

Tool Review: Maxus Aluminum Tank Air Compressor

I wrote up the Maxus EX8016 X-Lite compressor as an Editor's Choice product for our HGTVPro news show HGTVPro.com Weekly, but I only recently had a chance to use the tool for any length of time. While I don't usually run a double-coverage defense with products I include on the show, I was so impressed with the 4-gallon twin-stack unit and its bevy of smart features that a real-time review had to happen.

Bottom line. Let's start with the BL. I used the 1.3 horsepower, 3.7 SCFM X-Lite in the three highest-drain applications I encounter as a home-improvement contractor: nailing off sheathing, running a roofing gun, and using my old Shingle Saw Pro II. It kept pace through and through.

I had absolutely no issue with laddered nails while rapid firing 8d, ring-shank nails or popping off shingles. And I wasn't nailing into any brand new softy 2x10 SPF; I was gunning into 80-year old Doug fir 1x12 sheathing and 2x8 rafters. I drove four nails into every 1x12 board up the roof — a way tighter nailing schedule than 1/2-inch roof decking, wall sheathing or subfloor. My nailer never starved for air.

It's worth pointing out that the EX8016 is a heavy breather and really liked having a dedicated cord straight out of the power supply — it tripped the lame-o surge suppressor strip I use as a multi-plug (no surprise, no demerits) — but on its own 100-foot cord, it ran fine, even in temps right around freezing.

I also ran my Shingle Saw Pro II. This pneumatic shingle saw (no longer in production; it's been re-designed) gobbles air big time. Nevertheless, one-off shingle cuts were a snap. Impressive. And X-Lite recovered quickly when the tank drained.

Weight a minute. When a tool's weight passes a certain threshold — around 80 pounds — carrying it becomes an experience of both necessity and pure dread. Such is the case with most compressors I've owned. But — and I mean and ALL-CAPS-bold-italics BUT — the X-Lite's aircraft quality aluminum tanks drops this baby's gross vehicle weight to a mere 57 pounds. I won't say that's feather-light, but holy mack-o (as my daughter says), there's no comparison between the X-Lite and other compressors where the lift-and-lug process toggles between a serious chafe at the minimum to an exercise in blood-pressure management by week's end.

Details done right. Beyond the light weight, the Maxus designers kept pushing during their design charrettes and executed smart, savvy details that carry the X-Lite furlongs further towards top-of-el-heapo status.

It starts with a carry handle/roll cage that's aces. See, the compressor is cubic — roughly the same shape as other compressors in the class — but the handle is positioned to deliver optimum carry efficiency between truck and site or between floors. Combined with its lighter weight, you can practically carry it like a suit case without having a back surgeon on speed-dial.

The roll-cage part of the handle houses everything — supply lines, gauges and the pump motor, to name a few biggies — so that it'll be darn tough to break them when Bruno the Meatball javelins a shovel or stack of 2x6s into the back of your truck.

Speaking of the truck and cubism, the machine really is cubic! This means that there aren't hose fittings, gauges, cords, or round/odd shapes sticking beyond the tool's recti-linear perimeter. How much do I love this when loading the truck? Seriously, thanks, Maxus, for yet another weapon against entropy.

What I also love (but can't recommend, of course) is that because the tool really is cubic, if you happen to load something on top of it in the truck or gang box, so what? Certainly loading tool and kit boxes around it is easier than any other compressor I've used. This is really smart design.

Here's some other cool stuff:

- The pressure dial is easy to see, read, locate and use.
- There are two (thank you, lord) air ports right on the front of the tool.
- The cord is long enough too. I like this for trim or floor jobs where I might have the compressor in the room with me and need to move it here and there for whatever reason.
- The gauges are easy to see and read.
- Rubber feet mean I don't have to worry about putting the tool down on a finished floor. Tip: placing any compressor in the finished space on a piece of cardboard helps curb possible damage to the floors.
- It has an oil-lube pump; I don't mind changing the oil in every so many — er — years.

My only complaint. I wouldn't be living up to the secret writer's code if I didn't find at least one thing 'wrong.' Seriously, you get nasty letters from the Writers Guild if you don't. Anyway, it's the same complaint I have with all compressors and one that's a super-easy fix: the drain valve. I'd swap out the existing valve (one of those backwards-threaded 1/2 inch twist deals) with a ball valve. 'Nuff said.

Maxus-ed out. If you ask me, the Maxus EX8016 X-Lite compressor is the current industry leader in this category.

About the Author

Mark Clement is a remodeler and author of The Carpenter's Notebook and The Kid's Carpenter's Workbook, Fun Family Projects! To learn more about Maxus Tool's [aluminum air compressor](#), please visit Maxus Tools at <http://www.maxustools.com>

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