

Is This The 'New' Dewalt?

A review of the new 18v cordless drills

The power tool market is a fickle beast with some companies flying for years at a time then crashing and burning in spectacular fashion.

When I entered the retail power tool market over 15 years ago Dewalt was the company to beat. A marketing powerhouse helped to keep the brand foremost in the mind of the trade, and for a number of years it nearly became an iconic brand with fathers extolling its virtues to their sons and tradesmen plying its benefits to their apprentices.

Then it all changed...

Following some bad corporate decisions involving poor drill designs and battery technology Dewalt seemed to lose its way.

In the retail sector, the return rates of Dewalt steadily increased as did the customer angst. For those of us at the pointy end behind the retail counter, faced with increasing customer resentment and needing to protect the store profitability we began to focus attention away from Dewalt and toward other brands such as Makita, Bosch, and Hitachi.

Those of you reading this article, who have worked in the retail tool market will no doubt agree that when you've had to deal with a lot of customer complaints about a particular brand, you very quickly work to find alternatives to avoid customer related stress.

So for a number of years Dewalt seemed to be relegated to the back blocks of the power tool world.

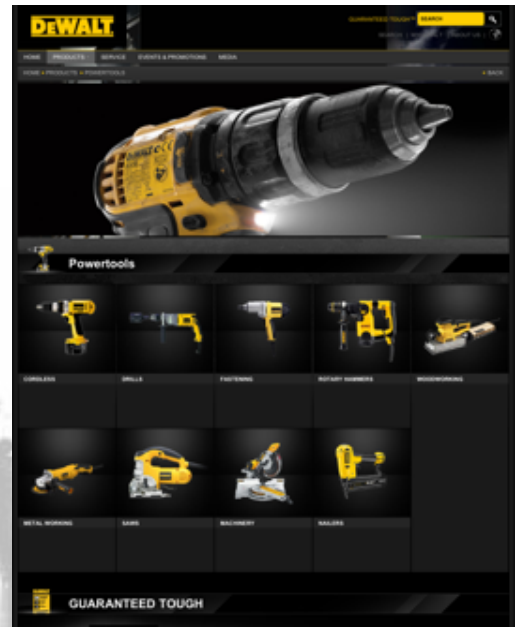
New lithium models from Makita and Milwaukee power tools, the new kids on the block, proving to be formidable competition to the once mighty brand.

Fast forward to 2012, we now see Dewalt as a brand of the Stanley, Black and Decker group, and undergoing a restructuring process that will see it emerge as a leaner beast. Tied to the restructuring is the release of the new 18volt cordless range which may see Dewalt gain back some of its lost ground in the lucrative cordless market

The first of the new offerings have just hit the shelves and i've had the opportunity to have a play with the new hammer drill, drill driver and impact driver over the last couple of weeks.



These models mark Dewalt's departure from the stick style batteries to the more efficient slide on



lithium ion batteries.

Let's have a look at the individual models and their specifications.

The first of the new tools is the DCD785 L2 compact hammer drill / driver.

Specifications.

Voltage.	18v
Battery capacity.	3.0 ah
Chuck capacity.	1.5 to 13mm
Power output.	350 watts
No load speed.	600 / 2000rpm
Beats per minute.	10200 / 34000bpm
Maximum torque.	35nm
Max drilling capacity.	Wood 38mm
	Metal 13mm
	Masonry 13mm
Weight.	1.8 kg
Length / height.	202 x 236mm



The next tool in the new lineup is the DCD780 C2, compact drill driver

Specifications.

Voltage.	18v
Battery capacity.	1.5 ah
Chuck capacity.	1.5 to 13mm
Power output.	350 watts
No load speed.	600 / 2000rpm
Maximum torque.	35nm
Max drilling capacity.	Wood 38mm
Weight.	1.6kg
Length / height.	190 x 236mm



The last tool I'll be looking at here is the impressive New compact impact driver, the DCF885L2

Specifications.

Voltage.	18v
Battery capacity.	3.0 ah
Bit holder.	1/4" (6.35mm)
Power output.	250 watts
No load speed.	2800rpm
Impacts per minute.	3200ipm
Maximum torque.	155nm
Max bolt diameter.	M1
Weight.	1.5 kg
Length / height.	141x 236mm



Using the tools.

Well, I'm the first person to admit that I have had a bit of a professional bias against Dewalt. I have been gun shy about the brand following all the dramas that I've encountered in the past.

When the rep dropped off the tools for me to test his departing comment to me was, "Bryan, I want you to be honest but I doubt that you'll find anything to complain about". I responded with a hearty, " I doubt that."

But, now a month down the track with a couple of projects under the belt all I can say is, "bugger, he was right".

These new offerings are a radical departure from the Dewalt of old, being perfectly balanced in the hand and not lacking at all in the power department.

The mass of low profile 1.5ah and 3.0ah batteries don't interfere with the handling of the tool and provide more than adequate run time for all the applications that I used them on.

To test these tools I used them on some home renovation projects that I'd been planning. During my Festool days I tested drills in a variety of ways including the methods that marketing departments everywhere love, like how many screws will it put in and how many holes will it drill. From experience I know that these test results can very easily be skewed to achieve a particular result and that there are way too many variables that need to be taken into account before you can obtain any reliable data.

Selling power tools for a living gives you an objective viewpoint. The vast majority of my customers are more interested in the feel or reliability of a tool rather than how many screws it will put in.

In real life applications these new Dewalt tools performed well above my expectations. I put the hammer drill to work drilling holes in the brick walls of my workshop for new timber racking. After 16 x 6mm holes, the drill did get hot, and there was no noticeable deterioration in the performance.

I used the impact driver in a variety of applications including cabinetry and carcass construction as well as putting in all the fasteners needed in the timber racking.

The drill driver was put to good use drilling out the excess timber in through mortice and tenon joints for some hardwood doors I'm making.

It copped a beating as It drilled out 80 mm of excess timber without stalling.

The more I worked with these tools, the more I came to admire the grunty little buggers and now, as the time comes to hand back the tools I find myself a little sad to see them go.

I think that after their time in the wilderness Dewalt has got it right with these models. Will they stand up to prolonged use?; I certainly hope so.

Only time will tell if these tools stand up to the rigors the building site. I hope the Dewalt has learned from past mistakes and listens to what the market says about these new tools.

I've enjoyed my time with them and hope to see them in the market for a long time to come.

Cheers

Bryan

