

Trend Airshield

SPECIFICATIONS

Airflow:

Minimum	160l/min
Fully charged	180l/min
Headband size	52-62cm
Noise level	70dB
Weight	735g
Eye protection	BS EN166 (medium energy impact)
Respiratory protection	BS EN146 THP2 (NPF20)
Price inc VAT	£188

I'm always amazed at how many of us woodworkers spend considerable time cleaning, rust-proofing and generally caring for our valued tools, yet often neglect the most vital piece of equipment we possess – our body! Few of us, for example, would use a router without eye protection, or a circular saw without earphones: but when cutting up the odd piece of MDF, do we always bother to wear an appropriate dust mask? Maybe it's a case of 'what the eye don't see, the heart don't grieve over.'

A case in point was on breakfast TV news the very morning I wrote this test review. At that early hour, I was too bleary-eyed and fuggy-headed to comprehend what the story was about, but it showed film of a secondary school workshop where a boy was merrily boring into a block of MDF with a bench

drill. Sure, he was wearing safety goggles for protection against the MDF dust and swarf that was flying everywhere – but his dust mask was conspicuous by its absence!

Apart from ignorance, or a blasé attitude to safety, the main reason dust masks are not used more often must be that many are uncomfortable and rarely fit satisfactorily. Thankfully, then, those clever designers at Trend have come up with an ingenious, lightweight, battery-powered respirator to help overcome this. It comes neatly packaged with its own draw-string carry bag, four-hour battery, battery charger, THP2 fine filter, pre-filter, airflow indicator, visor overlay and COSHH card.

Although it looks like something Dan Dare might have worn back in the 1950s, the Airshield is actually very comfortable and remarkably



The Airshield's filtration system offers protection against airborne particulate hazards, while its face mask will withstand medium impacts as defined in the relevant British Standard. In fact, about the only thing it won't save you from is the savage mocking you'll get if your friends ever see you wearing it

lightweight. Excellent adjustment straps and mechanisms enable it to be quickly suited to the user's head; the small rechargeable battery unit is side-located behind the main headband and takes only a couple of seconds to fit or remove. Fully charged, it is designed to give enough power for four hours' continuous use. An additional battery can be fitted in an identical compartment on the opposite side, which allows up to eight hours' usage.

The Airshield works by fitting to the operator's head like a mask so that the comfortable, soft face cloth fits all around the jaw and cheek area. When switched on, a fan-motor unit draws air through a pre-filter, to remove larger dust particles, before being drawn through the main filter. The filtered air is then passed down over the face. Exhaled breath leaves the respirator through holes in the bottom of the visor frame.

Many accessories are available for the face shield, including packs of replacement filters. The excellent instruction manual advises users on when to change the filters – pleasingly, this was not as often as I had initially expected.

Performance

Unfortunately, I don't have a fully fitted test lab in my spare room. But based on my practical experience with the Airshield, it appears to me to work wonderfully well.

I wore it during a particularly dusty MDF sanding job, and it provided me with an ample supply of what certainly smelt and tasted like well filtered fresh air. It was very comfortable to wear, to the extent that I actually forgot I had it on at one point, and commendably quiet in operation. Neither my glasses nor its own clear visor got misted up, and after use I could find no trace of any errant dust inside the unit ■

TWVERDICT

A well designed, comfortable and relatively lightweight item of safety equipment. It is of sound construction, operates quietly and, based on the test described above, seems to work. Trend deserves congratulations on a job well done – the Airshield promises to be a real boon for users of woodworking power tools and machinery. ■



Batteries are rechargeable, and take just a second or two to fit in the side-mounted holder. Useful life is four hours on a full charge, but there is a second holder on the other side to let you double this by adding another battery