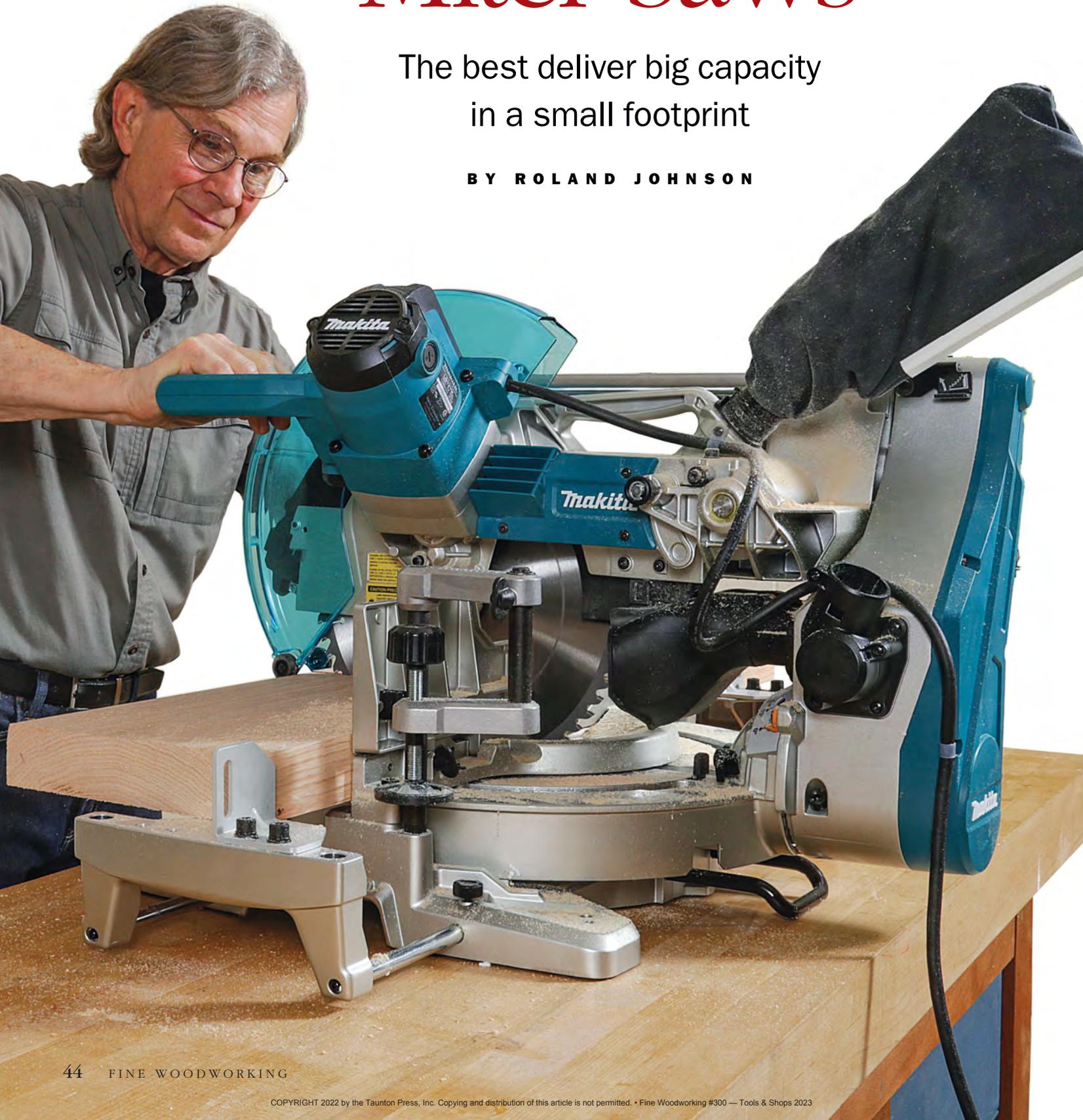


# 12-in. Sliding Compound Miter Saws

The best deliver big capacity  
in a small footprint

BY ROLAND JOHNSON



## TOP SAWS STICK CLOSE TO THE WALL



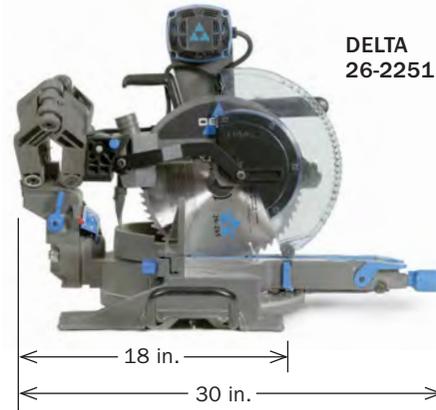
**Wonderful wallflowers.** The saws that performed the best could also tuck right against a wall thanks to articulating arms, like those on this Bosch, or a carriage that slides on stout twin twin rails. Conversely, saws with sliding rails that require a lot of room behind the saw didn't yield better cuts.

If you want to work easily with wide stock, invest in a 12-in. sliding compound miter saw. Compared with the winner from the last review we did of miter saws, the non-sliding Bosch CM12, the sliders in this field have an extra 5 in. or more of cross-cut capacity. Each of these sliders can crosscut stock over a foot wide. That's excellent, and the extra width doesn't come at the expense of performance, either.

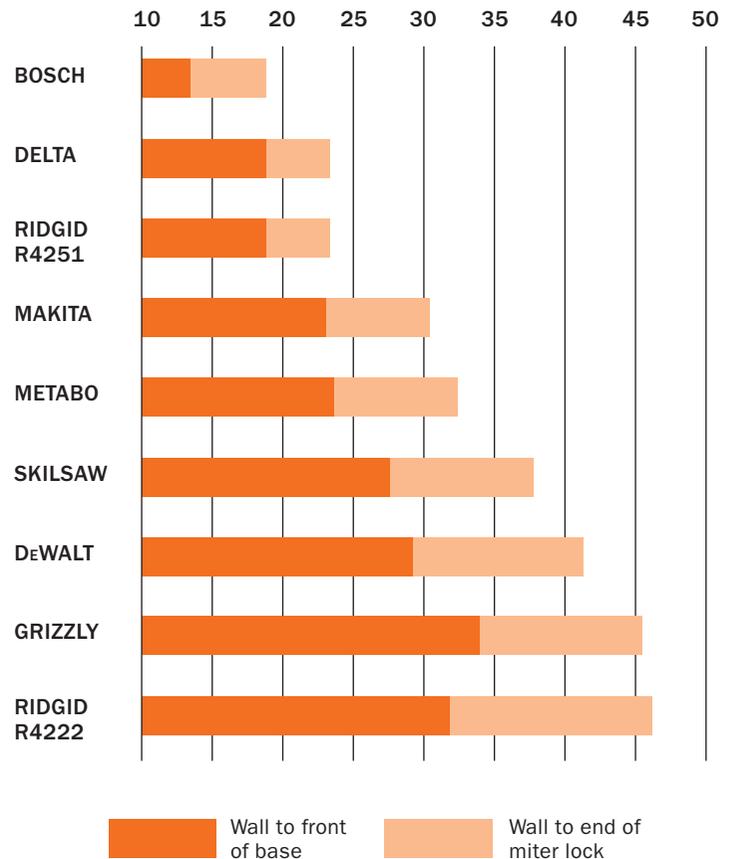
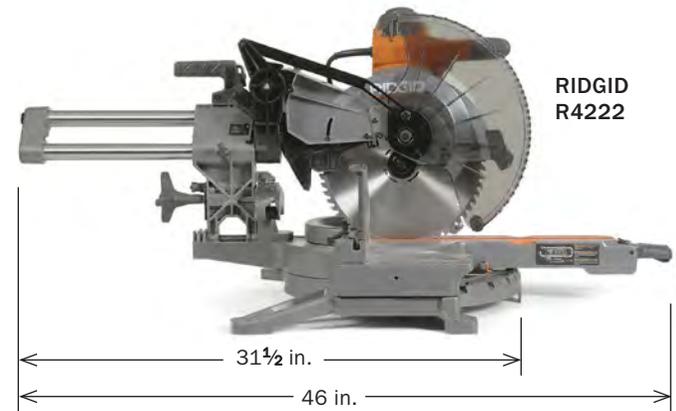
Each saw I tested for this review was reliable enough to yield furniture-quality cuts every time. Every model can handle both rough cutting big boards and sizing panels to final length. What's more, their bevel and tilt mechanisms let them cut simple or compound angles with a flip of a handle or twist of a knob. These are capable, versatile machines, and there are plenty of options to pick from. So, if you're in the market for one, I'll give you some guidance on which saw might be right or wrong for you.

Among this group of saws, there is no poor choice. While evaluating them, I found all had high accuracy and good power. Tables were flat, fences were coplanar from side to side and square to the tables, and sliding action was accurate and smooth. Even with a full thickness 80-tooth blade, they all easily sliced through 8-in.-wide 8/4 red oak with a single cut without bogging or creating a rough cut. Cuts in 8/4 Eastern white pine were equally nice. No one saw had make-or-break cut capacity relative to the others.

Even though performance was essentially identical, the saws are not the same. The biggest immediate difference among them is their slide mechanisms, especially how much room each takes up. I much preferred the slides that don't need clearance behind the saw, a space-saving innovation that allows the tool to sit very close or even flush to a wall. A couple of models accomplish this via rods mounted alongside the blade. The Bosch, the Delta, and one of the Ridgids employ articulating arms.



The saws with articulating arms need no clearance behind the saw, meaning they can hug tight to a wall to save space. In contrast, those with telescoping arms need up to 47 in. from front to back. In a small shop, this can make a big difference.



## FEATURES TO CONSIDER

### HANDLES

There's a range of handle sizes and trigger-lock options, including buttons outside the handle, buttons next to the trigger, and slides. Johnson found some intuitive, some a bit clunky, but almost none were so awkward that he wouldn't get used to them.



**Vertical handles are the author's least favorite.** Handles oriented vertically are one style that Johnson does have a hard time adjusting to. They put his arm and wrist in a cramped position, and the cut ergonomics are awkward for him.

### LIGHTING

Several saws have LED lights that wash over the blade, casting a sharp shadowline for accurate cuts while also providing enough overall light to see what's going on. Lasers, on the other hand, are seldom accurate enough for furniture work. The Metabo's laser is an exception, since it can be adjusted easily.



The rest of the saws have rods that extend behind the machine, requiring a foot or so of clearance to the wall. That's a lot of lost space without any benefit.

No sliding mechanism proved more inherently accurate than another. They all traveled true and were sufficiently rigid, making them all up to the task of furniture-quality cuts. A quality blade with a negative hook angle is critical; I like the Ridge Carbide RS1000 Super Miter.

Additionally, I believe poor cuts with miter saws happen more because of the operator than the machine. It's key to employ good cutting practices, such as pushing directly in line with the blade rather than to one side or another, much like with a handsaw. Any of these saws will deflect or cut off line if you don't move the blade in a controlled manner. Also, take small bites in thick

hardwood rather than trying to plow through the board in a single pass. A bit of finesse and use of best practices will make one of these saws a valued performer in even the fussiest shop.

In the end, it's the small details that make some of these saws sing. Take, for instance, ergonomics. Handles that are comfortable to grip lead to better control, as do triggers and trigger locks that are easy to engage simultaneously. Well-placed adjusters are not only more convenient, but they also improve accuracy since you're not contorting your body to set them while hoping the setting is spot-on. On some saws, I actually had to move around behind the saw to have enough muscle to release the adjustment and secure it again. That was frustrating. Although you can get used to any of these setups, with such solid choices in the field, you shouldn't have to.



### ADJUSTMENTS

**Opt for convenient controls.** These saws bevel and tilt by design, but some locate the adjustment levers and knobs in easier-to-reach places. The best are designed like this Delta, whose controls are either at the front of the saw or a short, unobstructed reach away.

## MAKITA LS1219L

AUTHOR'S  
**BEST OVERALL**  
CHOICE



Price: \$760

Max cut at 90°: 13½ in.

Clearance to front of base: 22¾ in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 35¼ in.

Miter range: 60° left and right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 48° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 22.5°, 33.9°, and 45° left and right

Light: Laser

**This is the saw I want in my shop. For one, it's easy to use. All of the controls are easy to reach and manipulate, and the glide mechanism is both robust and smooth. The handle works well for righties and lefties. Then there are added bonuses that no other saw has. For instance, its hold-down is superb, as it can move to different locations, hinges for a greater range of coverage, and actually holds down the work. In addition, the saw has two points of dust collection, letting it firmly beat the rest of the field. The one downside was the saw's laser, which was so faint we had to turn off the shop lights to see it. Still, all these pluses in a package that fits tight to the wall? That's a winner for me.**

Lighting is important for accurate cutting. Several of these saws have LED lights that cast the blade's shadow onto the board, for a very accurate cut line and enough overall light to see what's going on. Other saws shine a laser directly onto the board. I'm typically not a fan of these because they are seldom accurate enough for the work I do. Metabo's laser is the standout because it can be so easily adjusted. The Bosch has neither an LED nor a laser.

My remaining criteria were mostly a wash. All the saws have depth stops, which are handy for dadoes and rabbets. However, the Metabo is the only model without a flip stop, making repetitive cuts, the purpose of the stop, a much taller order.

Blade changes were tedious but typically without drama. I wouldn't walk away from any of these machines because of a tricky blade change. We simply don't change blades that often for it to be a deciding factor.

Hold-downs are a nice idea, but they're mostly not worth bothering with. Similarly, except for a few saws, dust collection, for which I hooked up a shop vacuum, was mostly underwhelming.

These saws all have support arms that extend from the side to increase the width of the bed. Some of these worked better than others. But for the best performance it's worthwhile to ignore the extensions and create a miter-saw station where the saw is between two raised tables for maximum stock support.

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**Standout features.** *The Makita is the only saw with two areas of dust collection. Its dust management was exceptional compared with most of the other saws. Johnson was also a fan of its handle thanks to its ambidextrous design and responsive button.*



## BOSCH GCM12SD



Price: \$650

Max cut at 90°: 13<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in.

Clearance to front of base: 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 26<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.

Miter range: 52° left; 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 47° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 33.9°, and 45° left and right

Light: None

Bosch has produced another quality miter saw. It not only fits tight to the wall; it also has the shortest distance to the miter lock. The saw's generous miter range is complemented by its large selection of miter detents. However, it falls short in a few areas. The handle is nicely ambidextrous, but its large size may make it cumbersome for all but large hands. I also found the miter and bevel controls, including their locks, stiff. The saw is the only model in the field with no light, either an LED or laser.

## DELTA 26-2251



Price: \$670

Max cut at 90°: 13<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.

Clearance to front of base: 18 in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 30 in.

Miter range: 50° left, 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right; and 60° right

Bevel range: 47° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, and 45° left and right

Light: LED

The Delta was another model that you can locate close to a wall. It employs dual articulating arms that save space while yielding good, wide cuts provided you use good technique. The saw is tied for the second-shortest overall footprint. The Delta's ergonomics were a treat too. Thanks to convenient placement and ease of use, the locks for the miter and bevel stops were superb. Its LED results in a nice, accurate shadow. The dust collection was just slightly lower than the Makita's, but still quality for a miter saw.

## DEWALT DWS780



Price: \$680

Max cut at 90°: 13¾ in.

Clearance to front of base: 28¾ in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 41¾ in.

Miter range: 50° left; 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 49° left and right

Bevel detents: 0° and one movable stop on each side

Light: LED

This saw produced good results and has some positive features, like the miter range, quality locking hold-down, and stout side-support extensions. Its dust collection is also on par with the Delta's. However, it has no bevel stops, just two adjustable stops left and right. Some of its controls are awkward to reach.

Note: DeWalt recalled this model sold in North America between April 2019 and May 2022 because the plastic rear guard assembly can break, exposing the blade. Consumers are advised to get a free repair kit from DeWalt or take it to a DeWalt service center for a free repair. DeWalt has taken defective units off store shelves. Currently available units incorporate a fix.

## GRIZZLY PRO T31635



Price: \$430

Max cut at 90°: 13¾ in.

Clearance to front of base: 34 in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 45½ in.

Miter range: 52° left; 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 45° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°

Light: Laser and LED

This saw performs well and the ergonomics are good. I appreciated the easily accessed controls and nice, ambidextrous handle. The Grizzly employs two lights, a laser to guide the cut and an LED to illuminate the cutting surface. The visibility is good, although the LED does not cast a shadow, it just lights up the cutting area. The miter range and number of detents are nice. However, the bevel range extends to only 45° on each side and has no positive stops. The saw requires a good deal of clearance from the wall, which, like similar models, may make it tricky for smaller shops.

## METABO HPT C12RSH2



Price: \$385

Max cut at 90°: 12 $\frac{1}{8}$  in.

Clearance to front of base: 23 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 36 $\frac{5}{8}$  in.

Miter range: 45° left; 57° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 45° left and right

Bevel detents: None

Light: Laser

This saw has a similar design to the best overall Makita, but it falls short because of small details that add up. First and foremost are the poor ergonomics. I find vertical handles cumbersome. The bevel lock was frustrating too. The tilt lever was at the back of the saw, meaning the tool can't sit tight to the wall. There are no bevel detents. It's the only saw without a flip stop, meaning you have to reset it between cuts. Still, the saw has a compact design, and it's the most affordable of the bunch. The side extension arms have slick levelers, too.

## RIDGID R4222



Price: \$440

Max cut at 90°: 15 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.

Clearance to front of base: 31 $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 46 in.

Miter range: 70° left and right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, 45°, 60°, and 67.5° left and right

Bevel range: 48° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 33.9°, and 45° left and right

Light: Laser

Especially considering the price, among the lowest of the bunch, the Ridgid R4222 has impressive adjustability. It has the largest crosscut capacity of all the saws. And the miter and bevel settings have the largest range of travel, and a bevy of detents. However, the power switch is clumsy, a bad design especially for lefties. The adjusters are either hard to use or hard to reach. Plus, its slider needs the most room out of any of the saws.

## RIDGID R4251

AUTHOR'S  
BEST VALUE  
CHOICE



Price: \$550

Max cut at 90°: 13¼ in.

Clearance to front of base: 18 in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 30 in.

Miter range: 50° left; 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 47° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, and 45° left and right

Light: LED

The Ridgid R4251 was a pleasant surprise. It uses two articulating arms to let it sit against a wall. The mechanism had me skeptical, but it performed excellently. The controls are conveniently placed and easy to use. The bevel and tilt locks for working off of the stops were my favorite of the field. Its LED results in a nice, accurate shadow.

## SKILSAW SPT8801



Price: \$650

Max cut at 90°: 14 in.

Clearance to front of base: 27 in.

Clearance to front of miter lock: 41 in.

Miter range: 50° left; 60° right

Miter detents: 0°, 15°, 22.5°, 31.6°, and 45° left and right

Bevel range: 48° left and right

Bevel detents: 0°, 22.5°, 33.9°, and 45° left and right

Light: LED

This saw performs as well as the others, but its price and inconveniences make it hard to recommend. As far as the positives go, the handle is comfortable to grip. In use, its power switch works for both righties and lefties. However, other ergonomics are OK at best. It's also another saw with the bevel lock at the back, meaning it's a reach to get to. The tool has good bevel and miter range. It's the only worm-drive saw, but I did not notice any difference in cut. The saw cannot sit flush to a wall.