



He's a Starr man

Anyone who has ever spun a metal cutting blade through the side of a kitchen unit or floorboard will know that even the toughest metal blade soon overheats and jams in timber. It is simply the wrong tool for the job. The right tool for the job is quite definitely the Starrett tungsten carbide multi-purpose saw.

Not only does it cut through timber, it also cuts through MDF, plastic, ceramic tiles and, to some extent, bricks. You will need a different arbor for tiles and brick. I found that when drilling through tiles it doesn't pay to push it hard because that first few turns are aggressive and they can lift the glaze. It struggled a bit in the floor tile, but what doesn't? I was impressed that it even succeeded at all.

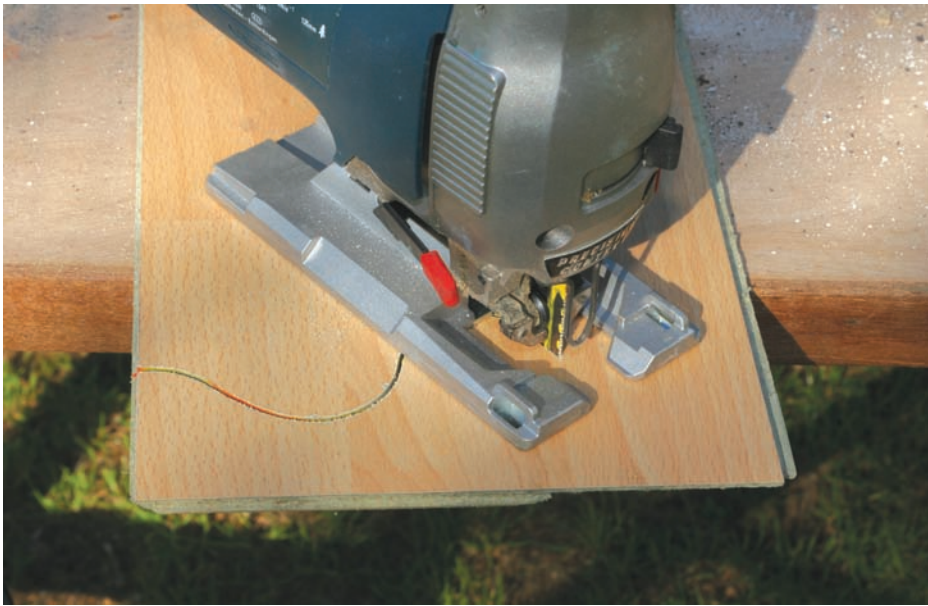
The name Starrett is very well known in the building industry. Roger Bisby discovers some innovative products that are helping the company to stay at the top of its game.

It was absolutely brilliant through plywood, creating a clean hole in seconds. This is a hole saw that you don't have to be precious with; use it and abuse it, have some fun, it is perfectly legal. Having said that, Starrett makes a locksmith version of this set, which, in the wrong hands with the wrong intent, could land you in that horrible corner of the Monopoly board.

Smooth cut

Another set of particular interest is the

Bi-Metal cordless smooth cut (CSC). Forgive me for being a tad confused, but I remember conversations with this company a good while back when they were extolling the benefits of the variable pitched tooth arrangement on the basis that it gave a faster cut. You might not be able to reinvent the wheel, but it seems hole saws are a different matter. The variable pitch still features in the range and is a best-seller, but Starrett noticed that tradesmen were using cordless tools to



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run these saws and the fast rate of cut together with the coarse teeth puts a big strain on an 18V cordless tool. If you look at maximum permissible hole sizes for cordless drills you will see that most of us push our luck – they aren't that big.

Ease the load

So the CSC is designed to ease the load on the drill. The CSC won't get you through thick steel in a hurry but it zips nicely through a stainless sink top and loves a bit of plastic or plasterboard. Starett says that the saws will cut twice as many holes per battery charge than standard (coarse) saws. I am going to take their word for it, the last time I decided to put this sort of claim to the test it took me all day to do the comparison and I had a workshop full of holes.

The saws have a safety stop to prevent the backing material from being damaged so (in theory) you can cut through boards without hitting the pipe. The problem here of course is that the arbor leads long before the saw blade breaks through. The hole is, however, very clean without that horrible breakout that you get in kitchen units. Another good feature is the quick change hex drive adaptor. I hate changing arbors.

Life however isn't all about holes (unless your name is Tiger Woods) so Starett has hit the straight shot by putting the same technology into jig saw blades. The blades have a unified shank which means that they will fit all jig saws. OK, there is one saw out there that they won't fit, but if you have it you should be retired by now, in which case you can send it to me because I know a museum that is looking for one.

The range of Starett blades is too numerous to cover here, but there are some impressive designs in the catalogue and the company can boast longer-lasting, stronger blades which are said to be unbreakable in normal use. The multi-edged teeth produce a nice straight cut with minimal chipping. Normally I cut laminate from the underside, continental style, but just to see the result I cut it from the top, and I can confirm that you don't get chips with everything. They also make a down-cutting blade which puts the chips on the underside but don't use this blade on pendulum setting.

■ Lots more information is available by circling the Readerlink number below. It is worth it just to see all those lovely boxed sets.

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