

Cut to the Chase

By Gary Butts, MMR

Sandy is always buying stuff from the Internet and I never know what is going to show up at the door from day to day. Sometimes she buys something for me. Well, she dropped a pair of very weird looking scissors on my modeling desk a couple of months ago and I wasn't very impressed because they looked pretty bulky at first glance. I stuffed them into the drawer and forgot about them for several weeks until I needed a pair to cut some styrene for one of my model railroad projects. I opened the drawer and there they were. Closer inspection revealed that the bulky part of the scissors was actually an LED laser cutting guide. Now that got my attention.

It turns out that by pushing a button on the side of these scissors a bright red laser trail is projected out in front of the cutting edge blades highlighting the path of the cut.

Fearing that the laser guide might not be very accurate, I made a few practice cuts on paper and was very pleasantly surprised to find that the scissors cut exactly on the projected path. I laid out pencil lines on the styrene that I needed to make my parts and found the cuts to be almost exact. Normally, when I make cuts with conventional scissors there is almost always some wandering of the cut as I try and follow the cut lines with my magnifier as the material is parted by the scissor blades. This usually ends up with me leaving excess material on the part and then filing or sanding the part to its final shape. By trusting in the laser guide and looking at it instead of the cut line at the blades, I was able to much more accurately guide (aim?) the cuts. This resulted in parts having near perfect sides with little follow-up sanding or filing required. The laser not only works wonderfully on straight line cuts, which is 90% of my requirements, but it also helps with the curved cuts as well in that the laser lights up the cut line at the blades making it easier to see my

sometimes faint pencil markings.

The scissors are fairly sturdily built and I have used them to cut styrene sheet up to .062" (1/16 in) thick as well as brass up to .015" thick and aluminum up to .02" thick. My pair are still sharp so they must have pretty hard steel in the blades. The laser uses a couple of button cell batteries and I have not had to change mine yet. The LED does not turn off automatically so you must remember to turn it off after you finish your cutting job.

There are no manufacture markings on the scissors themselves so it is not possible to tell who manufactured them, but they are very distinctive in shape and appear to be available from several sources. I found one web site specifying them as KingMas brand and another as IDC brand. I think they are all the same and come from the same manufacturer. The price seems to run in the \$7-\$10 range from several Internet sources and a search for "Laser guided scissors" will turn up most of them. Compare them with the pictures in this article to insure you are getting the same scissors I have.

There is a warning label on the side of the scissors telling you to avoid looking directly into the laser itself, which is very good information and the scissors LED laser should probably not be left on in the presence of children.

A good tool at a reasonable price, give them a try!

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