

Second fix nailers square up

How does the new Makita GF600SE measure up against the well-established Paslode IM65? There is little to separate the two nailers but a few subtle differences could swing the balance either way



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After more than 25 years of Paslode dominance, we believe Makita's new second fix brad nailer prompts much-needed competition in this sector.

Since the introduction of its first cordless finish nailer in 1991 (the IM250 F), the Paslode brand name has become synonymous with nail guns and these reliable, hard-working tools are among the most in-demand on our hire fleet.

In May this year, The Hireman started offering Makita nail guns for the first time, having stocked Paslode nail guns for about 20 years. We were very interested to see how the new offering – the Makita GF600SE – compared with the market-leading Paslode IM65, both of which are second fix cordless nailers.

Tool versatility

Our customers use these nailers for interior carpentry work, including architraves, window casings, dado/picture rails, skirting boards and general MDF fixing; they are proving particularly popular with interior contractors working on high-specification London projects demanding speed, accuracy and reliability.

Second fix tools are far more popular in the UK market than first fix or third fix, as we use steel, concrete and brick frameworks for building – unlike in the US, for example, where timber frame construction is more prevalent.

When looking at the specification for both tools, there is very little difference in what they offer. They both achieve a maximum of 1,000 fastenings per fuel cell and hold up to 100 brad nails. The vibration ratings are also negligible for each tool.



But the Makita does have a number of additional features that make it easier to use.

It is slightly lighter than the Paslode (2.2 kg compared with 2.3 kg), and when testing the machine we found it had a smoother movement, with less of a kick-back. The Makita seems noticeably better balanced than the Paslode – though this could have been simply because they are newer machines.

The Makita also comes with an LED light on the front of the machine, which sounds minor, but when working in dark corners it does make a difference and is a handy feature. In addition, the Makita's charging system is slightly more compact, as it doesn't require a base.

The Makita model comes with

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two batteries instead of one, which also makes it more productive on site, cutting out the waiting time for battery charging.

Similar productivity

When looking at productivity and effectiveness of the tools, there is little difference, though the Makita does offer a number of additional features that could make it more appealing to users.

But from our workshop's perspective, the Paslode is a much easier tool to service.

The Makita is much harder to strip down for cleaning and servicing – the piston is non-removable, which makes it very difficult to clean, whereas this can be removed from the Paslode model. About a third of our fleet now consists of the Makita and we have received nothing but positive feedback so far – apart from those customers expecting an orange tool.

Rather shrewdly, Paslode nails and gas can be used with the Makita model – although this isn't

the same the other way around.

Price-wise the two tools are also comparable, including the consumables.

As far as returns and repairs go, we have very few issues with either tool – both perform well and are nearly always out on hire.

We still have a couple of IM250 nailers in our fleet (bought about 10 years ago), which continue to go out regularly with no complaints – in fact, some of these older models are requested by loyal users.

After six months, it is still too early to say whether the Makita will be able to compete with the Paslode's reputation, reliability and durability – Paslode is still requested as the go-to brand for nailers and we can't see this changing any time soon.

For now though, Makita has come up with a very viable alternative. As a hire company, it is always good to be able to offer our customers a choice.

Neil Graham is managing director at The Hireman