

# HM Review

Dennis Andreas, Dennis McFarlane & Keith Pruitt

## Tools in Review

*Every hobby discipline needs quality tools.*

Tools are one of the most important items on our workbenches today. The proper tools make any hobby more enjoyable and safe and will get the job done quickly. Tool choices are vast, but we put together an assortment of affordable products that every modeler will eventually need and that would be good options for dealers to inventory.

One item I [Dennis A.] have been holding onto specifically to cover in this issue is the Ultimate E-Clip Tool from Duratrax (DTXR1107). Every single one of your customers who's getting started in cars, boats or helicopters quickly discovers the E-clip. They are those pesky little retaining clips that are shaped like the letter E (or a C) that flick away when they are removed, or bounce off the ceiling when we're trying to install a new one. The poor guy is then on his knees for an hour digging through the carpet, looking for the needle in a haystack, before he



*The Duratrax Ultimate E-Clip Tool has multiple holders, which makes replacing pesky clips easy. Finally gives up and returns to your store frustrated and angry, looking for a replacement.*

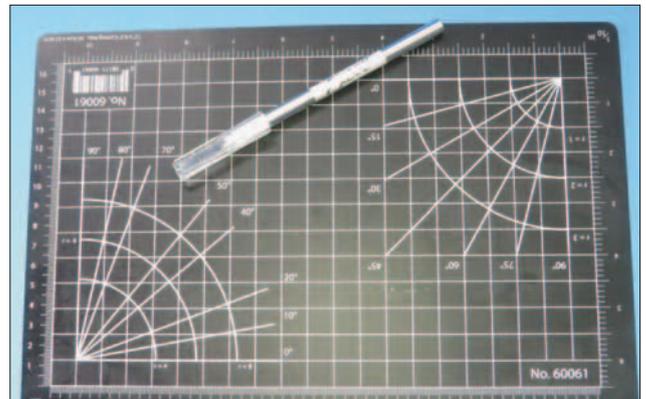
Close inspection of the business end of the Ultimate E-Clip Tool looks something like a Swiss Army knife packed full of different size clip holders. Each is sprung to hold the clip securely in a groove. To remove a clip, place the open side of the tool against the open clip ends and push. To install a clip simply load one in the appropriate holder and push it on. The tool is easy to use and will save countless hours searching for that last retaining clip needed to finish a project. Happy customers are repeat customers, and this is one tool they need.

The Excel Light Duty Hobby Knife (16001) is a staple item in every store. Most likely the #1 hobby knife is the first add-on sale a dealer makes. There's not a lot to be said about the Excel #1 hobby knife except it must be on practically every workbench in America. That said, Excel offers a vast assortment of knives and cutting blades.



Two new items are the Executive Retractable Knife (16047) and the Rev-O-Knife (16060). The Executive Retractable Knife is exactly what the name implies. Working much like an ink pen, the tiny and replaceable blade retracts into an aluminum handle. The knife's housing is equipped with a pocket clip allowing the handle to be placed in a shirt pocket. The Rev-O-Knife is an outstanding product every store owner can use. Opening boxes is a part of your daily routine. The Rev-O-knife folds like a pocket knife, but the rotating hinge is large enough for a finger and this provides for some outstanding leverage. Like all Excel knives, the blade is replaceable once it dulls from use.

The only modeler who says he doesn't need a Cutting Mat is the modeler who's never used one. The mats have many uses besides being a cutting surface, and there is no doubt they've saved many a table-top, and probably a marriage or two. Excel offers mats in a variety of sizes



*The only modeler who says he doesn't need a Cutting Mat is the modeler who's never used one.* from 5-1/2 x 9 inches up to 36 x 48 inches in five different colors. All of the mats are double sided and self-healing. The mats also include convenient grids and reference markings.

Flex-I-File/Alpha Abrasives have been offering fine modeling tools for the hobby industry for many years. The Alpha Abrasives Shape Shifters (0908) are thin sanding sticks with a malleable metal core. The metal core allows the stick to be bent into a variety of different shapes, but it is stiff enough to stay in that shape until bent again. The Shape Shifters are 7.5 inches long allowing for smooth

sanding but are only .125 inches in width and can fit into the tightest spots. The package contains ten color-coded sanding files and includes two files each in grits of 100, 120, 220, 320 and 400.

The Flex-I-File CA-ndle and Holder (5555) comes with a sheet of photoetched metal heads that can be inserted into the included aluminum handle. The photoetched heads each have a slit at the tip which allows it to pick up a single drop of cyanoacrylate adhesive for precise placement. Once loaded with glue, the tip can be placed on the part's seam allowing the CA to be drawn into the seam. The ergonomic angle of the heads allows the tool to be held in a comfortable position for long periods of time. The photoetched heads come in four sizes, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4 mm, with two of each size included in the package.

Flex-I-File's Flow-Thru Applicator Kit (9611) is designed for precise application of a variety of liquids, the kit comes with one squeeze bottle, one syringe and 32



*Flex-I-File offers a number of handy products such as L: Flow-Thru Applicator kit C: Shape Shifter sanding sticks R: CA-ndle wicks that are aimed towards the modeler who strives for precision in detailing.*

assorted tips. The kit can be used to apply a number of different paints, liquid glues or lubricants. The different size tips include a number of different shapes from straight to angled and even micro brushes.

A newcomer in this market but a familiar face in the industry is **The Jeric Group** with the Prime and Tuning Haus line. The Prime line features good quality tools at a very reasonable price. The hex tool is a must have in every tool box. Many of us have used allen keys over the years and the mediocre units show their cards quickly with rounding of the hex bit corners and slipping after trying to torque just a few stubborn screws.

The Prime HEX Driver Set (PMQ1006) is a 3 piece set of the popular sizes of 1.5mm, 2mm and 2.5mm drivers needed for hex head screws. The drivers feature an aluminum handle and the bits are all of drill rod quality. The drivers have a good feel and are easy to use.

Prime Metric Hex Nut Driver Set with Pouch (PMQ1007) compliments the Hex Driver Set nicely, so be sure to up-sell the pair as a set. The nut drivers sizes are 4.0, 5.0, 5.5, 7 and 8 mm. The spin tops allow pressure to be maintained on the nut with your palm while rotating the driver with your fingers.

Body Scissors are useful in all aspects of the hobby.



*To keep tools from getting lost in the bottom of a box, the Prime Tool Pouch from the Jeric Group.*

Although focused on the Lexan car body, they can be used for canopy and cowl trimming, ABS sheet construction material and plastic modeling. The Prime Curved (PMQ1004) and the Straight (PMQ1005) scissors fit the bill nicely with their oversized and comfortable plastic handles.

Everyone has their favorite tools. Unfortunately most of these are buried at the bottom of a workbench drawer or go-bag for the field. The solution is easy: the Prime Tool Pouch. The pouch does not include any tools, so it was loaded with the tools previously described. The tool pouch neatly stores a variety of 20 tools. The pouch incorporates a zipper for easy opening and secure closure to keep the tools in neat order yet completely accessible.

The X-ACTO Series #1 precision knife claims to have the sharpest, most durable blade on the market. The knife comes with a standard #1 handle, but with a gold anodized tightening collar. Beyond the gold collar, is a zirconium nitride coated #11 blade. The zirconium nitride not only provides a superior edge, but also gives the blade a gold tint, making it distinguishable from carbon blades.

X-ACTO's X-Light Knife is the newest tool in the extensive X-ACTO line. It features an innovative LED light in the blade end of the handle for point-specific lighting while working. The handle is slightly oversized and covered in a soft rubber material, providing for a comfortable grip. The knife's blade is changed in the usual manner, while the AAA battery for the LED can be replaced by removing the switch cap. The knife does not include instruction for changing the battery, but it's a very simple and completely intuitive process.

**Xuron** is a company that's well known for its huge assortment of super sharp and comfortable to grasp diagonal cutters and hinged tweezers. Although most dealers may feel the focus of the company's products to be geared towards the plastic modeler or jewelry maker, Xuron offers products aimed directly at all hobby disciplines.

The 2200 Railroader's Tool Kit contains three tools: 2175B Track Cutter, 410T High Precision Shear and 450S Tweezernose Plier W/Serrations. The set provides the Z, N and HO model railroader with the tools needed to work on their layout all conveniently packaged in a fold up pouch.

The track cutter easily slices through rails leaving a straight and burr-free end. The sheers and pliers can be used in a variety of applications such landscaping and assembling the different structures that are part of every layout. **HM**