

Ask Jon Eakes

Pro: Weird and (sometimes) Wonderful Power Tool Accessories

Last Updated: Thursday, March 28th, 2013, Created: Wednesday, November 29th, 2000

Power tools are generally designed to do one thing very well, and then with a change of blades or bits, they can often do a decent job on a few other tasks. Accessories, like handles and guides, usually enhance their initial design function. But what about all those other accessories? The drill has screwdriver bits, sanders, grinders and polishers that all work pretty decently? of course, not as well as dedicated power screwdrivers, sanders, grinders or polishers. But nonetheless we all use them for small jobs. Screwdriver flex shafts are very useful, but are not a heavy-duty accessory. Let's look way beyond this stuff, to things you may not even know exist. Exchange-A-Blade has brought out a drill attachment that turns your drill into a light-duty reciprocating saw. It actually works. Although intended for the DIYer, it is a low-cost back up (and small in your toolbox) in case yours blows out and you need one quickly. It takes standard blades. A company called Prazi in the U.S. sells some interesting things. They have a little drill attachment they call Putty Chaser that goes on your drill and has a simple metal handle and a special guide and router type cutting bit for cleaning old window putty out of sashes. You can actually get that at Lee Valley Tools as well. You should practice a bit before taking on the customer's windows, but you will find it does grind out dry, old putty very neatly. It is when you hit a bit of softwood that it tends to bite. Also, Prazi has a whole line of power caulking guns. Some are attachments for drills, while some are attached to drills right at the gearbox. They will handle regular to large cartridges. If you've never used a power caulker, you should at least try the inexpensive attachments. You'll never go back. Then they get a little crazy? but maybe crazy could be useful to someone out there. How about a chain saw attachment to go on your circular saw? They call it the Beam Cutter and the idea is you have the control and guide of a circular saw, with a very, very deep blade. It goes on almost as quickly as simply changing a circular blade. I haven't tried it, and the issue of safety scares me a bit, but I thought I'd let you know it existed. How about a power mortar gun for re-pointing? Quik-Point has one. This one really works and can save hours on each job. Strap it over your shoulder, put a couple of litres of mortar in the hopper and then a vibrator drops it onto a screwdriver that pushes it out one of several sized and shaped nozzles. Repoint almost as fast as you can walk along the scaffold. They also sell the same type of system for applying floor grout? without bending over. They not only have a line of power caulking drill attachments, but supply power epoxy gun attachments as well. DeWalt has a new gadget, called Rapid Load. It is sort of a hex version of an SDS drill? except it is a chuck that simply chucks into your existing chuck. (Did you chuck all of that?) With hex shafts on both ends, it eliminates slippage, and they have a whole line of drivers and drill bits coming out to fit it. I haven't tried it but it looks like any standard hex shaft will fit in, although only theirs will lock in. And while we are talking about chucks, I have a peeve to air and a compliment to give. Keyless chucks are wonderful but, other than the Fenn chuck, I haven't found any that will really hold a bit in a hammer drill. The Fenn chuck seems to have some kind of a final click that locks it shut. I would really like to hear from you if you have found any other keyless chucks that withstand the vibrations of hammer drills. Give me specifics so I can find the exact chucks you are talking about. (You can imagine the letters I am going to get from manufacturers on that one. Let me know what your experience is in the field, so I will know whom to believe.)**Originally published as an article by Jon Eakes in Home Builder Magazine, the magazine of the Canadian Home Builder's Association.

Keywords:

Accessories, Gadgets, Power Tools, Tools

