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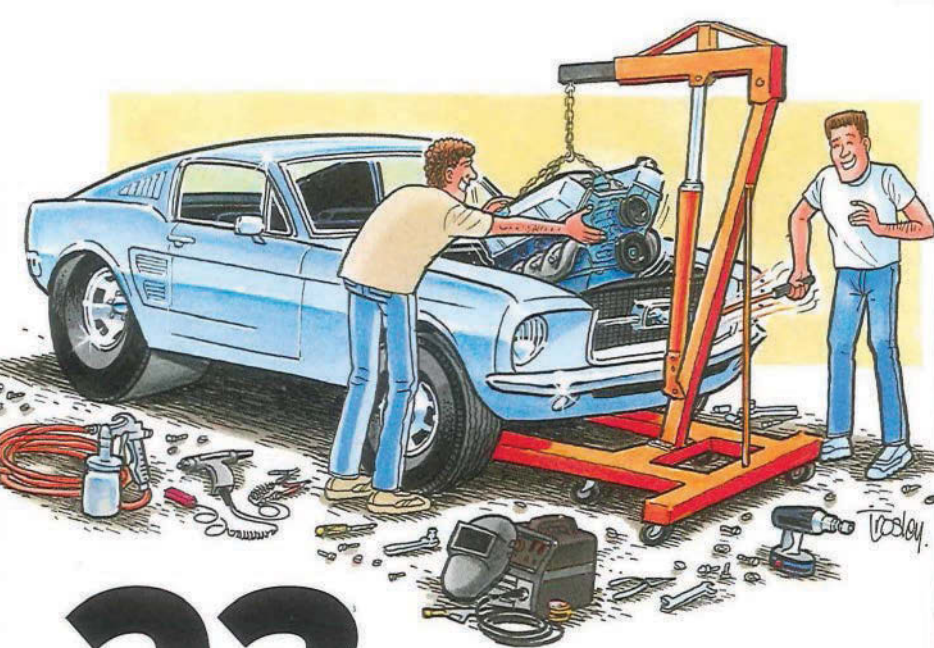
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**LAST-MINUTE HOLIDAY GIFTS**

23 COOL TOOLS FOR  
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**PROJECT COUGAR RETURNS!**

PLUMB A HI-PO FUEL SYSTEM  
WITH FUNCTION & STYLE!



# 23 COOL TOOLS

Home garage helpers you gotta have that won't break the bank.

By Rob Kinnan • Photography by the manufacturers  
Illustration by George Trosley

If you're expecting a Tim Allen reference, move along. This story is not about a tool-obsessed comedian, but rather tool-obsessed hot rodders like us. You know you're legit when you have a tool that you've never used and likely never will, but are happy that you have it anyway. Because, you know it's cool. And when you got that neat tool without having to break into your kid's college fund, it's just that much better.

We've collected a handful of some of the coolest tools and devices we've run across and presented them here for two reasons. One, they serve a real function when it comes to working on our cars; and, two, because they're not hideously expensive. While a few of them approach the definition of "pricy" (like the welder and plasma cutter combo), compared to the competition and/or going without, we'd consider them a bargain. So without further ado, here ya go by alphanumeric order. *Arh, Arh, Arh!* (Sorry, couldn't help it.)

## CRAFTSMAN TOOLS

Craftsman.com

When you were a kid, you probably hated when mom dragged you to Sears for new clothes, but as an adult car guy you're fine with it because while your wife is shopping, you can hang out in the Craftsman Tools department. All they need is a bar and a TV with the NFL package there and you'd never have to leave!



### 19-PIECE UNIVERSAL MAX AXESS SOCKET/RATCHET SET

Leave it to Craftsman to come up with yet another take on the classic ratchet and socket set. The neatest thing about the 3/8-drive Max Axess kit is the pass-through design of the sockets and ratchet, so if you have to remove or install a nut from a long stud (too long to allow a standard deep socket to work), the Max Axess gives you the convenience of using a ratchet to remove or install it, instead of the tedious process of using a wrench. It works on quad, hex, 12-point, external Torx, splined, and even rounded-off nut/bolt heads, includes 3/8- through 7/8-inch sockets, 10-19mm sockets, plus a storage rack and socket rails. **PRICE:** \$39.99



### HANDI-CUT

We never thought we needed one of these until we got one, at which point we can't imagine being without it. We have used the Handi-Cut for years, mostly for cutting radiator, heater, and fuel hoses, but it can also be used on leather, fabric, rope, and gasket material. The stainless steel blade is easily replaceable, and the handle includes storage for extra blades, which are available from Craftsman (one extra blade comes with the tool). And like most Craftsman tools, it has the lifetime Craftsman Forever guarantee. **PRICE:** \$19.99

### CORDLESS IMPACT WRENCH

One of the most critical tools to have is an impact wrench to loosen tight fasteners, especially lug nuts, and by far the most convenient impact is a cordless one. This is doubly true at the track, when you don't want to lug a generator and air compressor around. We've used a Craftsman 1/2-inch impact to change wheels, and have gotten a lot more use than expected out of a single charge. This C3 model 19.2V wrench is over a hundred bucks, but use it once and you'll gladly pay triple that for it. It packs enough torque to remove even rusted-on lug nuts, with 200 ft-lb of torque and 0 to 3,000 impacts per minute, as well as a bright LED light that comes on when you pull the trigger. You also get two NiCad rechargeable batteries, so you'll always have a fresh battery ready to keep your project on track and on time. If you do forget to recharge, the batteries are interchangeable with other 19.2V C3 tools. **PRICE:** \$134.99



## EASTWOOD PRODUCTS

Eastwood.com

Eastwood is one of those places where you can spend a paycheck in a hurry on all their trick tools, especially when stocking up on body and paint supplies. They also sell the Paintucation body and paint videos with Kevin Teitz, whose Mustang you can find featured in this issue. But we picked out some of their more hard-core tools for car guys, and you really need some of these to call yourself a hard-core hot rodder.



### FLARING TOOL

If you're doing anything with brake lines, you'll need a double-flaring tool—putting a single flare in a brake fitting is a quick path to lost brakes and piling your car into a tree. Eastwood's Professional Brake-Flaring Tool lets you create three kinds of precision flares in any of five sizes of tubing, in minimal time. The kit includes a brake-flare forming tool; 3/16, 1/4, 5/16, 3/8, and 4.75mm tube-retaining dies; handle; instructions; and case. It'll pay for itself with the first project and give you peace of mind knowing that your brake flares are of OE-precision quality and safety. You really don't want to half-ass it with your brakes. **PRICE:** \$249.99



### VIBRATORY TUMBLER

How many times have you tried to remove grime or polish from a small part with a wire wheel and have it flung across the shop? Or, worse yet, at your face? Eastwood's 18-pound Vibratory Tumbler makes old hardware shine like new, cleaning and polishing small parts and hardware. The tumbling action helps the media (included) remove corrosion from pockets and recesses quickly, and best of all, the vibrating tumbler does all the work. It'll handle parts up to 10 inches long. **PRICE:** \$249.99

### HOT STAPLER PLASTIC REPAIR SYSTEM

Here's one we bet you didn't know existed. And now that you do, you need one! Eastwood's Hot Stapler System makes solid, permanent repairs of breaks, cracks, and tears in rigid or flexible plastic parts, like interior stuff. It has three staple-mounting options and three heat settings depending on what you're working with. **PRICE:** \$199.99



### FENDER ROLLER KIT

You can mini-tub your car to fit fat tires on the rear, but you're still most likely going to have to roll the inner fender lips for more clearance, especially when you're trying to fit the fattest rubber possible. Traditionally, we've used a Louisville Slugger for that job, but Eastwood makes it easier and far cleaner (and with no risk of screwing up your sheetmetal) with its Fender Roller kit. It uses an adjustable fender-rolling roller to gradually roll the inner lip flat, and an adjustable-height arm lets you work on a wide range of cars and light trucks. **PRICE:** \$249.99



### WELD AND CUT!

Eastwood's MIG 175 welder and Versa Cut plasma cutter package is the most expensive item on this list, but crucial for the home garage of anyone who's serious about building a badass car. You know what the MIG welder does, and it's easier to learn than you think. As for the plasma cutter, if you've ever used an oxy-acetylene torch to cut metal, you know what a sloppy mess it makes. A plasma cutter is quicker, easier, and about a hundred times cleaner than cutting with a torch. You can buy a welder and cutter separately, but Eastwood has a kit that includes both. There are actually two kits: both include the MIG 175 but one has the Versa Cut 40-amp plasma cutter that works on 110 or 220V currents, and the slightly more expensive kit uses the Versa Cut 60 that only works on 220. The Versa Cut 40 cuts through metal up to 3/8-inch thick, while the 60 cuts through metal up to 7/8 inch. The MIG 175 works on either current and welds mild or stainless steel up to 24 gauge or 5/16 inch, and includes a free spool gun to weld aluminum, which otherwise requires an expensive and hard-to-learn TIG welder. **PRICE:** \$999.99 (MIG 175 and Versa Cut 40) \$1,099.99 (MIG 175 and Versa Cut 60, shown)

### STUD WELDING KIT

Now this one is cool! An easy way to start a major dent repair job is to use a stud welder, which welds small "nails" to a body panel that you can grab with a slide hammer, slowly bringing the panel back out close to a normal shape. In the past, that's required a \$200-plus stud welder gun and accessories, but Eastwood has this little kit that turns your MIG welder into a stud welder. It includes a MIG stud nozzle, slide hammer, 100 2mm pins, and a replacement locking cam for the slide hammer. The nozzle included in this kit was designed to work with Tweco-style nozzles and may or may not work with other style MIG torches. **PRICE:** \$34.99



### SPOT WELDING KIT

Like the stud welding kit, Eastwood also has this kit to turn your MIG welder into a spot welder, just like the factory but without a huge and expensive, large-resistance welder. See, yet another reason you need a welder at home. **PRICE:** \$99.99



### MITYVAC BRAKE BLEEDING KIT

Bleeding brakes usually requires two people; one to pump the pedal and another to crawl under the car and crack open the bleeder screws. It's kind of a messy pain in the neck. But the Mityvac, available from Eastwood, makes it a one-person job with a handheld pump that moves about 1 ci of fluid with each stroke, pulling out dirt, old fluid, and air. It develops and holds approximately 25 inches of vacuum. The kit includes the pump, brake bleeding adapter package, user's manual, three lengths of 1/4-inch id tubing (1 1/2-, 3-, and 18-inch), 3 inches of 5/32-inch tubing, and a reservoir jar with transfer and storage lids. **PRICE:** \$42.99



### HARBOR FREIGHT HarborFreight.com

You know Harbor Freight as the place to get dirt-cheap tools, from tiny stuff to the bigger power tools, presses, and such, but your author has put a ton of use into their tools for decades and can attest that the "cheap tools" thing is mostly a myth. And they have everything, including a lot of things that the other tool companies don't offer. Check 'em out.

### STEP DRILL BITS

We call this dynamite little tool a unibit, and if you don't have one in your toolbox then, sorry, you're an idiot. Talk about handy! Harbor Freight's three-piece Titanium Nitride Coated High-Speed Steel Step Drill bit takes the place of 28 individual bits and is just the thing for drilling holes to just the right size and deburring the hole at the same time. We've used it many times on firewalls to pass a water temp gauge capillary tube and fitting through, as well as a hundred other uses. The nice thing about Harbor Freight's step drill bit is that it is vastly less expensive than the last one we priced in a hardware store for \$75! This is another one of those you didn't know you needed until you used it once. **PRICE:** \$12.99



HARBOR FREIGHT CONTINUED

**HEAT GUN**

Why would you need an industrial-strength hair drier? Because a true heat gun is much more than that and is a handy thing to have in the garage. Harbor Freight's 1,500-watt Dual Temperature Heat Gun puts out either 572 degrees or a flame-like 1,112 degrees (through a three-position switch) to strip paint, varnish, remove decals, shrink wire wrap, loosen fittings, thaw pipes, or anything else that's made easier with heat. **PRICE: \$14.99**



**AFFORDABLE POLISHER**

While it's true that a paintjob is only as good as the prep work, it's equally true that it's only as good as the cut and polish after the paint and clearcoat has dried, and Harbor Freight has just the inexpensive tool to do it. Their 7-inch Variable Speed Polisher/Sander, Drill Master can be set to spin from 200 to 3,377 rpm to polish a finish or sand a larger area. Ball bearing construction makes it smooth, a six-speed thumb control changes the speeds, and a spindle lock makes for easy pad changes. **PRICE: \$39.99**



**SHOP CRANE**

Also known as a cherry picker, a shop crane is mandatory to remove or install an engine in a car, but they take up a boatload of room when not being used. Harbor Freight solves that with a foldable crane in either 1-ton or 2-ton capacities. The 1-ton unit is \$40 cheaper and we've used it to remove an engine, but the 2-ton crane's boom extends out 61 1/4 inches (as opposed to 50 1/4 inches on the 1-ton), making it a much easier process. We'd opt for the 2-ton crane, since if you have a car with a lot of front overhang, the smaller one might not work. The foldable design makes storage a piece of cake. **PRICE: \$184.99 for 1-ton, \$224.99 for 2-ton**

**POWERHOUSE PRODUCTS**  
PowerhouseProducts.com

Powerhouse is the place to go for hard-core engine tools. They are a part of the COMP Performance Group that includes COMP Cams, TCI, and FAST, and have some really neat tools that fit the PHR reader's toolbox perfectly.



**LS VALVESPRING COMPRESSOR**

The GM LS engine has taken over, but like the small-blocks before it, changing valvesprings can be a real pain in the butt. Powerhouse's spring compressor for the LS makes it as easy as possible, allowing you to remove one or two springs at a time without the hassle of having to remove the rocker stands or any other installed rocker arms. It works on all Gen III and IV engines with the heads on or off the engine, and is small enough that it works in tight spaces like an engine compartment. **PRICE: \$103.96**

**TDC STOP**

Harmonic balancers and their timing marks can never be fully trusted when trying to find top dead center (TDC) on a cylinder. Use Powerhouse's TDC stop to find true TDC. Screw it into the No. 1 cylinder spark plug hole and manually (do not use the starter!) turn the engine over until the No. 1 piston hits the stop and mark the balancer. Then, turn the motor the other direction until it hits again and mark the balancer; the midpoint between your marks is true TDC. **PRICE: \$11.14**



**TRANS TAILSHAFT PLUG**

This seems stupid to include here, but it's such an inexpensive no-brainer that we had to. A universal tailshaft plug should always be around when removing or installing a trans, since it keeps the fluid in the trans and not all over your arm, face, and garage floor. **PRICE: \$6.34**



**SUMMIT RACING**  
SummitRacing.com

Summit Racing is to the automotive world what Wal-Mart or Costco is to regular life; you can get anything you want, usually for much less than other stores. We put together some of Summit's most useful and affordable items from their tool catalog.

**AUTO DOLLIES**

Most of us have two-car garages, if we're lucky, and moving a car in and out when it doesn't run is a pain. Summit's car dollies from Merrick Machine make it a piece of cake. They are made of 1/8-inch steel plate with non-marring, poly ball bearing casters, and the standard-duty set can support a 6,000-pound car. A heavy-duty version supports 10,000 pounds, but if you need those, what in the world are you working on? **PRICE: \$154.95 (set of four)**



**QUICKIE PAINT BOOTH**

Another product we have personal experience with is Summit's ZipWall system that uses four 12-foot-tall (maximum height) telescoping poles and all the necessary attachments to quickly turn your garage or covered patio (in our case) into a paint booth. Just add clear plastic sheeting (also available from Summit or any big hardware store) and a vent fan and you're good to go on that home paint project. **PRICE: \$259.97**

**SPOT WELD CUTTING BITS**

These Blair 3/8-inch double-end spot weld cutter bits are the professional's choice for removing spot welds. By cutting around a spot weld and leaving the underlying panel undamaged, the damaged panel can be quickly removed. Then, just repair the panel and replace it, or install a new one using the spot weld cutters to make plug holes for welding. An adjustable depth rod protects the underlying panel and best of all, when one end of the cutter bit dulls, you can simply flip it over and keep working. The bits are used in standard handheld drills. **PRICE: \$13.95 each**



**ROLL-ABOUT ENGINE CRADLE**

Don't sit an engine on an old tire or, worse yet, its oil pan for storage because you know that's just wrong, and it makes it hard to move around. Instead, bolt it to one of Summit's cradles with wheels to get it off the floor and allow you to roll it around much easier. The cradles are available for all popular engines and are made from 14-gauge square tubing with a black powder-coated finish. They will hold up to 1,000 pounds, so unless you have an all-iron big-block Chevy with an 8-71 blower, you won't come close to maxing it out. **PRICE: \$33.97**



**TABLETOP SANDBLASTING CABINET**

A sandblast cabinet makes quick work of stripping old paint, grease, and grime from parts, but if you don't have room in the garage for a big stand-alone cabinet, check out Summit's tabletop unit that features a 23-inch wide, 19-inch high, 19.25-inch deep work area and a 20x15.50-inch viewing window. You supply the compressor. **PRICE: \$144.95**

