

# Meet the New Boss, Not the Same as the Old Boss



By Scott Burt

**B**efore I got my hands on the new Graco

ProShot four months ago, I had heard a lot about it in the paint community. It seems to me that when a highly touted and much anticipated new painting tool hits the market, the contractor rumor mill spins efficiently but not always with accuracy. I heard that it could only spray items in a vertical position, that the battery cycle was too short, that the unit was too heavy, that it caused some sort of weird electrical charge to shoot up the user's forearm, that the tool itself was disposable after a few uses, too loud, too much overspray and much, much more.

So, I thought the best way to test the tool and get a real-world take on its true capabilities would be to put it through the paces in the shop, the controlled environment where critical spraying often takes place. My company was in the midst of a project that included a large quantity of custom-built cabinetry. I was able to scavenge 74 cabinet doors and shelves from one of our jobsites and bring them into the shop. The doors were poplar frame and MDF panel. The shelves were MDF with poplar nosing. It was a perfect combination of typical paint-grade materials, and a large enough quantity to get an accurate read on the new tool. Also, the material stock was all raw, which created the opportunity to run both primer and finish through the gun.

Honestly, as I set up the shop for this test, I was keenly aware that the other sprayers were sitting in the shop, so if the ProShot couldn't cut it on paint-grade cabinet finishes, the show would go on. In other words, if the tool couldn't pump the



primer, I would have the luxury to switch to a more suitable machine. Or, if there was anything in the primer coats that was unacceptable, it would be getting in between coat sanded anyway, and then I could switch over to a more suitable machine for the finish coats.

Starting on the bottom sides of shelving is a good way to get a new sprayer calibrated and dialed in. I could not have been more pleased that the ProShot was good right out of the case. No tweaking, adjusting or cursing at all. I didn't even install the flow inhibitor that is recommended for finer finishes. With a 211 tip attached, I wanted to feel 2,200 psi running off a fully charged 18 volt battery pack with a full quart cup on board and no hose to wrestle with. I wanted to lay out as many pieces as possible and just walk through the shop at will, shooting edges and faces from

every conceivable angle, focusing on nothing but the finish.

I was immediately impressed with the power of the tool. For the spraying process to be happening in such a compact unit in the palm of my hand, it was a new experience to see and feel the spray pattern go from gun to substrate. No spitting, not too loud, no hose tending; a perfectly well-behaved new addition to the fleet. More important, it was laying down a nice heavy coat of primer that would stay wet just long enough to level out beautifully and then kick off to tack heaven. The overspray was what I would consider to be comparable to that of an HVLP and definitely less than an airless with a fine-finish tip.

To make the story of a fairly long and enjoyable experience relatively short, it is sufficient to say that over the course of 74 pieces and multiple coats on all sides, the

tool was put through its paces from many angles – even upside down. The gun never spit or clogged and laid down nice finishes over the course of the several days of testing. That being said, I ran about four gallons through the ProShot, one quart at a time, went through several battery charge cycles and got to clean it several times.

Here's the practical scoop on using the machine: It works exactly as advertised. I'd recommend orienting the angled suction tube to face the front of the cup to accommodate horizontal shots, the downside being that you may have to refill slightly sooner in that position. The battery charge cycle is perfectly acceptable. It seemed that on average I was getting about five quarts out of a cycle. The kit comes with two batteries, so it's easy enough to swap out for a fully charged one. It is interesting to note that I actually liked the attitude of the machine better during the second half of a battery than the first. I could definitely feel when the battery was losing its fully charged edge, and I preferred the more mellow personality of the second half of the cycle. I am suggesting to the manufacturer that one of the best improvements that could be made to a unit like this

would be to implement a pressure control knob. I would love this machine even more if I had more control of it.

Cleaning the ProShot is certainly easier than cleaning an airless with a hose. However, like any sprayer cleaning exercise, it

neous on-site items that need to be sprayed, especially at times when you don't want the inconvenience of hauling in a bigger unit. The downside, for quantity, as in this test, is that a quart doesn't go a very long way, and it's no fun stop-

ping your process to keep refilling. Graco was smart to include two battery packs with the kit. Multiple cups would also be handy for those inclined to do volume with the unit.

Since the initial test, the ProShot has been convenient on other tasks. We had about 50

removable divided light wooden window grill inserts on a recent residential repaint – a perfect project for the cordless. Again, the tool made for a pleasurable and efficient experience in an inherently not-so-pleasurable-and-efficient task. There were so many situations in the past where this tool could have saved us time, which in reality is money. That is one of the realities of paint tool assessment: its ability to pay for itself and become a profitable asset.

Because this tool is advertised as having a finite life span, it technically falls into the category of a "disposable" sprayer. I have used lesser disposable sprayers over the years and often disposed of them after the first use. This unit is touted as having a 150-gallon life span, needing to be repacked after 50 gallons. Retail price on the ProShot was \$449 when it was launched. This breaks out to about \$0.75 each time you shoot a quart through the gun. As an occasional tool, the 150-gallon service life should go a long way, one quart at a time. For convenience, portability and the obvious potential to rather quickly pay for itself and become a profitable tool, this is a good investment. **APC**

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is an exercise – mostly in the cup itself. I don't love threaded cups. I wish it had a locking mechanism more like an HVLP style. Also, on that note, aligning the threads with a full cup of product is a bit of a balancing act. The entire post-use cleaning process took about eight minutes each time, and that included flushing it with warm water at the end.

It is to be noted that I would not recommend purchasing this unit for use as a cabinet-grade finish sprayer. I tested it under these conditions to determine its finish quality capabilities and was more than satisfied with its paint-grade finish. It is perfectly suitable for the miscella-

