

Ultrasmooth impact driver

Whenever new cordless tools hit the market, we expect them to be smaller, lighter, and more powerful—and the new WH18D-BDL2 from Hitachi definitely is. Hitachi's marketing for this new impact driver touts its three anvils and impressive torque (1832 in. lb.). I'm actually more impressed with the tool's smoothness and how much control it gives no matter what type of fastener you're driving. The secret is a little button just below the comfortable pistol grip that lets you choose one of four tightening modes. There's a soft mode for delicate work, a normal mode designed for typical screw-driving tasks, a power mode for sinking large screws and bolts, and even a self-tapping-screw mode that regulates torque so you don't strip threads when fastening into metal. In my job as a remodeler and cabinetmaker, I get to work on projects of all shapes and sizes, so I put the new Hitachi driver through its paces over several weeks. I even passed it around to the other carpenters on the crew so that they could try it out and test its durability. The consensus was that the four tightening modes gave us complete confidence in our ability to drive fasteners right where we wanted them and without stripping. Installing small bits of hardware with the soft setting was a breeze, while the rapid-fire bursts of torque in the power mode were almost scary. There always seemed to be a perfect mode for the job, no matter what size screw or type of material we used.

Another button lets you toggle the front-mounted LED light between "always on," "trigger activated," and "always off"—enough choices for every possible workspace where you might need an impact driver. And the driver's supershort body allowed us to keep working in situations where we typically would have to grab a right-angle drill. Even the case is useful, with a lid that has its own separately hinged compartment for carrying bits and other accessories. It didn't take long for this new impact driver to climb to the top of my list of favorite tools. My only quibble is that Hitachi put a charge indicator on the driver and not on the Li-ion battery itself, which means that you can't check the charge on your spare batteries without sliding them onto the tool. A kit including two 3.0-Ah batteries sells for \$400.

Rob Wotzak, a remodeler and cabinetmaker in New Milford, Conn.



Packed within a small, comfortable housing, Hitachi's new impact driver has three modes (delicate, normal, power) that are well-suited to a variety of general fastening tasks. A fourth mode prevents stripping self-tapping sheet-metal screws.

