



# Rabbit On The Roof Skis

*Passionate Artisanal Ski Craftsmanship From Paris*

By

Eric Edelstein & Jennifer Ankner-Edelstein

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**Rabbits.** Oh yes, the rabbits. Rabbits of many sizes, ages and colors suddenly appear from every hidden nook and cranny, out from under workbenches, machines and stocks of lumber, dashing to the center of Peter Steltzner's workshop as he opens the cellophane wrapper of some biscuit crackers and drops heads of beautiful French lettuce onto the floor. Deep in the "Bronx of Paris" (Montreuil, France) (pronounced "Mon-TRWOY"), previously known as a home to rap groups and some storied urban conditions over the years, a tiny woodworker's shop has become the cult-like source of some

favorite skis of some impressive skiers from around the World. Hand crafted in many different shapes, flexes and finishes, Peter's skis have been winning the hearts of competitive and recreational freeriders throughout Europe for several years. Meeting Peter for the first you are immediately taken in. Peter is intense about the topics he loves. His energy and enthusiasm draw you in so he seems as if he is someone you already know. Here is his story.

Nearly twenty years ago in 1989, Peter Steltzner moved from California USA to Paris. Why, you ask? As with so many, many men before him over the centuries, he fell in love with a French woman who drew him away to France where he has lived happily ever after. Learning the craft of French furniture making on his own, then later with old masters ("The Best" Peter says), he has built his shop, business and family in the outskirts of Paris. The resulting visits to the Alps stirred a renewed passion for skiing into this ex-pat Californian, who began to tinker with shaping and building his own skis. When he tells you the story about how he ended up in France, how he started working a little under the radar, or how he has ended up with three generations of rabbits living on his hand-outs – "I buy so much lettuce that the grocer



*Peter Steltzner in his shop*

*thought I was a vegetarian.”* - his agile features reveal a bit of a rule breaker - like the guy in highschool who skipped classes, but whose charm and exceptional work got him the magic “get-out-of-jail-free” card.



*The Rabbitmobile outside the shop*

guides to produce his current lineup of nearly eleven models - mostly freeride, but sprinkled with carving skis too for the piste enthusiasts.

Today, his little unmarked shop on a narrow city street in Montreuil is generating about thirty pairs of skis per year. Part workshop, part tinker's laboratory, Peter's shop looks like nearly any other woodworker's, with the exception of a hydraulic press weighing five tons (carried into his shop in sections by his faithful friends!), and some ski shape patterns stacked among segments of wood, carbon fibre, kevlar, ski bases and metal edges. One other thing... it's literally crawling with rabbits everywhere you look (more on this later).

At first glance, Rabbit On The Roof skis look like they are hand-carved from a single plank of wood, like some ancient Norwegian touring skis or maybe like the skis your grandfather had mounted over the fireplace in his hunting cabin. These are not glossy-topsheet, cartoon-color graphic skis. The topsheet body and predominant layers are ash or hickory finished in any number of combinations of bee's wax, stain or oil (although I personally think a



*Peter with his creations*

It is not Peter's impishness or enthusiasm that we are interested in. It is his skis. Littered along walls throughout his mechanic's shop turned into fine woodworking and ski atelier are test ski forms, bases, trial shapes for tails and tips, and beautiful, hand-built top sheets. These classic or “old” style tops hide a masterpiece of modern materials, flex and shaping. They look like a classic, but they are build like a new race car. Peter's rule breaker side is given free range as he plays with looks and performance tying together natural and synthetic materials to produce strong, graceful boards whose appearance pays homage to the antique skis shaped by our forefathers. Peter's designs have evolved from constant testing and comments from friends, competitive skiers and mountain

highly polished and lacquered “fine-furniture” option would be really, really cool too). Peter showed me a few pairs he beat with chains for that “old-and-antiqued” style, and they looked great. The hot-iron branding of the skis with the Rabbit On The Roof logo is a great touch, finishing the hand-hewn look nicely. Upon closer inspection and listening to Peter's descriptions, you quickly learn the old-style tops hide high-tech materials. After experimenting with many materials, Peter has more or less stabilized his construction to ash or hickory layered with triaxial fiberglass, kevlar and carbon. He typically does not use titanal or aluminum sheets in his skis, preferring the behavior of fiberglass, carbon and kevlar components with the wood.

Peter usually creates custom flexes to the customer's specifications using his standard patterns, rather than offering to customize the shapes. One look at the work that goes into the patterns and tooling to get a new shape, and you realize why he has settled on around a dozen geometries at most.

The variety of shapes is testimonial to the testing Peter and his fans have put in over the years. The enthusiasm of his skiers and competition-winning record of his skis shows he is definitely on to something.

His website has some great testimonials:



*Peter showing some different shapes*

*“I gave you an impossible task when I said I wanted both light skis for touring, and at the same time skis I could race with...You made them...Today we had the most kinds of snow I think we can have in La Grave except pure ice: Both packed and light powder, moguls, hard and transformed snow as well*

as everything in-between. Your skis were always fantastic. It was grip, stability and response....they were living....Most people have a dentist and a doctor, some have a pharmacist or a hairdresser. I have a carpenter that lives and works in Paris who happens to make the best skis in the World. I am extremely satisfied and proud". - Harald.

### The Skis:

- **Meije Master** is the stiff, charging “derby” ski built to custom specifications.
- **Dreamday widebody** (146x120x130 @198cm - €800-€1200) was used by Seb Meyer to win the telemark Derby del la Meije in 2006 and 2007 and is available in pure hickory or hickory with black walnut topsheet. It is a hard-charging ski for strong skiers.
- **Gaspard swallowtail** (130-120-110 @193cm - €800-€1200) has a more nimble geometry for more kinds of terrain and enjoys a hickory core with, ash or walnut topsheet and includes kevlar and P-Tex 4000 bases.
- **Norway “Norwegian Special”** (123-90-112 @ 184cm - €800-€1200) allows more security on the piste with a narrower geometry and is built from hickory, ash, kevlar and carbon for performance.
- **Berarde** (130-120-110 @193cm - €800-€1200) is the same shape as the Gaspard swallowtail. *Peter could tell you the differences if you ask...(the dimensions are from his website).*
- **Tignard** (125-100-114 @185cm - €800-€1200) also gets the swallowtail for maneuverability and a wide range of suitability for more types of terrain.
- **Silver Bullet** (108-70-91 @182cm - €800-€1200) is the GS-inspired carver with a heart of hickory finished with ash or walnut.
- **Cousin Bulgare** is the “mid-fat” (125-107-111 @182cm - €800-€1200) powder model with a wide range of terrain capabilities is built with a hickory core, kevlar, carbon fibre, finished with ash and P-Tex 4000 bases.



*The patterns are everywhere!*

- **Mountain Goat** is the smaller, all-mountain ski (118-84-97 @170cm or 177cm - €800-€1200) for lighter-weight skiers desiring a narrower geometry.
- **Miss Brevoort** is the smallest ski (100-80-90 @165cm or 170cm - €800-€1200) and suits the women looking for a frontside-to-all-mountain ride.
- **Pema** is the tiniest ski Peter makes at 150cm, and is for all-around use by those needing a small ski.

Generally, the fatter skis get the rounded tips, while the Norwegian and all mountain skis have the pointed tips. Peter's ability to adjust the "spatula" length and rise for floatability, combined with double radius pintails make the big skis buoyant, but maneuverable and skiable by more sizes of people in different lengths.

Of course, each of the skis can have the mix of triax fiberglass, kevlar, carbon you desire to get the responsiveness, strength, dampening and feel you want. You can get ash or walnut topsheets and your choice of finishing. Just ask!

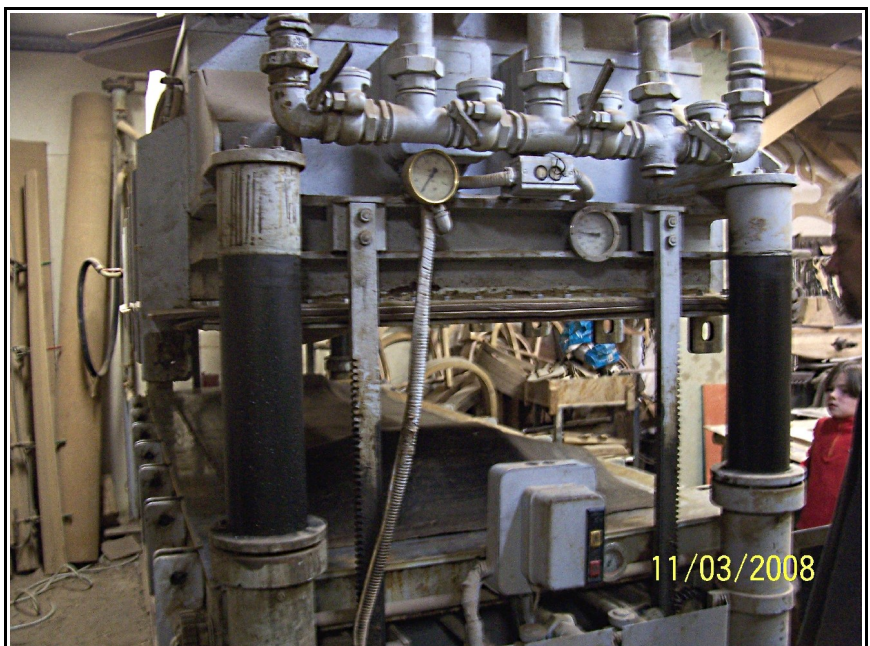
As I checked out the collection, including the prototypes, used skis, new skis and others, they all had remarkably individual flex patterns in the forebodies and tails. Each one has a different torsional strength along its curves, and a remarkably responsive and controlled feel. Some were engraved, carved or given a unique finishing treatment. Each ski had a superb build quality and left me wanting to try them all. The "retro" look has a great appeal, especially when mounted up with some modern Marker Dukes, Jesters or Dynafit bindings.

Since the current trend for freeride and big mountain skis seems to ignore any frontside or resort-oriented skiers, Rabbit On The Roof skis has a

refreshing offering of several narrow-waisted skis (Silver Bullet, Mountain Goat, Miss Brevoort) with geometries and flexes that are superb. We see a huge variety of skis here at ExoticSkis.com, and when you find something special, it stands out. It's great to see a freeride ski builder produce some carving tools in



*Peter's press weighs 5 tons. It's a beast and it works!*



*This is not a homemade press!*

addition to the backcountry big-snow models. There are all kinds of skiers out there, and for the resort skier who likes the groomed slopes and occasional off-piste runs, Peter's skis offer a customizable ride with world-class flex and geometry.

**Now, about those rabbits.....**we will let Peter explain:

*"...Well, yes, Rabbit on the roof... I live above my shop and a large part of the roof is inclined and protected in a natural way by the walls of my neighbors. A friend gave me a rabbit for my kids, and after eating a bit too much stuff in my house, he ended up there... Another friend came by one day and saw the sight, and pronounced with his charming French accent, "rabeet?, rabbeet on the roof?!" and the name stuck. Since then, many generations of rabbits have come and gone. Especially after another friend gave me a female and voilà! The first births happened between the roof and the sub insulation, so it started "raining rabbits". They look like small hairless pit bulls at that age, but move a lot and therefore fall. Now I have several in the shop too. I should train them to sand because they eat tonnes and only watch me work...!" - Peter Steltzner*

The philosophy and feel of Rabbit On The Roof can be best summed up by Peter's comments:

*"I'm Rabbit on the Roof, Peter Steltzner to most, and I'd love telling you a bit more about what I'm doing. I'm from California originally but have been living n France for twenty years, in Paris where I make furniture and do steam bent wood. I have an old crazy stream bending shop, some is from the turn of the*

*last century, and working with it I wanted to have a production I enjoyed, especially because Parisan life is stressful and far too far from the mountains. I thought of the beautiful old skis we so often see on the walls of our favorite mountain spots and thought to make a modern,competitive, performant ski with the same*



*Real Rabbits = Real Skis*



*The rabbits eat Peter out of house and home, but are pretty fun to have in the shop.*

*materials and look, and also because in wood bending we use the same woods (ash and hickory mainly) that skis have been made out of for centuries. I'm for progress but our forefathers were far from stupid and had an amazing capacity for evaluating our natural resources through time and experience... So I am humbly trying to render them justice by doing the same thing all while incorporating just the right amount of modern fiber and resin, p-tex race bases and edges to pull all the good out of their old knowledge while making a modern skis "way old school". So far thanks to Seb Meyer the skis have already won many freeride events, Derby de la Meije 2006, 2007 en equipe, etc; and a few high mountain guides who have them, so I am continuing to fulfill my passion for the mountain and for skiing."*

Peter has found his passion as a ski builder, and frankly, he would like to replace his furniture work with producing skis full-time. His designs are solid, diverse, high-performance and great looking. In an era where most of the skis you see on the rack of your friendly local ski shop are mass-produced by large factories, isn't it great to know there is a dedicated craftsman ready to offer you a hand-crafted ski with high-tech materials to your specifications for only a little bit more than the big-name brands? I will be saving my coins to buy a pair for me and my wife Jennifer. To be honest, I would rather give my money to Peter Stelzner than a corporate mega-company. Besides, Peter has to buy a boatload of lettuce every week to feed his rabbits.

We are stoked to try and get some runs on Peter's skis later this winter, so stay tuned for some on-snow reviews!



*Peter shows off his waterski-shaped fun project (yes they have edges)*

For more info, see Rabbit On The Roof at:

<http://www.RabbitOnTheRoof.com>

Telephone: +33 664348093

[rabbitontheroof@aol.com](mailto:rabbitontheroof@aol.com)

Some photos from our visit:



*Checking out the waterski-shape experimental skis (note the pintail)*



*Check out the profile thickness along the ski tip to tail...*





*Quiver sample from Rabbit On The Roof*



*More rabbits...*



*Peter's Paris delivery..a mobile....awesome handlebars.  
I would definitely buy skis from someone like this.*



*The pieces of Rabbit On The Roof Skis*



*Note the long taper on the forebody and the cool base graphics*



*Leaves and Snow Ghost engravings*



*Snow Ghost and buddies*



*Peter flexes a binding mount segment*



*Rabbit on the Roof Skis "Made Here"*



*Shapes for all kinds of terrain*





*Some examples of Peter's different topsheets and shapes.*



*Tip shapes as you want them....*



*Some tail designs (broken one happened in Chile, I think... "repairable" says Peter.  
(You can see the tail end of the binding mount segment above the split-tail)*



*Peter explains different inlay-overlays*

### **About ExoticSkis.com:**

ExoticSkis.com began around 2005 as a hobby project to create a list of all the ski companies besides the “big name” brands everyone sees at typical ski shops. We started learning more and more about dozens, and dozens of small and large ski companies most people never heard of. We started taking notes about them, monitoring their websites, ski blogs, ski forums, word-of-mouth, rumors and referrals by everyday ski enthusiasts. It has become addictive and fun. One day we got up the nerve to ask some companies if we could test their skis and report about our experiences at our little website. To our surprise, we got to demo some very interesting skis, and found many of them to be excellent.

Today, ExoticSkis.com lists more than two hundred companies from all over the World, and receives visitors from more than forty different nations each week. We host some of the only published on-snow reviews of some skis. We think it's the biggest list of its kind, and even if it isn't, we like it anyway.

We don't sell skis and we don't sell advertising to ski companies. ExoticSkis.com is a volunteer effort supported by a small group of contributors and enthusiasts who simply love different skis and the stories behind their designers and builders. We don't get paid by any ski companies to test or write about their products. Sometimes they give us skis so we can loan them out for widespread reviews all season long. Sometimes we have to buy the skis with our own money, but most of the time we have to return the demos to their owners after we review them. We don't even get discount lift tickets (bummer). We do, however, get to ski some really interesting skis, and that makes it all worth the effort! If you hear about any ski companies we don't have in our list, let us know so we can tell the world about them.

Cheers,  
Eric Edelstein