

Veritas Low-angle Jack is Built for Serious Service

Though Lee Valley Tools describes this tool as a “plane” in its catalog, it actually has a lot more in common with another piece of military hardware: a tank.

This low-angle jack plane tips the scales at almost 6 pounds – more than a pound-and-a-half heavier than my old Stanley jack plane. It’s also an inch longer and $\frac{3}{8}$ " wider than my jack. The cast sole of the Lee Valley plane and the iron are both a whopping $\frac{3}{16}$ " thick.

All this iron and steel creates a tool that has a lot more in common with a British-style panel plane than an American jack. Panel planes traditionally were used to take the final passes on large-scale work (think big tables) before finishing. So I’ve been using this plane mostly as an oversized smoothing plane, but I’ve also found it excels at other tasks, too.

The mouth of the tool is positioned further back than on traditional tools. This allows the tool to perform well at truing long edges. The sides of the tool are ground perfectly square to the sole, so it works well on a shooting board. And the easily adjusted mouth, which works

much like the mouth on a block plane, permits you to switch quickly between coarse and fine shavings. Additionally, an ingenious small brass knob behind the mouth allows you to make the switch between a tight and open mouth without worrying about ramming the toe piece into your iron.

The model we tested was just about flawless. The sole was flat within .0015" in every direction and the iron required little work before use. Though the tool is heavy, it is well-balanced. And the Norris-style adjuster works smoothly and has little mechanical slop. This combination of traits allows the plane to plow through difficult woods and different tasks. Once you start planing, the inertia of the tool takes over and does the driving.

Lee Valley also sells a second high-angle iron with a 38° primary bevel as a \$29.95 accessory. Get it. With these two irons you can tackle everything from end grain to figured woods without a problem.

— Christopher Schwarz

For more information, circle #179 on Free Information Card.



Photo by Al Parrish

SPECIFICATIONS

Veritas Low-angle Jack Plane

Street price: \$179

Body: Unbreakable cast ductile iron

Iron: A2 steel, $\frac{3}{16}$ " thick, 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide

Handles: Rosewood

Performance: ●●●●○

Price range: \$\$\$

Lee Valley Tools: 800-871-8158 or
leevalley.com

Kreg Precision Miter Gauge

The Kreg miter gauge system is well designed and nicely made, but a few elements in its construction keep me from being enthusiastic about it. It was extremely accurate out of the box – I made perfect 90° cuts, as well as parts for an octagon, using the settings as they came from the factory. A loose brass pin drops in holes for preset stops at commonly used angles, and there is a vernier scale for accurately setting angles to $\frac{1}{10}^\circ$. It’s possible to tweak the adjustments to $\frac{1}{100}^\circ$ – well beyond what a typical woodworker needs to do.

Setup and assembly was minimal as the Kreg gauge comes from the factory with the head attached to the bar and precisely calibrated. The only adjustment I needed to make was to install five nylon screws to fine tune the way the bar slid in the miter gauge slot.

All of the parts were nicely machined, and the scales were clear and easy to read. The flip stop on the extruded aluminum fence works well both to set the length of cuts, and to secure short pieces.

While I was impressed with the overall design and construction of the gauge, I

question some of the materials that are used. The aluminum bar that rides in the table slot is flexible, and can twist from the weight of the head, particularly when the head is pulled back beyond the edge of the saw table. Plus, if I didn’t keep downward pressure on the head while cutting, the bar would sometimes be above the surface of the saw table. This isn’t the end of the world, but it can get in the way when sliding a piece past it, and could raise the end of a short piece enough to throw the cut slightly out of square. This was a disappointment in an item designed for precision work in this price range.

As supplied, the fence is only 24" long, not quite enough in my opinion – you can’t cut legs for a 30"-high table with it. A 48"-long fence extrusion is available at additional cost.

— Robert W. Lang

For more information, circle #180 on Free Information Card.



Photo by Al Parrish

SPECIFICATIONS

Kreg Precision Miter Gauge

Street price: \$160

Description: Factory-calibrated miter gauge with 24" bar and positive stops at 0°, 10°, 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ °, 30°, and 45°

Performance: ●●●○

Price range: \$\$\$

Kreg Tool Co.: 800-447-8638
or kregtool.com

Penn State Dust Collector Muffler

Every woodworker is aware of how important dust collection is for the safety of your lungs. But every one of us has spent time talking over the noise from a dust collector as well.

How about knocking five to 10 decibels off that noisy dust collector and saving your hearing? The Suppressor from Penn State Industries took seven decibels off the Delta single-bag collector in our shop. Seven decibels may not sound like a lot, but decibel increase and decrease is calculated as a logarithm, so this “slight” change is the difference between annoying and dangerous.

The Suppressor works a lot like the silencer on a gun, fitting on the dust collector at the intake connection. The metal cylinder is double-walled with acoustic insulation between the walls. In testing in our shop we saw a change from 82 dB to 75 dB with the device in place.

Installation is fairly simple (though permanent) using a bead of silicone caulk to seal one end to your machine. Then a hose is added between the 5" connector at the other end and the bag section on your machine. Connections may vary depending on your machine, and a side attachment may require a couple of rivets as well as silicone, but it really works. —David Thiel

For more information, circle #181 on Free Information Card.



SPECIFICATIONS

The Suppressor (SUP1000)

Street price: \$80

Performance: ●●●●○

Price range: \$\$\$\$

Penn State Industries: 800-377-7297 or pennstateind.com

Splitter will Save Your Bacon

If you don't have a splitter on your table saw, put down the magazine when you finish reading this review and order a Micro Jig Splitter. For about \$20 and 30 minutes of your time you can make your saw significantly safer.

The splitter – a small wafer of tough polycarbonate plastic – fits snugly behind your blade to greatly reduce the chance of kickback. And – most importantly – it's easy to remove and replace when you need to make dado, bevel or through-cuts. Because this device is so simple to remove and replace you'll actually use it (unlike the unwieldy stock splitters).

The Micro Jig Splitter works only with 1/8"-wide saw blades and you need a zero-clearance insert to make it work. The package includes everything you need to install the jig (even the drill bit) plus excellent instructions.

Also worth noting is that the Micro Jig actually comes with two splitters, and each face exerts a different amount of pressure against your stock and the rip fence. This



SPECIFICATIONS

Micro Jig Splitter

Street price: \$20

Description: Splitters included: 2; each face exerts different pressure in .003" increments

Performance: ●●●●●

Price range: \$

Micro Jig: 407-696-6695 or microjig.com

allows the splitter to function as a mini-featherboard, adding accuracy to your rips. Few products are for every woodworker, but this one is. I highly recommend it. —CS

For more information, circle #182 on Free Information Card.



AMANA IN-STILE & RAIL

Making a flat-panel door using plywood should simplify the door-making process, but plywood thicknesses can vary, complicating the process.

Amana's In-Stile and Rail system uses spacers and shims to adjust both the rail and stile cutters to perfectly fit the thickness of your plywood.

Each well-made, two-piece set will accommodate 1/4" and 1/2" plywood material. In 1/4", the panel groove will adjust from 3/16" to 9/32". In 1/2" the groove adjusts from 7/16" to 17/32".

Available in concave, bead or ogee profiles, each set is mounted on 1/2"-diameter shanks and can shape door frames from 5/8" to 1 1/8" thick.

Just as with a dado stack that uses shims, the bit sets will require some fine-tuning until the perfect thickness setting is achieved. Amana has made this easier by including detailed drawings of the bits and how they should be arranged, calling out specific thicknesses for each of the shims and spacers.

The In-Stile and Rail sets sell for about \$155. This isn't a set you buy on a whim, but if your woodworking involves plywood panel doors, these bits will improve the fit and reduce the rattle.

For more information, visit the Amana web site at amanatool.com. —DT

For more information, circle #183 on Free Information Card.

ABOUT OUR TOOL RATINGS

Performance is rated on a one-to-five scale. You won't see a low rating ("one or two") because we don't publicize inferior tools. "Five" indicates the leader in the category. Five dollar signs indicates highest price in the category. Three indicates an average price. If you have tool questions, call me at 513-531-2690 ext. 1255, or e-mail me at david.thiel@fwpubs.com. Or visit our web site at popwood.com to sign up for our free e-mail newsletter.

—David Thiel, senior editor