



# Finally, Another Finger-saving Tablesaw

A look at the Bosch Reaxx,  
SawStop's first real competition

BY KEVIN IRETON

I first learned to use a tablesaw the way most carpenters learn to use their tools—namely, by watching the people around me. Unfortunately, that meant I learned from an otherwise excellent craftsman who made dangerous techniques look routine. He would cut sheets of plywood in half by removing the rip fence and muscling the sheet through the blade freehand. He also would trim the bottom of a six-panel pine door by setting the tablesaw fence ½ in. from the blade and running the door over the saw with most of the door cantilevered off the left side. I didn't learn to respect the tablesaw, or to use it safely, until a kickback accident cost me a fingertip.

Earlier this year (*FHB* #258), I reviewed the first-ever job-site tablesaw with flesh-sensing technology, introduced by SawStop, the company that pioneered the technology 15 years ago. I liked the saw and said it compared favorably to Bosch's 4100, which has long been a respected workhorse on residen-

tial and commercial job sites. Now Bosch has launched the first competitor to SawStop, the Reaxx (GTS1041A; \$1499). I spent two months testing the Reaxx with the experience of using the SawStop fresh in my mind.

## The Reaxx will save your finger without ruining your blade

The biggest difference between the Reaxx and the SawStop has to do with how the injury-mitigation systems work. Both rely on the principle of capacitance—in this case, the human body's ability to store electricity—to sense contact with the blade and then to trigger their safety mechanisms. But whereas the SawStop drops the blade below the table and drives a chunk of aluminum into the blade to stop it, the Reaxx simply drops the blade and allows it to coast to a stop.

I have had the Reaxx blade drop twice when the saw wasn't even plugged in—once when I was getting the saw out of the truck, and once when I was changing the blade.

The cartridge did not fire; rather, the safety release—which is triggered when the cartridge fires—got jostled and let go. Resetting the saw was easy, and if this is the price of using a safer saw, I'll gladly put up with the minor inconvenience.

Like the SawStop, the Bosch Reaxx allows you to turn off the finger-saving feature if you want to cut highly conductive materials, such as wet pressure-treated lumber or foil-faced rigid foam, that would likely activate the cartridge and drop the blade. A yellow light on the Reaxx indicates that you are in this "bypass mode." (I tested the injury-mitigation system by running foil-faced foam through the saw in regular mode.) By contrast, SawStop's bypass system is a little more useful because it delivers either a blinking red light or a blinking green light to indicate whether the material is conductive enough to activate the safety cartridge.

The cost to get up and running again after the safety system is activated is less with the

## What if Saw Stop wins its lawsuit?



The story of the Reaxx and the Saw Stop is not as simple as a comparison of the two safest job-site table-saws ever made. Deciding which saw to purchase requires knowing about some pending litigation.

In July 2015, SawStop filed a lawsuit with the U.S. International Trade Commission (USITC) alleging that Bosch had infringed six patents related to its injury-mitigation technology and seeking to block the



**Resetting after an activation is easy.** Once the cartridge has been replaced under the red screw cap, the blade is returned to the cutting position by pushing the red button at the front of the throat plate while pulling up on the blade arbor with the blade wrench. The red button locks the blade in the down position so that it doesn't bounce back up during an activation.

**Activations don't destroy the blade.**

Unlike SawStop's aluminum brake, the Bosch system doesn't try to stop the blade, so it remains undamaged. Instead, the spinning blade is forced below the table with an explosive cartridge like those found in car airbags. Each pair of cartridges (\$90) is good for two activations. The cartridge on the left has fired. The one on the right has not.

**You can bypass the safety system.** As with the SawStop, the Reaxx's safety system can be bypassed for cutting wet or conductive material. The bypass switch (left of the main switch) can be locked if you want to prevent inexperienced users from disengaging the safety system. The yellow light indicates that the saw is in bypass mode.

importation of the Reaxx tablesaws and activation cartridges, which are made in Taiwan. Bosch launched the Reaxx in June 2016, just as lawyers for both sides were

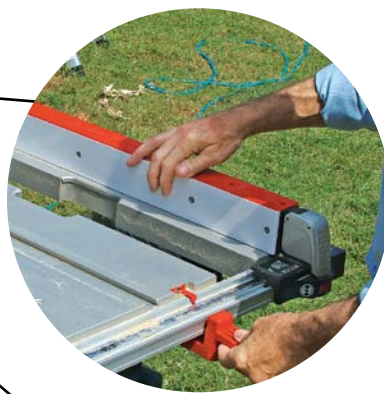
arguing the case before the USITC judge. An initial determination was due as this issue was going to press. Later this year, the USITC will decide to adapt, modify, or reject the

initial determination. Even though the future of the Reaxx might seem undecided, Bosch says it has "put in place the necessary sales and service resources to meet demand for

the REAXX Jobsite Table Saw, and ensure stocks of dual-activation cartridges."

To follow the ongoing developments in this lawsuit, go to [FineHomebuilding.com](http://FineHomebuilding.com).





**A better table extension.** With the Bosch, you can lock the fence down and then move the sliding table anywhere between 13 in. and 25½ in. from the blade. This approach guarantees good support at the fence. The SawStop extension table only locks fully closed or fully open and relies on a thin piece of metal for supporting the stock.



**Outfeed support for short rips.** The included outfeed support extends 19 in. beyond the back of the saw. It's better than nothing, but it's not going to help when you're ripping a sheet of plywood or a 10-ft. 2x12. The minimal outfeed support may keep users from developing safer solutions for cutting long and heavy material.



**Slower blade-height adjustments.** While SawStop's blade can be brought from below the table to full height in one turn, the Bosch requires 25 turns, so it takes longer to adjust the blade height.

Reaxx. Its pair of cartridges costs about \$90, or \$45 per activation. A new SawStop cartridge is \$69, but of course, you'll also have to buy a new 10-in. blade at \$40 to \$100.

### A worthy sibling

The Reaxx, with its gravity-rise stand, is an offshoot of Bosch's 4000-series tablesaws. It has the same 15-amp, 4-hp motor as the 4100, but it is belt driven rather than direct drive. The Reaxx is a little heavier than both the 4100 and the SawStop—133 lb. vs. 112 lb. and 108 lb. respectively, which includes the stands. The fence has plastic facings to prevent tripping the injury-mitigation system accidentally. Other than that, it looks and handles like the 4100. I first used the saw to rip a piece of hard maple for a breakfast nook I was finishing. The motor didn't bog down, and the cut was amazingly smooth and clean.

Bosch refers to the Reaxx's rip fence as "self-aligning," but the fence on the saw I tested had to be tweaked, which was simple enough. I also had to adjust the riving knife and to align the blade with the miter-gauge slots. Both operations were straightforward, but the latter was particularly easy because

the alignment bolts for the Reaxx are right on top of the table.

After using the saw for a few days, I couldn't get the blade to crank down all the way below the table for transport. I turned to the owner's manual and discovered that the hinged dust shroud surrounding the blade should be left open if you're not using a vacuum. Otherwise, dust can build up and interfere with the blade-elevation and injury-mitigation systems. Once it was cleared of dust, the blade-height mechanism worked fine.

### A smart saw with smartphone capabilities

The Reaxx saw has been designed so that its injury-mitigation system can communicate with smartphones that have near-field communication (NFC) capability. With Android phones, you can download an app that allows you to lock or unlock the saw digitally, as well as access information such as maintenance recommendations and the number of activations. This tally is important; after 25 activations, the Reaxx becomes inoperable until it is serviced by a factory-authorized service center.

If you've got an iPhone, as I do, you're out of luck until Bosch switches to Bluetooth technology—or maybe you're lucky. I'm not sure that I want a tablesaw that communicates with my phone. But I also think that in this digital age, we have to be a little patient with companies breaking new ground. I can imagine a future tablesaw that only lets authorized users turn it on. And if it knows that I'm an authorized user because of my phone, maybe this is a step in that direction.

### The verdict

If I had to buy a new job-site tablesaw today, I'd buy the SawStop. I like the Reaxx, but it's heavier and costs more than the Saw Stop, and its technology is not yet proven by thousands of activations in the field. Finally, I can't see buying the Reaxx before the outcome of the lawsuit is determined (see "What if SawStop wins its lawsuit?" p. 46) and we know if activation cartridges and authorized service will continue to be available. □

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