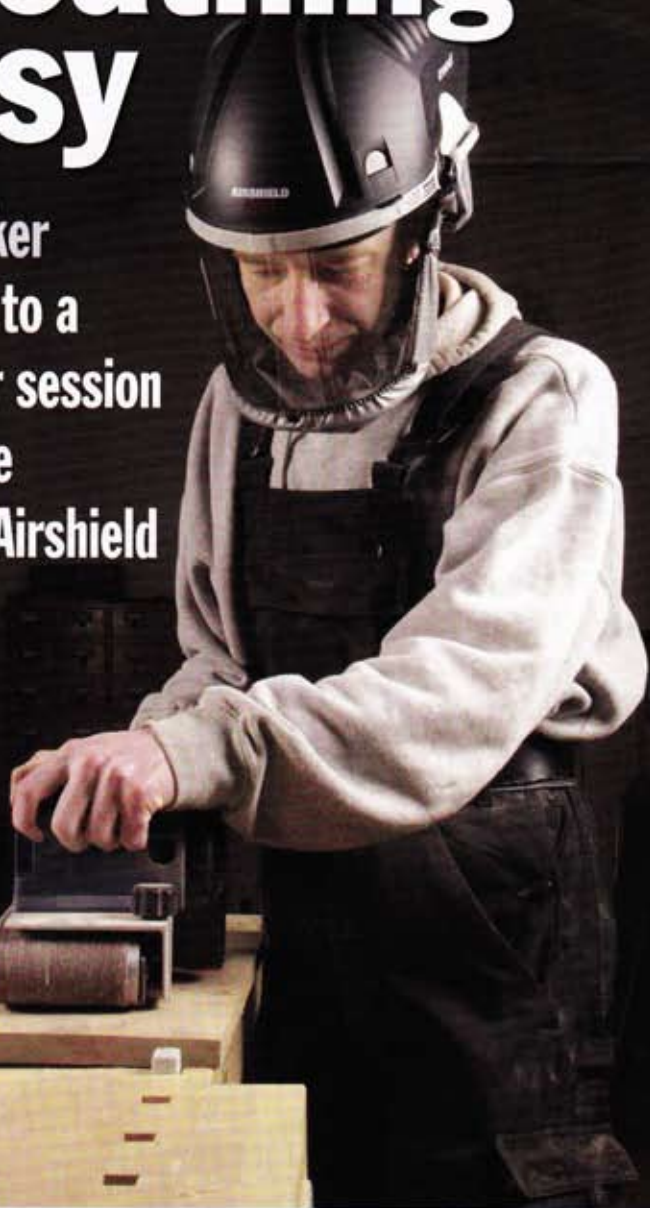


Breathing easy

Mark Baker faces up to a four-hour session inside the updated Airshield



PHOTOGRAPH BY GMC/ANTHONY BAILEY

Here's the dilemma: whether to cover your entire face with a respirator, feel claustrophobic and risk 'Daft Vader' cracks from your mates, or to look cooler and more comfortable in an ordinary mask and risk inhaling fine and possibly toxic dust along with assault by flying wood chips.

Not so much of a dilemma after all is it, put like that.

So if we take it as a given that a full-face respirator will do what it says on the box, we are left with the grinning pals and our own personal comfort zone. I have to admit that, while I wear

a respirator for safety's sake, up till now I have never relished the prospect of donning it.

I own – and use – the Airshield model that the 230V Air/Pro Airshield Pro Respirator replaces, so am I going to get a positive wearing experience from this new one? I'm looking for comfort, health and efficiency at a reasonable price.

This is what Trend says

- This new version offers:
- double the protection of its predecessor and 98% filter efficiency
 - low-energy impact visor

DATAFILE

Airflow min 160l/min
Airflow fully charged 200l/min
Headband size 52-62cm
Motor sound level 70dB
Battery 8hr
Weight 995g
Power 230V
Eye protection to BS EN 166 (low energy impact)
Respiratory protection (NPF50) to BS EN 12941 THP2

From: Trend Machinery and Cutting Tools Ltd
Tel: 0800 487363
Web: www.trendmachinery.co.uk

- improved face-seal and hood
- components positioned for optimum centre of gravity
- motor positioned away from forehead
- functional components positioned away from brow
- single rechargeable Ni-Mh 8-hour removable battery pack
- replaceable visor
- twin filters
- removable brow guard allowing access to components
- pre-use airflow go/no go indicator

This is what I say

With the battery, motor, face shield and head guard sitting effectively on top of your head, the old-style respirators – of which the last Airshield was just one – could cause such a neck ache and feeling of being closed in that after a couple of hours I always felt like removing the face shield and abandoning the job.

But this new Airshield is light years away from its predecessor. The balance is better, I was able to work for four hours without neck fatigue and could have gone on for longer.

There's a feeling of more space inside it and an impression of more air blowing across the face. It's a massive improvement on the old version and one of the least expensive PPE (personal protective equipment) respirators available today.

So come on boys, carry on taking the mickey, but I'll be having the last laugh! ■