

sliding bevel from Axminster. I usually like Japanese handtools for their fascinating differences from their Western counterparts, though in this instance the Shinwa bevel looks and works the way I'm used to... Except that to lock the sliding arm in position, instead of a wing and a prayer – you surely saw that one coming – you tighten a thumb screw which protrudes from the very end of the stock, well away from the angle you are measuring and locking the sliding arm very securely.

With a thick-ish 10" (250mm) stainless steel sliding arm and a chunky 6" (150mm) aluminium stock and weighing in at 10 oz (288 grams), the Shinwa 740 sliding bevel is a serious and solid tool; good value at £18 inc VAT. In fact, it's so well made that long after you retire, you'll surely be taking it down the pub to tell the other old boys about it.

**Axminster Power Tool Centre Ltd,
Unit 10 Weycroft Ave, Axminster
EX13 5PH Tel: 0800 371822
www.axminster.co.uk**

SYNTAC EPOXY RESIN

Review by Jo Moran

So far, I have built five boats, from prams to pocket cruisers and for each I used whatever epoxy was readily available in the nearest chandlers, always a major brand. Having been very satisfied with the results, I never really considered the other epoxy resins on the market.

However my latest project is a Geodesic Airolite canoe, which has only a few small joints that require glueing. I have the usual pumps for measuring epoxy at a 5:1 ratio but I find they are not really suitable for mixing very small quantities accurately. So I contacted Reactive Resins whose Syntac epoxy has a simple 2:1 ratio, and is therefore easier to mix in small measures.

Reactive Resins' Trevor Vare was very helpful and able to suggest the combination of resin and hardener which would suit my project best. Instead of buying a standard general purpose pack, it made a change to buy something more specifically tailored to my needs. On Trevor's advice, I bought a 1.5kg pack of Syntac EPAFD low

viscosity resin with Synamin 220 fast hardener, which gives the mixed epoxy a 25-minute pot life. With a tub of cellulose fibres to turn the coating into an adhesive, the price was £33 inc VAT and it all arrived the next day.

Using a basic set of digital kitchen scales, which are accurate to one gram, I was able to measure out as little as 10 grams of resin and then having reset to zero, add 5 grams of hardener. I felt that the proportions were as accurate as I would be able to get, if not perfect. I then mixed in Reactive Resins Cellulose Fibres; they give a slightly darker colour to the mix, so it's easy to see when they are mixed thoroughly. In fact, the epoxy mixed easily and cured promptly, even in the very damp weather which we seem to be getting a lot of since I've begun boatbuilding again! The canoe's framework is made up of small gauge stringers and frames so the gluing areas are very small but all the joints seem to be good and strong.

I was curious to see what the Syntac epoxy was like as a coating, so I sanded a square of plywood and painted some on. The next morning, I came back to the workshop after a night of heavy rain and found the Syntac mix had cured well, leaving no greasy amine 'blush'. I sanded it lightly and it easily took on a nice matt finish, although, as usual with epoxy, it had clogged up the sandpaper.

Overall, I am very pleased with the Syntac products and feel I made a good choice for the canoe, although this small project has not thoroughly

When my Uncle Harry retired as foreman joiner in a shipyard up north, he left behind most of his tools and the brown overalls but took with him his little bevel. Thereafter, he wore his Sunday suit every day of the week and the bevel lived in his waistcoat pocket. He was right proud of that bevel, a proper shipwright's bevel he'd made himself in brass. He'd tell the other old boys in the pub how to use it, whether they were interested or not. Sadly, when he finally went to the Great Saloon Bar in the sky, he couldn't take his bevel with him. Because I had it.

At which point, I would love to add: 'and I've used it happily ever since.' Except I haven't. The arm of the little bevel pivots on a brass rivet, which, despite my attempts to adjust it with judicious taps of a light hammer, is either too sloppy – so you lose the angle as soon as you move it – or too stiff to get the angle in the first place. So Uncle Harry's bevel now lives at the bottom of my briefcase, which is my waistcoat pocket.

Instead, I have used a succession of shop-bought sliding bevels with reasonable success except... Instead of a rivet, each has had a bolt, with a hex or countersunk head let into the stock at one end and a kind of one-winged wing-nut at the other. You lock the gauge at the desired angle by winding up the wing-nut, quietly praying as you go that the wing ends up within the angle and not sticking up in the way. And that the setting doesn't slip as you move it to the workpiece. Which, of course, all too often it does.

Hence the appeal of the Shinwa





tested their capabilities. There's a whole range of Syntac resins which I'd like to try too. I found Reactive Resins provide a very good sales and advice service; despite the small quantity I was buying, I felt my purchase was important to them and worth their time to advise me.

Reactive Resins, 33 Normandy Way, Walker Lines Ind Estate, Bodmin PL31 1HA Tel: +44 (0)1208 264999 www.reactiveresins.com

Mega-Pro 15-in-1 Screwdriver

Review by Doug Dickson

Ratchet screwdrivers: do you love them or hate them? In my experience they always seem to have been left on 'undo' when you need them to 'do-up' and while you fumble with the ratchet mechanism, the screw leaps lemming-like into the bilges to join its cousins or falls amongst the wood-shavings you failed to sweep up before opening that box of expensive screws.

So, why not do without the ratchet altogether? If the very top of the handle rotated smoothly in the palm of your hand, you could keep an even pressure on the screw while turning it in either direction. That is the principle employed in the Megapro 15-in-1 screwdriver which stores seven double ended bits inside the handle – 4 and 6mm flathead; Nos 0,1,2 and 3 crosshead; PZ 0,1,2 and 3 Pozidrive and T10, 15, 20 and 25 Torx sizes – all of which fit the industry standard hexagon socket tip which doubles as a

1/4" (6mm) hex driver.

The Megapro is comfortable in use as the 1 3/8" (35mm) nylon/ABS resin handle is agreeably textured and the rotating handle end prevents blisters on the palm of the hand. In use, the bits are securely retained in the shaft by a sprung ball and at 8 1/2" (215mm) long and weighing 8 oz (250gm), it feels reassuringly robust.

Made in the US and available on-line in the UK from Amazon and Auto-Unique, the standard model costs about £17 and there's a stainless steel version at £20. Auto-Unique even offer to replace lost or worn-out bits for the cost of postage and packing. It is now the favoured screwdriver in my toolbox for those occasions when a drill/driver is unsuitable.

www.amazon.co.uk

www.auto-unique.co.uk

colour, however carefully we applied them. The water-based stains, favoured by furniture restorers, produce a good even coverage but always raised the grain and when you fine sanded it smooth again, you cut through the stain.

We tested the Epifanes stain on some utile, a timber increasingly used in boatbuilding as a mahogany look-alike. One coat of stain, applied with a foam brush, produced a very even colour. After a few coats of Epifanes varnish had been applied over the stain the utile had developed a good natural-looking mahogany colour. Compared to an un-stained area which we varnished alongside the stained sample, the colour was enhanced and looked far better for the treatment.

The important point is that the stain is used to improve the colour of the hardwood, not to radically change



Epifanes Classic Mahogany Stain

Review by Colin Henwood, Henwood & Dean Boatbuilders

When the editor asked if I would review some wood stain I thought he was joking: what can one say about wood stain? But the nice man from Marineware, the UK Epifanes distributors, gave us a can of Epifanes Classic Mahogany Stain so we tried it out and have easily managed to report the following.

We have not had much luck with wood stains in the past. The spirit-based DIY products always produced patchy results and a fairly unnatural

it. It is not intended to make a piece of builder's softwood look like Honduras mahogany! With the scarcity of richly coloured mahogany available to the boatbuilder, the ability to enhance the colour of the timber with a stain is very useful. Marine grade mahogany-faced ply is often quite pale in colour and its appearance could be improved by using the stain.

We found this Epifanes product works exceptionally well. It's compatible with both their conventional and 2-pack polyurethane varnishes; in fact, you can add the stain – up to 10% – directly to the varnish, though we were unable to try out this application.

Marineware Ltd, 6 Crosshouse Centre, Crosshouse Rd, Southampton SO14 5GZ tel: +44 (0)23 8033 0208 www.marineware.com



www.watercraft-magazine.com