

PRODUCT TEST



Roger Bisby
takes the DeWalt
DC234KL out for
a spin.

PRODUCT TEST
PROFESSIONAL
HEATING &
PLUMBING
INSTALLER

The new 36volt Lithium Ion range from DeWalt is said to offer mains power performance from a battery tool. Although it is by no means the first manufacturer to offer this technology, DeWalt says that it held back from introducing Li-Ion because it has been working on a variation that overcomes some of the early problems of Lithium Ion. It needed to produce a battery that copes with the heat generated by the high level drawn by power tools and has come up with a battery unlike any of the types already on the market. I won't go into detail because the anorak stuff is on the website and what matters to you and me is how the drill performs.

I took the 36volt SDS hammer drill breaker out on site to see if I could cook it. Together with plumber Alan Philpott, we broke out brickwork and drilled some 24mm holes through brick. This was Alan's first encounter with Lithium Ion and he fell in love immediately. "I want one," he said. The power and performance is seductive but it is the fact that it weighs just 3.8 kilos but still manages to knock out 2.5 joules which really impressed Alan. It can be used for lightweight chiselling in the rotary stop mode and can be used to drill in hammer or non-hammer mode. The quick release chuck allows you to swap to a 13mm 3 jaw chuck to drive screws and drill in timber and metal.

Take one

With two batteries and two chucks you can take this drill out on an installation job and not have to take another. That will appeal to those working in built-up areas where parking is often a long way from the job. With the one hour charger you will be able to top up the batteries as you go. Li-Ion has no memory, which means you can top it up before it is depleted.

A good hammer drill puts up with a lot of punishment. The new all metal construction of chuck and gearbox has proved a lot more robust but it still pays to treat it with respect. Avoid at all costs using the hammer action when you have the taper jaw chuck on – hammer is for SDS only. Of course, no matter how good a chuck is, they have an uphill task with some users and abusers. I came across a lad on site who was about to chuck his SDS drill in the skip because it had stopped hammering. I showed him a little trick with some silicone grease. He was gobsmacked. I dread to think how many people have thrown away drills for the want of a little squirt of silicone inside the SDS chuck.

Ion maiden



Roger's verdict

■ It is difficult to fault this drill but I would like to see DeWalt put a bit more protection around its batteries. Many manufacturers now have a nice rubber bumper to help cushion the battery from knocks. I have met many tradesmen who have dropped or knocked a relatively new battery and had to buy another one. The cost of replacement Li-Ion batteries is significantly more than Nicad or NiMh, which isn't a problem if you get the anticipated 2,000 charges out of a battery, but if its life is cut short by a silly accident then you are going to be sicker than the proverbial parrot. Another idea, of course, would be to offer insurance against accidental damage.

For more information on the DeWalt 36V Li-Ion range circle PHPI readerlink 175