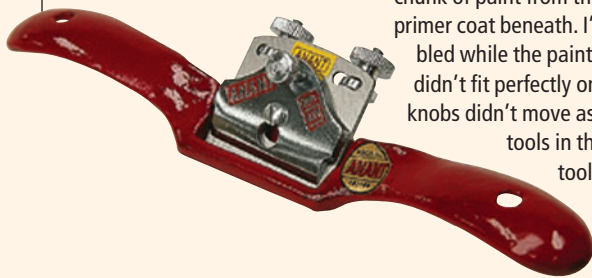


ANANT A151 SPOKESHAVE

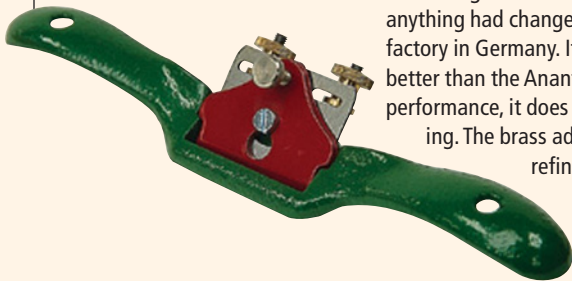


This was the most frustrating tool in the test to set up. Right out of the box, the underside of the iron was stuck to the tool's body. When I pried the iron off, it took a fair chunk of paint from the body with it, revealing a black primer coat beneath. I'm guessing the tool was assembled while the paint was still tacky. The iron itself didn't fit perfectly on its adjustment knobs and the knobs didn't move as smoothly as those on the other tools in the test. Overall, this India-made tool had the lowest level of fit and finish. The knobs were rough, and the cap iron didn't fit well

on the iron and required quite a bit of work to get it functioning well. The red paint job was uneven in places, and the bed of the tool is not machined. Unfortunately, the tool works about as well as it looks. When faced with any wood harder than cherry it screeched in protest and chattered – no matter how tightly I set the cap iron or how lightly I set the iron. With a cost of only \$15, you might think that it's at least a decent bargain tool to start with. You would be wrong. Save your money or buy a vintage tool.

Available from Woodworker's Supply, 800-645-9292 or woodworker.com

KUNZ ADJUSTABLE SPOKESHAVE



This was actually the first spokeshave that I ever bought. And I have spent hours upon hours tuning it up to squeeze acceptable performance out of it. For this test I bought and tuned up a new specimen to see if anything had changed in the last decade at the Kunz factory in Germany. It hadn't. While the tool is a fair bit better than the Anant and Stanley in fit, finish and performance, it does have some problems worth noting. The brass adjustment knobs are a nice and refined touch, but they spin freely more than any of the others in the

test. You have to twirl each knob for two full turns before it will engage the iron. The tool's bed is merely cast and painted – and roughly at that – with no machining in this critical area. As a result, this tool protested when asked to take a heavy cut or when subjected to hard maple. With a price of \$18.50, this tool is an acceptable choice if you work only in softer woods or are willing (make that "overjoyed") by tuning, tuning and tuning your tools.

Available at Tools for Working Wood, 800-426-4613 or toolsforworkingwood.com

LIE-NIELSEN SMALL BRONZE SPOKESHAVE

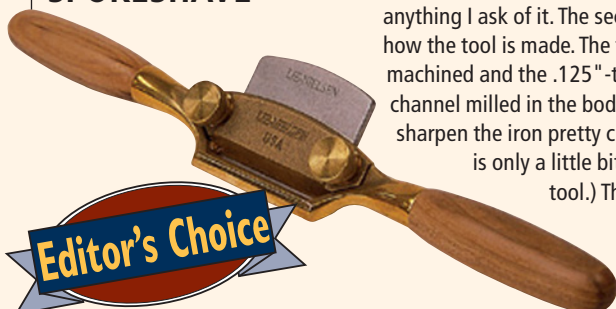


This little jewel is based on the British-made Preston tools that are highly desirable among collectors. But this tool isn't designed to just sit on a shelf. It works incredibly well when you need to make precise cuts. Your hands almost totally enclose the bronze body, which gives you a high level of control. Like the Boggs Spokeshave, this U.S.-made tool has a completely machined bed, a thick iron and a heavy cap iron that is machined in two places on its underside. Out of the box, I found it necessary to file and polish the leading edge of the cap iron to allow the shavings to easily escape the throat; otherwise, the tool's

throat would occasionally clog. The entire procedure took about 5 minutes, which isn't too much to ask in my book. Like the Boggs Spokeshave, this one doesn't have knobs to adjust the depth of your cut. But because there is only one thumbscrew (instead of two) to tighten, this tool is quite easy to learn to adjust. Owing to the tool's small size and tight throat, it's probably not the only spokeshave you should have in your shop (you can't buy just one, by the way). But because of its outstanding performance it's a strong No. 2 choice.

Available from Lie-Nielsen Toolworks, 800-327-2520 or lie-nielsen.com

LIE-NIELSEN BOGGS SPOKESHAVE



I've been using the Boggs Spokeshave for nearly nine months now, and it never leaves my bench. Once I got used to setting the iron without adjustment screws, I was hooked. This U.S.-made tool is capable of almost anything I ask of it. The secret to its performance lies in how the tool is made. The tool's bronze bed is fully machined and the .125"-thick iron fits snugly in a channel milled in the body. (Note that you need to sharpen the iron pretty close to square because there is only a little bit of lateral adjustment in the tool.) The cap iron is completely flat on the underside and mates with the iron over its entire face. Add to that the fact

that the cap iron is secured with two large thumbscrews and you understand why this tool is so incredibly stable. The only difficulty to report with this tool lies in setting the two thumbscrews. To set the blade you need to hold the iron in place as you tighten the two screws, and this requires a little bit of finger acrobatics. Once the iron is set, however, the tool is comfortable to use for hours and hours thanks to the well-shaped hickory handles and bronze body. The Boggs Spokeshave – which was developed with the assistance of chairmaker Brian Boggs – is the most expensive tool in our test (\$125), but worth the price.

Available from Lie-Nielsen Toolworks, 800-327-2520 or lie-nielsen.com

STANLEY 151 SPOKESHAVE



This tool, now made in England, is the genetic ancestor of the Kunz, Anant and one of the Veritas shaves. Too bad it has fallen on hard times. The Stanley 151 of old was a finer tool than this modern version. The fit and finish was better on the old models I've had in my shop, as was the fit between the body, iron and cap iron. In fact, the modern Stanley version has been eclipsed by the Veritas (which is far superior) and even the Kunz (which has nicer adjustment knobs). Like the other less-expensive shaves, the Stanley didn't like to take a heavy cut or work in harder woods. If you were inclined, you could tune up the bed, replace the iron – a \$25 to \$33 investment – and make yourself a

new heavy cap iron. However, that reminds me of the joke about the guy who bought an old handsaw. He didn't like the feel of the handle so he replaced it with a more comfortable handle. After using the saw for a bit he realized that the steel in the blade was junk and so he replaced that, too. The only original parts left were the saw's nuts. If you like Stanley tools, I recommend you check antique stores, flea markets or eBay for a vintage 151. They are quite common and reasonably priced. In fact, you might find a specimen for less than the \$23 you'd spend on a new version. While it's a shame that this once-great manufacturer of quality hand tools is now more focused on garage-door openers, it's the simple economics of the modern age.

Available from Garrett Wade, 800-221-2942 or garrettwade.com

VERITAS LOW-ANGLE SPOKESHAVE



This hybrid tool has a lot of things going for it. Because it has the bevel facing up, it cuts at a low angle. This makes the tool easy to use even in hard woods and it is the best tool – hands-down – for shaping end grain. In fact, you can shave off ribbons of end grain when this Canadian-made tool is freshly sharpened – try that with any other metal shave. Because the tool's body is cast aluminum, it's lightweight (like a traditional wooden shave) but the throat won't wear out like a traditional wooden shave is prone to because the body made of metal. The most unusual feature of the tool is its toe piece. It can be

turned over and reattached to the body, allowing the tool to be used on outside and inside curves. You set the depth of cut by adjusting the toe piece up and down, exposing more or less of the blade as needed. You also can shift the blade forwards and backwards in the body of the tool, regulating the tool's throat. All-in-all, it's a very adjustable tool. As mentioned earlier, the lower cutting angle means you have to pay closer attention to grain direction to avoid tear-out. If you build chairs (where straight-grained spindles are riven from logs) then this tool is ideal. It's also great for any work that requires extensive shaping of end grain.

Available from Lee Valley Tools, 800-871-8158 or leevalley.com

VERITAS SPOKESHAVE



Lee Valley's newest spokeshave does everything right. The body is cast from nearly unbreakable ductile iron with nicely fitted rosewood and brass handles. The bed of this Canadian-made tool is fully machined, resulting in an airtight fit between the iron and body. The brass adjustment screws fit into the notches on the iron perfectly with no discernable play or spinning – this results in an iron that is easy to set and stays set during your cut. The iron is .125" thick and made using A2 steel, which I personally prefer. The cap iron is a massive .20" thick and is machined on the bottom where it meets the

iron and the top where the shavings escape. The throat is a good size for most general work. For woodworkers who prefer a tighter throat, the tool comes with two custom-fitted shims that you can place between the blade and the shave's body. Overall the tool is a joy to use. The rosewood handles are quite comfortable (and I'm told there will be a kit offered soon that will allow you to make your own custom handles for this tool). The Veritas is easy to set and takes a fine or thick shaving without a hint of protest. Harder woods pose no problems for it. Priced at \$65, this tool will become one of your best friends.

Available from Lee Valley Tools, 800-871-8158 or leevalley.com **PW**