

The Devil's in the Dust

I'm sure you know all about what happens when you hook a shop vac to your sander, but when I finally got round to it the other day I was frankly amazed. I connected our Fein Turbo II vac (admittedly a *very* good vac) to my favorite random-orbit sander and sanded more than 250 square feet of painted surface—latex mixed with Resisthane—with a single 120 grit disc, a disc which at the end of the job was still clean, sharp, and apparently ready for several hundred square feet more. In my experience, that's simply unheard of. I fully expected to load a half-dozen discs with the usual mess of fused paint and debris, and to spend as much time sanding out the resulting scars as it took to create them in the first place.

Now you might find this naive, but I've always assumed that hooking up a vac was about keeping the shop air clean. It does help a lot, but this recent job makes me realize there's something even more useful going on. It turns out that most of my sanding career has been spent sanding dust. If I'd had the wit to vacuum away the layer of waste between abrasive and workpiece from the beginning, I'd probably have saved at least a year's total sanding time, and I'd have saved a few hundred pieces of sandpaper, too. Believe it or not, sanding is actually a fairly efficient process, if you can manage to put clean, sharp abrasive in direct contact with wood (or paint, or whatever).

Try it! By all means, spring for a Fein vac and live large! In the meantime, check our flexible vac hose, and note Fein's inexpensive flexible step adapter too. Next time you have a big sanding job, hook up your vac and compare. I suspect you'll be impressed.

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