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Echo cs-400 18 gas chainsaw review

Reviewing a chainsaw can be a little tricky because we have found that people treat chainsaws and their brands like they do their vehicles. Ford hates Chevy, Dodge is better than Toyota... you get the idea. When we agreed to review the ECHO CS-400 18" Chainsaw it was with the knowledge that we were going to put it into the hands of some guys who had years and years of professional tree trimming under their belts. The trouble was, they both used a competing brand.With a predisposition towards bias - because that's just how we operate as humans - I submitted my product to them for use and tagged along to try it out alongside them, hoping to provide any necessary "balance" to their biased opinions. Turned out I got worked up over nothing... and they were downright pleased with how well the ECHO performed. One of them was quoted as saying: "this is the best chainsaw I've ever used that wasn't touting itself as a pro-only model". Not bad... not bad at all.Editor's Note: Check out our 36V Cordless Chainsaw Shootout article for a look at how battery powered chainsaws compete with corded models.Build Quality of the ECHO CS-400 Chainsaw OK, there's nothing surprising about the Echo chainsaw except that... well, it really comes across as a 'Pro' model - and that surprised our professionals. They previously viewed ECHO as "prosumer" - that is, a product that was developed for both consumers and professionals. Well, in all honesty, that's exactly correct. ECHO does pitch this chainsaw, and most of its other products at both markets (as opposed to the Echo Timber Wolf chainsaw CS-590 which is more squarely focused to Pros).What wasn't correct was the conclusion that a prosumer product can't work well for professionals and take serious use and abuse. Aside from its ability to power through wood, what our guys liked was the fact that ECHO didn't stick any of the consumer frills onto this chainsaw. It's a serious tool that doesn't include what we now consider to be problematic features like a tool-less chain tensioner, separate cut-off switch, and excessive body molding that recesses the controls instead of making them easy to get to.With the ECHO CS-400, everything is practical and easy to access. When the saw gets dirty or is in need of maintenance, you're not going to have any difficulties getting to the major components. Speaking of components, our saw came with the guide bar and chain disassembled and the kit included a T-wrench, manuals, kick guard and bottle of ECHO Power Blend XTended Life 2-stroke oil.Taking a look at the ECHO CS-400, you can immediately see that it has a very solid design and feel. Pick it up and you can instantly recognize the perfect balance of the tool as it suspends from your finger underneath the wraparound front handle. And I do mean perfect. With the standard 18" bar, this tool doesn't tip forward or back in the slightest - it's perfect.The rear handle is fully enclosed and there is a step plate for placing your foot while starting the motor. The pull starter is, as you'd expect, on the left side of the tool and so is the access for fuel and chain oil. The cut-off switch is a simple steel toggle switch - simple, dependable, and durable. On the right side, you can see the chain tensioner, which is the simple T-wrench style.Loosen up the twin bolts holding the bar securely in place and then you can turn the chain tensioner the desired amount. The air cleaner sits atop of the tool body. You can remove it by hand with a simple turn of the knob. We liked that ECHO opted to use an automotive-style air filter. It's a much higher quality filter than some we've seen and easily replaced when dirty. The fuel filter is just as easy to access and replace when needed. Maintenance, it seems, is something ECHO was careful to make very easy and hassle-free.Field Testing the CS-400 Chainsaw Starting the ECHO CS-400 is very easy. The i-30 starter system reduces the effort needed to start the chainsaw by around 30% - and it shows. Priming the bulb, engaging the choke and pulling the cord generally started the engine over after two quick pulls. With the choke off, one or two more pulls started the saw right up.ECHO gives users the ability to adjust the carburetor after you've gone through a couple of tanks of gas (we recommend Ethanol-free gasoline, due to the inherently sucky nature of typical Ethanol-laced low-grade fuel). ECHO merely recommends you use 89 octane or better gasoline. Adjustments to idle speed or the fuel mixture are accomplished simply by tweaking the low and high-speed needles. There is also an idle adjustment screw in the event that you need to change the idle speed of the chainsaw or stop the chain from beginning to rotate before the throttle trigger is depressed.Quiet RunningSpeaking of the throttle, the CS-400 idles at around 82dB SPL, not loud at all, really. But when you crank it up this baby puts out around 107dB SPL - loud enough to do some serious hearing damage over time. And that's before cutting into anything, which only makes the saw get louder. For that reason we recommend, strongly, the use of earplugs or other hearing protection if you're going to do any extended chainsawing.[amazon link asins='B071L4Z34XM,B003CJTW2,B07NZ5N9LG,B006UCCZSW,B07ZKT6VB6' template='ProductCarousel' store='protoorev-20' marketplace='US' link_id='59c086d7-dd10-4a06-acd7-de2f4e68d36b']Using the ECHO CS-400 ChainsawWe used the ECHO CS-400 18" Chainsaw on several neighborhood projects. Our favorite place to use tools is with Parker Street Ministries, an urban outreach not-for-profit organization here in Lakeland, Florida that ministers to people living in a particular depressed area of our town. The new facility they recently opened had a palm tree that had been felled just weeks before the chainsaw arrived.Of course, the remaining tree stump was sticking up quite a bit and needed to be tamed before we could bring in a stump grinder. It was the perfect first test for the virgin chainsaw. As anyone who has used chainsaws here in Florida knows, the palm tree is one of the most aggravating things to cut due to its density and the nature of its internal sappiness. Unlike harder woods that turn to sawdust with a nice blade, the palm tree ejects nasty pulp-like debris.Quartering a Palm Tree StumpWe started by quartering the stump vertically in preparation for plunge-cutting it and removing it in sections.With glee, we drove the saw down into the stump, and with gusto, it seemed to literally devour the material. In no time flat, we had the stump quartered and began the next phase.As we plunged the Echo into the wood, our resident chainsaw expert kept exclaiming that this was one of the best chainsaws he's ever used at this price level. It compared very favorably with his \$600 model he typically brought to use on tree trimming and disposal projects. We really appreciated the way the CS-400 ejected debris efficiently - even the gunky, nasty stuff of which palm trees are made. Looking at the photo above, you can see the Echo literally pour the guts of the palm tree stump out of the ejection port. Very impressive.Tearing Up Some DeckingAfter disposing of the stump, we wanted to do some more cutting. Grabbing a section of old decking that needed to be dismantled, we used the ECHO CS-400 to slice through the 5/4 decking and pressure-treated 2x4 lumber that made up the old cover for a basement entryway. The chainsaw went through the material like butter.While we tried not to intentionally hit any nails, we were all but certain we struck a few along the way, but the saw didn't really seem to mind and kickback wasn't nearly as much of a concern due to the sharp blade and the way the chainsaw powered through cuts. A lot of times, kickback occurs when you are cutting, for example, a log and the tip or the top edge of the saw comes in contact with another piece of material which then makes the saw jump or kickback when it starts cutting into the secondary material. The design of the Echo chain does a good job of minimizing this, while still providing an excellent cut.Smaller TreesWe next took out some smaller trees in another part of the property, giving us the opportunity to see how well the chainsaw handled more delicate tasks like removing 2-3" branches prior to felling a couple of ~16" diameter trees.The ECHO cut through the branches with ease and made quick work of the trunk of the tree itself, allowing us to cut quickly and accurately. Once the tree was down, we clear the stump nearly flush with the ground and repeated for several other trees.We used this chainsaw all over town. In fact, we sent it out of town on another ministry project with a local church. Feedback on that project was excellent and we were able to get the tool into the hands of another half-dozen users, ranging from experienced to novice. All had positive comments and none encountered any serious difficulties starting or using the chainsaw.Review ConclusionThere are certainly commercial products on the market that cater to users requiring durability, sustained heavy-duty use and an exceptional warranty and support system. ECHO seems to have achieved that in a package that costs a lot less than many similar products on the marketplace. While we can't speak to their long-term reliability (yet), our experience is that they are making some fantastic outdoor products that, while appealing to consumers, are surprisingly robust - enough to be used by professionals and the discerning homeowner or rancher. For Performance, our rating was a high 9/10. This is a saw that truly impressed us as well as the pros we let use it. For Value, it gets an easy 7/10 because, while it may be more expensive by the numbers, it's got features that back up the cost and a 5-year warranty that exceeds nearly all other manufacturers in the market.

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