.15 lbs. Its model GRTPIN23 shoots 1/2" to 1-3/16" pins and has a magazine capacity of 140. It has a rear exhaust and a reload indicator.

Grip-Rite didn't have a pinner prior to 2007. "We exhibit at all four JLC Live shows around the country and I'm going to tell you: The 23-gauge pinner — everybody out there must want one," said Grip-Rite's Tom Green. "Probably 50 percent of the guys that stop by our booth, their first question is, 'Do you guys have one of those?'"

Nikle Tools say it has seen a huge increase in the use of 23-gauge pinners in many fine finishing applications, justifying the recent introduction of its new NS2340 model that also shoots pins and brads, from 1/2" to 1-9/16".

It weighs 2.2 lbs. and will operate on a 1/2-hp or larger compressor, according to company. The nailer also features an adjustable exhaust port and retails for about \$210.

Spotnails offers model SP2340, which shoots pins only from 1/2" to 1-9/16". It retails for \$110.

And Omer, an Italian-based manufacturer which says it invented the pinner more than 20 years ago, offers the PR.28. It shoots 5/8" to 1-1/8" pins and retails for about \$245. ■

Source list

Bostitch, Stanley Fastening Systems, Briggs Drive, East Greenwich, RI 02818. Tel: 800-556-6696. www.bostitch.com

Cadex, Omer and Nikle Tools: Direct Sales Ltd., 3605 Commercial St., Vancouver, BC V5N 4G1. Tel: 604-876-9909. www.directfasteners.ca

Duo-Fast Corp., 2400 Galvin Dr., Elgin, IL 60123-7883. Tel: 888-386-3278. www.duo-fast.com

Grex Power Tools, 705 South Electric Ave., Alhambra, CA 91803. Tel: 626-289-7618. www.grexusa.com

Grip-Rite, PrimeSource Building Products Inc., 2115 E. Belt Line Road, Carrollton, TX 75006. Tel: 972-417-3701. www.grip-rite.com

Porter-Cable Corp., 4825 Hwy. 45 N., P.O. Box 2468, Jackson, TN 38302-2468. Tel: 800-487-8665. www.portercable.com

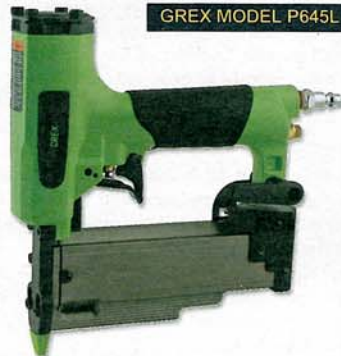
Senco Products Inc., 8485 Broadwell Road, Cincinnati, OH 45244. Tel: 800-543-4596. www.senco.com

Spotnails, 1100 Hicks Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008. Tel: 800-873-2239. www.spotnails.com

GRIP-RITE'S MODEL GRTPIN23



GREX MODEL P645L



BOSTITCH HP118K



SPOTNAILS' MODEL SP2340



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OLIVER 4455
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OLIVER 4060
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