

New Panasonic Brushless

**Independent
Review
by Peter Brett**

It's not a coincidence that Panasonic cordless tools have a very dedicated group of followers. In my experience, Panasonic tools are not only advanced, they are also very good with a number of features that set them outside the ordinary – like the TOUGH

TOOL IP system that protects tools and batteries both mechanically and electronically. Having seen a few very well used examples on worksites, I think they are up to the job.

However, life and cordless tools move on, and the launch of two new compact brushless drills from Panasonic now catches my attention.

Having got just about everything else, it seems that end users are demanding compact size as well, and the new Cordless Impact Driver EY75A7 and Cordless Drill Driver EY74A2 are about as compact as currently possible. I can almost see the Panasonic fans queuing up to get a look at them at the next trade show!

I started with the impact driver – and first impressions really do underline just how compact it is – just 120 mm from rubberized rear end to compact hex chuck and a shade over 240 mm tall, standing on the new 18v 5Ah battery pack. With the optional 18v 3Ah pack it is only 230mm tall and also correspondingly lighter. An option that will definitely appeal to kitchen fitters.

But it does not feel like a tiny tool – Panasonic has made the handling exemplary with a good balance and a textured grippy rubber overmoulding that covers the main handle and the base. Elsewhere on the tools, subtle patches of the new black “carbon fibre look” make it look ultra professional and modern, and with a few rubber “bumpers” on key parts of the housing, the whole should be able to take a few knocks.

The compact size is largely made possible by the all-new brushless motor developed by Panasonic. It is clearly powerful and smooth and raises the bar for other machines.

Panasonic likes to keep users informed about the state of the battery charge and to provide info there is a panel at the bottom of the main handle that indicates charge levels as well as impact speeds, a switch for the bright LED light under the chuck, and finally, a temperature warning for battery and electronics.

Some changes are under the skin, so to speak, and Panasonic has improved the hammer, bearings, switches and anvil in order to ensure that the driver is up to

heavy and sustained use. I can't test the long term, but I had no difficulty driving the longest and thickest screws in my toolbox (85 mm) into dense Indonesian hardwood like it was butter using the EY75A7.

A new “self-drilling screw mode” automatically switches the rotation speed from high to low when smaller screws are used (15mm or less) so that they do not get overdriven or broken by the sheer power available from this motor.

Rather belatedly it seems to me, some end users have come round to the notion that bigger Ah battery packs aren't always better. On smaller jobs, having a lighter and more compact battery pack makes sense because the tool can fit into

smaller spaces and the effort of lifting the extra weight of a bigger battery saves muscle power and helps prevent fatigue.

Not only will this and most other Panasonic cordless tools take the new 3 Ah lithium ion battery pack, but they are also dual voltage – 18v and 14.4v. Clearly, there is no excuse for older battery packs to be abandoned and at a stroke Panasonic has ensured that users get the best use out of their battery packs – old and new. However, the advantages of the newer battery packs are considerable, with a working life of up to 250% more than the original Li Ion ones.

I feel as though I can almost guarantee a positive response from end users after they have tried this little machine. I liked it a lot and it would easily become one of my favourite tools – one of the ones that you reach for first.



Cordless drill drivers are expected to be workhorses on site and in the workshop and I do see them being stretched beyond their capacity sometimes... ..??? Hence the importance of Panasonic's IP system for the users with less sensitive hands and ears. With smart electronics and other tweaks, Panasonic has enabled the motor in the EY 74A2 Drill Driver to deliver more consistent and higher power (more than 70% up compared with previous similar Panasonic models) and I definitely noticed the difference – up to 50Nm of torque can be noticed at the wrists!

Like the impact driver above, the new compact body has been redesigned for ergonomic handling and it also boasts the carefully designed rubber overmoulding and modern-looking carbon fibre patches on the body. At just short of 190mm long from motor end to chuck and 240mm tall with the 18v 5Ah battery pack it is very compact but feels impressive in the hand- it weighs a not inconsiderable 2Kg with the battery.

Again, some of the new features are internal or would go unnoticed, but they



Ultra Compact – and Very Good

nevertheless count as improvements. I particularly liked the new Hybrid Switch that has been designed to give increased switch durability as well as a more sensitive touch for users. Starting screws and drilling small holes need a sure but slow speed from the motor and this new trigger design allows users to select with ease by a simple progressive squeeze on the trigger.

The new electronic speed selection allows users to choose speeds when drilling sensitive materials like plastics and metals to prevent melting and scorching. Most will, I am sure, simply use the highest speed most of the time because it matches the jobs that need doing, but occasionally it is handy to have speed options.

Aimed at:- Pro users who need compact and powerful (and very well designed) tools with a variety of battery options available.

Pros:- Little gems, will do the job nicely!

Like the impact driver, users will be able to use older and newer 14.4v and 18v Li ion battery packs as well as the more compact 3Ah ones.

It is also comforting to note that features like the belt hook (L and R options), LED worklight and quality chucks are also used on these newer models. So you get the feeling that the new machines still retain a connection with the older ones, but are nevertheless more advanced. Users will be happy to note that these dual voltage machines are compatible with li ion battery packs dating back to 2007. Great that there is no built-in redundancy. I liked this pair of Panasonic machines a lot, and even if you aren't a Panasonic groupie, they would definitely be worth consideration.

