



Small & Independent Ski Brands: A Few Quick Impressions For 2012-2013 NEWSR / EWSRA Stratton Demo Days – February 2012 by ExoticSkis.com

Traditionally, only the major ski companies appeared at the NEWSR Demos Days, but the viability and persistence of the smaller, independent, innovative brands is changing the market so retailers and major brands alike are witnessing these agile, smaller ski companies appearing at influential industry events to pitch their brands. Each February in Vermont (USA), the **New England Winter Sports Representatives (NEWSR)** (<http://www.newsr.org>) and **Eastern Winter Sports Representatives (EWSRA)** (<http://www.ewsra.org/>) sponsors the **Stratton** Demo Days. This is typically the first opportunity for the major ski manufacturers to provide on-snow demos of the upcoming season's new skis to the retailers. Shop owners and hardgoods buyers from around the country descend upon Stratton, Vermont for three days to touch, smell, taste and test new skis in order to decide which brands and models to buy for the next season. NEWSR provides a unique

opportunity for sales reps, company executives and support staff to mix, mingle and even try each other's products (*under-the-radar...of course...*) over several days. The best part is talking about next year's equipment and marketing approaches with sales reps, retailers and manufacturers' VIPs and marketing staff over a few beers each night....Boots, softgoods and accessories are also part of the action at the Stratton Demo Days, but ExoticSkis.com will just focus on the smaller brands and innovative ski designs found at the event in February, 2012.

In the past, the ski industry was dominated by essentially 10 or 12 major brands such as Atomic, Rossignol, Dynastar, Elan, Fischer, K2, Elan, Salomon, Volkl, Head, Nordica and others. Annual industry buying cycles involved retailers visiting Las Vegas or ISPO to attend expositions where the manufacturers show off next year's models and pricing/payment term structures to hopeful retailers who begin negotiations about buying products for the next ski season. The first chance for these hopeful retailers to actually get on snow to test these skis in the U.S.A. is typically the NEWSR Stratton Demo Days in February.

The first production runs of new skis are boxed up from the factories and shipped to the



distributors and reps who mount and tune the skis (sometimes late at night before the event...the timing can be that critically close...FedEx and UPS trucks are full of skis heading for Vermont a day or two before the event) for Stratton, where they typically touch snow for the first time. Even for those who have been in the business for decades, the chance to get the first on-snow rides on these crisp, brand-new, fresh-out-of-the-wrapper skis for

next year is like a trip to Disneyland, with oldtimers and newbies alike showing a near-giddy anticipation at getting their hands on the new models. The event is for industry-members only, so the public is not allowed to participate, although the civilians looking-on at the circus-like atmosphere gawk in awe at the sheer number of tents and demo setups occupying the entire acreage of the base area of the resort. Hundreds of manufacturer's reps and hundreds of brands

fill the resort for the event.

2012 saw several smaller companies appearing at the NEWSR Demo Days:

- Goode
- Klint
- Lib-Tech
- Liberty
- Line (ok, ok, Line is a K2 company with production in the thousands, but it's a lesser-known brand in the opinion of many retailers)
- Surface
- Scott
- Faction
- Icelantic

We didn't get time on the Faction or Scott skis, and we had [previously tested](#) Icelantic's Nomad and Shaman skis in France a couple seasons ago, but below are some quickie "first-impressions" of the other smaller brands we tested briefly. Be aware the conditions during the two days we attended the event were hardpacked groomers only...no real 3D snow to speak of other than some boot-deep snow at the very edges of the trails..so the quickie impressions are incomplete at best, but probably contain some observations important to skiers considering these skis.

Some of these reviews are available at <http://www.ExoticSkis.com> and are reproduced here as a convenient package summarizing what we found at the NEWSR event in February 2012.

GOODE:



Sample of the new Goode Lineup

2012-13 Goode Fire (quick impression)

\$1,190 MSRP (website)

Length Tested: 177

**Dimensions/Turn Radius: 135-98-125 /
18.5m**

Camber: conventional w/slight rocker (mild)

Binding: Demo

Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120

Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

No fiberglass, no metal. Dry carbon layup.

The guys at the Goode tent said their models (now made in Utah) are aimed at the 30-60 year old market (roughly), so they should be easy to ski and full of performance. I had not skied any previous versions of Goode's skis, only read others' reports, so this was my virgin Goode experience...expecting to feel some high-tech tension and power, with intense grip and perhaps some carbon-nervousness, I found something completely different. The Fire 98 was a perfectly

pleasant and capable all-mountain ski with easy turn initiation, fairly decent, but not intense grip, slightly understated rebound response with no real snap or authority...just a friendly, stable, predictable ride in both short and longer-radius turns. I kept expecting more out of the ski, but what I kept getting was Casper Milktoast. The immediate thought came to mind of a semi-retired, advanced intermediate guy with a timeshare out west as the ideal customer. Maybe this is what they are shooting for, and if so, they hit it right on. If they are looking to please an enthusiast with any hopes of athletic performance, I think they undershot the target. There was absolutely nothing wrong with the ski. It is balanced, predictable, reliable and perfectly pleasant. It handles nicely at slow and higher speeds. It just lacks the zing I was expecting from high-tech carbon fiber masters like Goode. When asked about the core materials, the Reps said "wood". If it was anything special, they would have mentioned it I think.

I had serious contrasts and disagreement with Ski and Skiing magazine reviews since I did not find any remarkable quickness, rebound, "torching corduroy" or similar high-performance behaviors in the pair of Goode Fire skis I tried on hardpack in February 2012. I only spent a few runs on these skis, so maybe I need more time to understand them...but they did not impress me.

Ski Magazine, (October 2012) which claimed " ...*Tough crowd, critical category, and the Fire holds its own nicely (so close to moving up another three spots in the rankings). The new wood-core Goodes, still built within easy commuting distance of Snowbird, have more guts than their predecessors, and that makes all the difference. But they're still defined by lightweight finesse and pop. The Fire was No. 1 in Quickness, No. 2 (tied) in Rebound. It's spirited but never nervous (No. 1 in Forgiveness). "Sporty and snappy."*

Skiing Magazine, (October 2012) which claimed: "*The Fire absolutely torches corduroy yet doesn't require aggressive technique to do so. Its light carbon construction allows you to "relax on this ski and still go effing fast," according to one tester. Tip rocker helps with off-piste performance, but the Fire prefers to carve down the fall line rather than slide. It's a great all-mountain tool with a traditional feel perfect for race-bred folks. "*



Example of Goode's 2012-1013 tip cap assembly. (Fire model shown here)

Conclusion:

Perfectly pleasant, if not slightly underwhelming performance in an easy-handling, predictable chassis with a wide range of versatility. Wake me when its over. Maybe I just got a bad pair?

Pros:

Ideal for the semi-retired skier looking for a one-ski western-waisted ride who doesn't like surprises and values reliable handling in all conditions without a great deal of effort.

Cons:

Expensive performance / price ratio. Bland looking graphics.



Goode Fire (second and third skis from left) and Goode Plunge (3 skis on the right)

GOODE:

2012-13 Goode Plunge (quick impression)

\$1,000 MSRP (website)

Length Tested: 178

Dimensions/Turn Radius: 120-74-104 / 15.8m

Camber: conventional

Binding: Demo

Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120

Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

No fiberglass, no metal. Slight tip rocker. Dry carbon layup.

After the lackluster performance of the 98mm waisted "Fire", I was psyched to get the "Plunge" with its 74mm waist and full conventional camber onto the excellent carving surfaces at the show. I was hoping to feel some of the snap and zing I had read about from reviews of previous carbon composite Goode carving skis in years past. Again, I found lackluster performance no matter how I skied this model. It held its grip fairly well, but nothing exceptional. It was fairly responsive, but not impressive. It actually slipped a bit on the boilerplate, even with a good technique. This being the first real on-snow demo show of the season, the skis were pristine and in good tune (I checked), so it was not the tune. There was no real feeling of power in the Plunge, as it took direction from the skier perfectly fine, but never returned any real reward. It was predictable and fairly stable and quiet for a 74mm waisted carver, but it did not inspire confidence at speeds on hard surfaces. It behaved nicely and made nice turn shapes on the softer surfaces, but I felt it had been "neutered" and lacked the spunk I was expecting. Maybe I expected too much, or the change of design and revamp of the Goode ski lineup last year resulted in a mild-mannered product. In any case, I came away dissatisfied, and I really had gone into the runs with hopes of liking the carbon composite Goode skis.

Conclusion:

Same as the Fire reviewed above. Perfectly pleasant, if not underwhelming performance.. Wake me when its over. Maybe I just got a bad pair?

Pros:

Can't really think of any real positive notes about this ski, especially for \$1000.

Cons:

Expensive performance / price ratio. Bland looking graphics.

KLINT:



2012-2013 KLINT Krypto Lite (quick impression)

137-114-130 @187cm

r=(variable radius sidecut of 24m, 43m and 48m according to spec sheet)

Manufacturer Info:

KLINT
205 16th Street,
San Diego - CA 92101 USA
Ph: 619-876-5060
Fx: 619-798-3547
<http://www.klintsnow.com>

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$850 usd

Usage Class:

Big Mountain Freeride

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"->10="I have to own a pair")

8+

Summary:

[Not tested in bumps, soft or variable snow, so this test is incomplete.] The KLINT Krypto Lite is a versatile, big-mountain/backcountry ski with a wide range of excellent performance, and very light handling. It has a perceptible upper speed limit, being relatively soft, but handles its speed limit smoothly without any nervousness. Significantly impressive hard-surface grip for a soft ski this size. Extremely fun feel and quite responsive. Hard-chargers should look at the new Krypto Lite Ti (two layers of Titanal to beef it up). Excellent build quality.



Technical Ski Data:

Rockered tip and tail, traditionally cambered underfoot, vertical laminate birch hardwood core , fiberglass, UHMW sintered base, slanted ABS sidewalls. This model incorporates their "Reflection Applied Concept" which means they proportionally scale the geometry of the ski for each length, so the tip, waist and tail dimensions vary between sizes to produce the same relative personality traits among the different length skis. Manufactured by one of the most experienced ski facilities in the World.



Pre-Skiing Impression:

Top-shelf fit, finish and materials, soft response to hand flexing. moderate torsional rigidity. Clean looking graphics with a touch of "Nascar". Lightweight, thin profile. The hardwood core should provide a very long lifespan for this ski.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. I hope to get back out on this ski on steeper and softer terrain.



Test Results:

I did not ski the Krypto Lite in "big-mountain" conditions, so I can't talk about its handling in crud, fluff or bumps. Hopefully we can get out on the Krypto Lite in softer snow this season and see how it behaves in more diverse kinds of snow. The initial feel of the Krypto Lite was indeed "light", and was impressively easy to handle for a ski its size. The thin vertical profile of the hardwood core allows this ski to handle shorter and easier than it

measures. Swingweight is minimal. The Krypto Lite gripped along the boilerplate and hardpack without any complaints or insecurity, and was completely predictable, always give a bite when needed without any washouts or drift common to so many rockered big mountain skis in the 114mm waist category. While I did not expect any GS-like turns from this model, it actually cruised along on edge really well at speed with excellent dampening and no vibration. Since it is intended as a lightweight backcountry model, it had a bit of tip flap at speed, but it was mostly cosmetic and did not affect the integrity of grip along the engaged effective edge.



What struck me most about the Krypto Lite was the ease of directional changes, either when pressured and bent, or decambered and drifted across surfaces. This is a ski I want to get into tight trees with powder. While some skis this easy and light feeling are floppy, relatively insecure on hard surfaces or faster speeds, the Krypto Lite had a very precise feel to it, and was completely at home cutting back and forth on the groomers with very little effort. It wasn't "poppy", but had a "zoom" to it if you loaded it up and let it rebound. It may be a bit soft for tough crud cutting, but

skiers would probably pick the beefed-up "Ti" version for high-pressure crud busting anyway. The Krypto Lite is intended to be a lightweight backcountry ski, and I think they found a formula that really works well for those who may also need to access lifts over groomers. They made it light, responsive, well balanced and still grippy on hard surfaces. This ski could be a great introduction for skiers looking for their first rockered pow ski and aren't ready for the regular Krypto's larger dimensions. I think the "Ti" version with two sheets of Titanal might be very interesting....

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

An agile, fun and easy-handling bird dog with great discipline and manners you can run all day, no matter what the weather.

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Perhaps just a bit stronger flex in the mid and tail to sustain higher speeds, but it would sacrifice it's silky-easy handling. Maybe it's perfect as-is for its intended market.

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a great example of the new generation rockered big-mountain or backcountry ski having really nice grip on hard surfaces and a remarkably light feel.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

Look to the double-layer Titanal "Krypto Lite Ti" model if you want a hard-charger or high-speed machine. Buy it longer than you think you normally would. This is more of a finesse ski than a plank ski.

KLINT:



2012-2013 KLINT Karver (quick impression)

127-72-110 @172cm r=14m

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$890 usd

Usage Class:

Frontside Carving

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"-> 10="I have to own a pair")

10

Summary:

The KLINT Karver is a superb example of a modern frontside carver with a bias toward race-like performance rather than recreational cruising. The Karver has an impressive command of edge-to-edge transitions on hard surfaces and rewards athletic input with a thrilling ride, but can be skied more casually than most carvers with this level of performance. The Karver holds lines and changes directions precisely and with complete control, even at higher

speeds without any nervousness or "darty" behavior. It dampens vibrations very well while maintaining a very light feel underfoot. This is not a damp race plank, but a technical, precision carving tool with a wide range of friendly behavior. This ski could advance an intermediate-level frontside groomer enthusiast to upper-level carving skills without demanding Herculean input, and make ex-racer types grin ear-to-ear as their daily frontside ski. The Karver should be considered

one of the standards by which narrow-waisted frontside carving skis should be measured. Excellent ride with high-quality construction.

Technical Ski Data:

Vertical laminate birch hardwood core, dual-layer Titanal sandwich construction, UHMW sintered base, stainless steel tail protector. This pair was fitted with Tyrolia SP130 demo bindings, no raceplate. This model incorporates their "Reflection Applied Concept" which means they proportionally scale the geometry of the ski for each length, so the tip, waist and tail dimensions vary between sizes to produce the same relative personality traits among the different length skis. Manufactured by one of the most experienced ski facilities in the World.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Top-shelf fit, finish and materials, strong, snappy rebound response to hand flexing. Strong torsional rigidity, thin vertical profile, lighter weight than expected. "Industrial" look with it's brushed-metal topsheet appearance. "Businesslike" look and feel. Modern frontside carver shape without excessively large shovel and tail widths (less radical than some carvers). The hardwood core should provide a very long lifespan for this ski.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. I hope to get back out on this ski on steeper terrain.

Test Results:

The KLINT Karver grabbed my attention at the very first turn. The next few turns immediately made me grin as I picked up speed and began to bang out directional changes while picking up speed. The light weight and narrow waist, combined with a 127mm tip allowed the ski to shift edges and pull itself into turns with very little effort. While some skis want you to roll them over and pressure them into the next turn, the



Karver pulls you into the next compressed arc when you tip onto new edges. This means you get excellent turn initiation with very few calories required per turn.

Once the Karver gets into its sweet spot radius, it is happy to hold itself there, or you can tighten or loosen the arc smoothly as needed without any loss of confidence or security. Some carving skis like to ride in their design radius, but get balky if you try to tighten it up, but the Karver is happy to adjust turn shape on command without any change in grip underfoot. That's a good thing. The Karver has no hint of nervousness or darty behavior, thanks to two layers of Titanal (one below and one above the birch core), yet has none of the "metal battleship" feel of some race skis or carving skis trying to achieve the same performance. The Karver also has a remarkably wide range of speed, allowing you to ride it slow and gentle, weaving back and forth without effort, or turn it up to race-pace and drag your hip across the hill with race-like acceleration on demand. Conditions for this test were excellent for carving skis, with a mix of real ice, eastern boilerplate, packed powder and granular snow, and the Karver's behavior was quiet, confident and agile on everything I could find. While there was no thick snow available to test the handling of these skis, I will assume they will behave like a 72mm waisted ski. Hopefully we can get out on the Karvers in softer snow this season and see how they behave off their hardpack home surface.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A high performance club-racer Porche for civilians. My favorite quote from PhilPug at EpicSki.com describes this ski perfectly: "This ski is like a drug."

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Nothing at all, but maybe dress up the graphics a tiny bit with a piece of discrete and bolder color, but the industrial grey look grows on you.

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a superb example of what a modern frontside carving ski should be. Race-like grip and powerful response with razor-quick reflexes in a well-controlled, lightweight chassis. Not for soft snow.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

Expect to hone your carving skills with this ski. Don't expect to have any fun in soft snow. This is a ski designed for excellent hardpack carving without needing to be an olympian athlete.

KLINT:



2012-2013 KLINT Karver II

(quick impression)

119-73-105 @167cm r=15m

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$490 usd

Usage Class:

Frontside Intermediate to
Advanced Carving

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"-
>10="I have to own a pair")

9-10 for its intended audience

Summary:

[Not tested in bumps, soft or variable snow, so this test is incomplete.] The KLINT Karver II is intended for intermediate to advanced intermediate frontside carving and exceeds its intended performance envelope really well. A true high-end carving geometry softened enough for lightweight skiers or intermediates looking to up their game on the groomers,

while keeping experts happy at less than mach 9 speeds. Excellent build quality. Great price-to-performance value.

Technical Ski Data:

Traditionally cambered, vertical laminate birch hardwood core , fiberglass, UHMW sintered base, slanted ABS sidewalls. Manufactured by one of the most experienced ski facilities in the World.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Top-shelf fit, finish and materials, moderate response to hand flexing, snappy feel. very good torsional rigidity. Clean looking graphics. Lightweight, thin profile. The hardwood core should provide a very long lifespan for this ski.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. I hope to get back out on this ski on steeper and softer terrain.

Test Results:

According to the catalog, the Karver II is intended for "...the progressive skier looking to cruise and make longer radius turns". I skied this model in a relatively short 167cm slalom-sized version for my size, and immediately found it to be really turny and instantly responsive like a slalom carver in my first few turns across the boilerplate and hardpack. Turning up the speed a notch found it to hold a really nice shape across different surfaces with a degree of communication underfoot that would embarrass more expensive skis. The Karver II seemed to be a slalom carver that held GS-like turns really, really well. I found myself grinning more and more every turn I made with it. I tried to believe this was a mid-range ski, but everything I did with the ski (short choppy turns, skids, GS turns, SL turns, changed-radii turns, jams, etc.) seemed to indicate it is a top-shelf ski at a bargain price. The snappy response and grip underfoot was well above its intended category and put plenty of higher-end skis to shame. The short size I was on definitely got a bit nervous with my nearly 6-foot frame

at higher speeds, but the Karver II had a nicely balanced degree of dampening and response that never made me cautious or hesitant. I was blown away by the way this ski could grip and carve at low or high pressures and keep its integrity and directional prowess. The demo pair I tried had a bit of grabby tune in the forebody, so I had to adjust my feel a bit, but it had remarkable authority on hardpack, with a really fun turn shape I would recommend to anyone. In short, this ski performs way above its station and should definitely be on someone's demo list.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A hot-rod in sheep's clothing. A pocket rocket.



Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Perhaps just a little bit of VDS dampening or kevlar to add a touch more dampening.

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a state-of-the-art carving tool at a bargain-basement price, as long as you don't expect a race-ski's dampness at higher speeds.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

Buy a spare pair at this price and keep them for another season.

KLINT:



2012-2013 KLINT Fringe (quick impression)

130-86-114 173cm r=18m

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$690 usd

Usage Class:

All Mountain

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"-> 10="I have to own a pair")

8

Summary:

[Not tested in bumps, soft or variable snow, so this test is incomplete.] The KLINT Fringe is a strong all-mountain design with a bias toward higher-speed turns on groomed surfaces. Sort of a detuned GS ski with all-mountain manners, but retaining its firm personality. The Fringe likes to get up to cruising speed first, then it kicks-in with impressive grip (especially from the center body to the

tail) and top-shelf, quiet, controlled ride. Rewards a technical skier's touch and athletic drive with above-normal power and confident grip without being too burly. Prefers medium-to-larger radius turns. Feels like it would cut through crud without deflecting from its line. More impressive the faster you ski it. A high-quality, strong cruiser with lots of confidence and composure underfoot. I

agree with George Couperthwait who thinks the Fringe is a classic Eastern U.S. cruiser. Excellent ride with high-quality construction.

Technical Ski Data:

Traditionally cambered, vertical laminate birch hardwood core, fiberglass, UHMW sintered base, slanted sidewalls. This model incorporates their "Reflection Applied Concept" which means they proportionally scale the geometry of the ski for each length, so the tip, waist and tail dimensions vary between sizes to produce the same relative personality traits among the different length skis. Manufactured by one of the most experienced ski facilities in the World.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Top-shelf fit, finish and materials, strong, but not snappy rebound response to hand flexing. Strong torsional rigidity, strong feel, a substantial ski. Slightly retro look (reminds me of a Chevy Camaro), but clean looking. Conservative geometry, moderate camber. The hardwood core should provide a very long lifespan for this ski.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. I hope to get back out on this ski on steeper terrain.

Test Results:

The KLINT Fringe immediately gave me the impression of a classic, detuned GS ski, but with more all-purpose personality in a chassis undeniably biased toward moderate to higher cruising speeds. It felt very "classic" in a way, but not outdated. It cut across my test patches of boilerplate and hardpack with authority and confidence, rewarding me more if I skied it with some gusto and athletic inputs. This ski reminds me of a ski ex-racers-turned-instructors might like, or for those who like outrunning ski patrols early in the morning. Definitely a sporty, precision cruiser with no hint of fluffy behavior. I came away feeling the Fringe would not be a ski for the terminal intermediate, but for a strong or heavier advanced intermediate looking to up their game. KLINT touts the Fringe as a versatile, all-mountain ski, even for "...the adventurer who hasn't mastered the whole mountain." I think the Fringe might be a bit strong for someone who has not mastered the whole mountain, unless you want a ski to challenge your skills a bit in unfamiliar territory. I did not ski the



Fringe in "all-mountain" conditions, so I can't talk about its handling in crud, fluff or bumps. Hopefully we can get out on the Fringe in softer snow this season and see how it behaves in "all mountain" conditions with crud, bumps, fluff and sluff.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A classic hot-rod car (not state-of-the-art handling or design, but really effective in its element). A well-executed, clean, classic design that never goes out of style and can make lots of enthusiasts happy.

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Perhaps make its geometry a little more curvy and modern as a frontside all-around ski, and perhaps soften it slightly to make it appeal to a wider audience. Keep the GS-carving feel for those who feel the White Noise model is somewhat too soft for their rowdier style or heavier weight.

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a classic frontside design with excellent grip at speed, but more for higher-speed cruising than ricochet-rabbit turn-turn-turn styles. Best if you are athletic or a heavier skier. Excellent arcs at speed. Classic-looking graphics.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

Definitely try this ski if you higher-speed cruising all over the mountain and want a frontside bias since it's only 86mm underfoot. More GS than SL turn shape.

KLINT:



**2012-2013 KLINT White Noise
(quick impression)**

129-88-111 @175cm

r=(variable radius sidecut according to spec sheet, but roughly avg 18.5m according to [PhysicsMan's radius calculator](#). feels shorter than 18.5m)

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$750 usd

Usage Class:

Rockered All Mountain

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"->10="I have to own a pair")

9-10

Summary:

[Not tested in bumps, soft or variable snow, so this test is incomplete.] The KLINT White Noise is a state-of-the-art, rockered all-mountain ski with a remarkable range of performance which handles quicker and more responsively than most other skis in the popular 88mm waist category. Lightweight, grippy and sporty with a huge fun factor in an easy-to-ride, very well controlled chassis. Not for GS+ speeds, but a really, really fun ride. The White Noise should be considered a reference point for new "all-mountain" designs for the majority of skiers out there who don't consider themselves better than everyone else. Nice work, and good looking.



Technical Ski Data:

Rockered tip and tail, traditionally cambered underfoot, vertical laminate birch hardwood core , fiberglass, UHMW sintered base, slanted ABS sidewalls. This model incorporates their "Reflection Applied Concept" which means they proportionally scale the geometry of the ski for each length, so the tip, waist and tail dimensions vary between sizes to produce the same relative personality traits among the different length skis. Manufactured by one of the most experienced ski facilities in the World.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Top-shelf fit, finish and materials, somewhat soft-feeling, sporty but not burly rebound response to hand flexing. good torsional rigidity, but compliant along its length. Clean looking graphics. Somewhat unconventional, but interesting forebody core vertical taper leading to rockered tip (see pics). Lightweight, thin profile. The hardwood core should provide a very long lifespan for this ski.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. I hope to get back out on this ski on steeper terrain.

Test Results:

I did not ski the White Noise in "all-mountain" conditions, so I can't talk about its handling in crud, fluff or bumps. Hopefully we can get out on the White Noise in softer snow this season and see how it behaves in more diverse kinds of snow. The White Noise is the rockered, high-performance all-mountain model, new for 2012-2013. My initial impression skating to the lift was "wow, this is a light ski." Usually, it takes several series of turns to get a feel for a ski's initial behavior, but



the White Noise gave me an instant grin on the first turn as I tipped it on edge slightly and felt it feed itself right into a nice arc, going exactly where I aimed. I quickly changed direction again, putting a little more downward, forward force, and bingo, it snapped to attention, gripped and zinged over to the new position. The White Noise almost had an eager feel to it, but really well behaved, predictable and really fun. I banged out some small, short radius turns right on top of them, and they gripped, and bang...went exactly where they were supposed to go, ready for the next direction change. I brought them up to moderate speed, laid them over and pressed them into a cruising, GS-like turn across the boilerplate in the center of the hill toward the softer surface at the trail's edge, they gripped with a solid, fun feel and then took a smooth, authoritative change of direction banking against the softer snow on the side of the trail and I loaded the tails, and zing...nice acceleration off the snow into the next turn. No vibration, no fuss, no resistance to anything, just a sporty feel with very little effort required to get any change of turn shape, chop-turn to scrub speed, sideslip at speed, carve, pop, slice, dice or cruise. What impressed me was the ability of the White Noise to grip hardpack and boilerplate so securely as a rockered ski. Edge-to-edge response was essentially effortless and very accurate. Response of the ski along its entire length was smooth and very well balanced (a difficult thing to do in some rockered skis). It has better security and bite underfoot than many conventionally-cambered skis. This pair was 175cm, so they were a bit short for my nearly 6 foot size and 180lb weight at any speeds above moderate since they have a significant rocker fore and aft, creating a short running length. When I brought them up to GS speeds, they handled just fine, but lacked the running length I wanted underfoot. The 182cm size would be more what I would need in this ski...so buy them longer than you think. The White Noise immediately had me looking to jump into the junk along the very edge of the trails to find odd surface types, off-cambers and odd consistency snow. They were as friendly as you could want, without any hint of fluffy behavior or wimpy support. You can drift along with a lazy style and have a great time, or punch them down and jack-rabbit your way in a new direction with very little input. The White Noise is an excellent "high-performance recreational" design, well

executed. I really liked this ski in a big way and was more impressed by it than many of the other skis in this crowded category I have tried.

While the White Noise has almost the same dimensions as Klint's "Fringe (130-86-114 173cm r=18m), the personalities could not be more different. The Fringe is a cruising carver for medium to higher speeds, while the White Noise is more surfy, turny, lighter and quicker edge to edge ski. It is not a hard-charger or for burly, hard-core skiers, but is an ideal ski for the wide variety of



intermediate, advance intermediate and expert skiers looking for a 80-90cm waisted ski for all over the hill. I immediately thought this would be a ski for nearly anyone, and its level of performance and fun-factor should make other builders take serious notice. The more I skied it, the more I wanted to keep it and get other people on it and watch their reactions.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A really eager, always ready, do-anything-with-you buddy with an infectious laugh everybody likes the first few minutes they spend with him/her.

Innovative cross-section thickness profile and rocker of the 2012-2013 Klint White Noise

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

I would not change anything in this design. It works perfectly. I would perhaps add a "hopped-up" version with one sheet of metal and some carbon fiber in it for heavier skiers or people looking for more rowdy support or charging behavior.

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is probably one of the best all-mountain skis with modern, rockered camber design you can find in the mid-upper 80mm waist range. Light and very responsive. Nearly zero-calories per turn, but excellent grip and performance. Fun, easy, beautifully balanced and high-performance are the words to describe it.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

Look to another model if you want a hard-charger or high-speed machine. Put the White Noise on your "must demo" list if you want a mid-upper 80mm waisted all mountain design. Buy it longer than you think you normally would.

LIB-TECH:



Four skis from right to left ..Lib-Tech Backwards NAS, Wreckreate, Fully Functional Five and Tranny,

2012-13 Lib-Tech Wreckreate (quick impression)

\$599MSRP (website)

Length Tested: 179

Dimensions/Turn Radius: 139-97-126

Camber: early rise, cambered

Binding: Demo

Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120

Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

Magnetraction wavy-sidewall

Having [tested](#) one of the original Lib-Tech NAS (Narrow Ass Snowboards) with the distinctive Magne-traction wavy-sidewall design back in 2008, I was interested to see the evolution of the design for 2012-2013. The Wreckreate model is for all-terrain usage...according to Lib-Tech:

"Rocker entry reCURVE Magne-Traction all terrain quiver killer shape that carves the hardpack, tears the ice, enjoys the park, moguls, groomers, pipe and powder. "

Having an aspen core with layers of triax fiberglass, the Wreckreate should have been lively and zingy...and my brief couple runs revealed it was playful,

damp and easy to ski, and really responded well once it sunk its sidewalls into any 3D surface depth, but I was sorely disappointed with the hardpack grip, especially after coming off some wider skis such as the Liberty Helix, Double Helix, Klint Krypto and others. The Lib-Tech Wreckreate was tuned just fine, but really lacked the bite I had expected, especially with the Magnetraction feature which we previously found to be nicely grippy on the eastern hardpack surfaces. Maybe the skis were base-high, but they did not feel like it, failing to show any drift or wandery behavior...they just did not bite well in short or long radius turns at any speed. Definitely fun and quick and built to withstand season after season of hard use (our park and pipe NAS model survived many seasons of harsh use without losing any strength or pop).

Conclusion:

A fun, easy ski with a good shape for handling nearly any terrain, but this demo pair did not inspire confidence on the hardpack the way it should...it deserves another chance after a trip back to the tuning gurus perhaps....

Pros:

Quick, light, fun, wide range of performance. Sturdy

Cons:

This pair, although appearing feeling to the touch to be tuned well, just did not have the grip on hard surfaces they should have, compared to even wider skis tested the same day.



Close-up of Lib-Tech's wavy Magnetraxion edge profile shaping



LIB-TECH:

2012-13 Lib-Tech Magic Horsepower NAS (quick impression)

- \$899 MSRP (website)**
- Length Tested: 178**
- Dimensions/Turn Radius: 137-100-123**
- Camber: early rise, cambered**
- Binding: Demo**
- Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120**
- Mount point: Suggested (boot center)**
- Magnetraxion wavy-sidewall**

I rode the Magic Horsepower NAS right after the Wreckreate model, and was immediately sold on the upgrade to the "Columbian Gold Eco" core (whatever that means) and basalt fibre (instead of the triax fiberglass in the Wreckreate model) after the first two turns. Even though the Magic Horsepower NAS was slightly wider underfoot than the Wreckreate,

the degree of pop, power, performance and fun-factor was upped waaay up. No fooling around, Lib-Tech's upgrades in the Magic Horsepower NAS are the real deal.

The Magic Horsepower was impressively more lively, responsive, powerful, sensitive and just plain fun to ski. It's hardpack grip was somewhat better than the Wreckreate, but again it was not up to par with other skis in the 100mm waisted category tested over the two days we were at the event.

Conclusion:

A really fun ski with plenty of pop, zing and responsive fun, making it feel lively and lighter than you might imagine.

Pros:

Zingy personality and control, with nimble personality and steady vibration control. Sturdy.

Cons:

Somewhat pricey, and the hardpack grip somewhat less than other skis in its category, but could have been a tuning issue.



SURFACE:



2012-13 Double-Time (quick impression)

\$499 MSRP (website)

Length Tested: 180

Dimensions/Turn Radius: 124-90-118/17.3m

Camber: Cambered

Binding: Demo

Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120

Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

The Surface Double-Time was surprisingly nimble, zippy and responsive, and definitely quick and punchy,, feeling right at home as a frontside tool for directional changes. I ended up moving the mount point back 1cm to get the best handling since I was not in the park. Because of its responsiveness, it felt shorter than its 180cm. While it was happy and playful zinging back and forth and popping off any bumps it could find, it had an unmistakable nervousness at high speeds, but then again, the Double-Time is not for

high speed GS cruising. The maple-poplar core, combined with carbon stringers makes the DT lively and really fun, but don't get in over your head at high speeds or you will feel somewhat unglued. The 2.5mm full-wrap edges look sturdy, and the ski was well balanced. Bases are extruded to keep costs low. Vibrations on the hardpack were controlled nicely due to urethane layers underfoot.

There is a very slight rise to the tip and tail, making directional changes easy, but it also contributes to the shorter-than-it-measures handling traits at speed on hard surfaces. The good news is you can find these on sale at nearly all times during the year for around \$350-\$375, so you can afford to beat them and get an extra pair if you destroy them. I think these could be a really fun and affordable ski for the teen crowd or someone looking for an inexpensive and fun frontside ski,



especially with such a low replacement cost if they get abused. Not a racy-feel, but focused on fun and easy handling.

SURFACE:



2012-13 Live Life (quick impression)

\$599 MSRP (website)

Length Tested: 181

Dimensions/Turn Radius: 146-110-130/22m

Camber: Rocker-Cambered-Rocker

Binding: Demo

Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120

Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

The 2012-2013 Surface Double-Time features a maple-poplar core, 2.5mm full-wrap edges and a pretty attractive graphic topsheet. Since the testing days had no powder, I was stuck with groomers and whatever 3D sno I could find off-trail (hardy any). The first impression I got was the extremely light weight of these skis. Very low swingweight and feathery. They had a fair amount of rocker up front, so they felt pretty surfy, and definitely wanted deep snow. Soft, Soft Soft kept coming to mind throughout each run I took on them.

A few years ago, a ski this wide would not be expected to hold hardpack carving movements, but with the new generation of 110mm+ skis actually carving hardpack nicely, the slippery feel of the Surface Live Life with mild camber underfoot was not really acceptable.

It never felt secure on hardpack, but I got the feeling it would be slick and easy in powder and probably a lot of fun in trees. Higher speeds produced a pronounced tip flap which could unsettle the already-loose feeling edgehold. It felt like the Live Life's were out of their element in the East coast frontside environment, and since they are a powder ski, they should be expected to be somewhat lacking on the frontside, but with skis from DPS, Praxis, ON3P, ROMP, Liberty and others gripping hardpack impressively at these dimensions, there is no real



excuse to be as slick as the Live Life felt. The saving grace of the Live Life is the retail price, which at \$599 is not that cheap, but sales on the Internet show pricing at sub \$400, which is great for a surfy ski like this. More reviews can be found at [TGR](#).

LIBERTY:



2012-13 Variant (quick impression)

\$599 MSRP (website)
Length Tested: 181
Dimensions/Turn Radius: 145-113-132mm, 186cm R=26m
Camber: Rocker-Cambered-Rocker
Binding: Demo
Boot: Lange Comp Pro 120
Mount point: Suggested (boot center)

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):
\$839 usd

Usage Class:

High-performance Freeride

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"->10="I have to own a pair")

9

Summary:

[Warning: Hardpack review only...no 3D snow was available for this test...so it is incomplete.]

The Liberty Variant is a high-octane game-changer in its category of 113(+/-) waisted skis, much like the DPS Wailer 112 was (but a different style). The Variant is a simply stunning display of GS-like grip and carving power on the hardpack without being an over-burly, big mountain plank with huge radius. The Variant is an ultra responsive, surgical cutting tool with an immense range of power and a carbide-like personality without requiring olympian-level input from the driver. While most skis in this category are either floppy, surfy powder dolphins with varying degrees of hardpack prowess or brutally strong, big-mountain chargers with giant radii, the Variant has taken a completely different approach...sort of like a Maserati for the 3D snow. This is an expert's ski for people who are enthusiastic about quick, accurate power and directional integrity under pressure. The ski's graphic design is gorgeous, befitting its performance. I have to reserve my judgment about its 3D snow performance until we get a chance to find some real snow, but it feels like the design is right-on. I hung out at the Liberty demo tent for a while listening to some

others coming back from their rides on this new ski, and they seemed to think the same thing.

Technical Ski Data:

Vertical laminate bamboo core with perimeter-ring layer of titanal, quadraxial fiberglass, PTex2000 bases, Rockwell 48 edges, UHMW sidewalls at 78 degree angle. Low-profile tip rocker, camber underfoot. Notches for skins.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Superb fit and finish with really handsome partial see-through topsheet revealing bamboo grain below. At first, it looks like a SkiLogik graphic copy, but once you look at it, it is quite different. The graphics really grow on you. Relatively stiff mid and tail flex for a ski in this 113mm waisted



category, but not "burly". Progressive, large-radius flex without hinge points or flat spots. Really nice rebound feel and response with hand flexing. Torsionally impressive. Intoxicating tip and forebody shaping (for some reason..maybe it's just me). This is a more businesslike look for Liberty than its previous model offerings.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was

intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. More reports as conditions change. I'm hoping to get back out on this ski as soon as three-dimensional snow appears to give it a fair test in its real design element.

Test Results:

The first impression I got was skating to the lift through the 3 cm-deep granular at the base. With every push-off from each foot, I got a little flex and zing propelling me forward.....hmmmm....that was unusual.....As soon as I made my first turn, I realized this was no ordinary fat ski, and in fact it carved better on the boilerplate sections better than some of the narrow, frontside carving skis I had been testing earlier. The second thing I realized was the Variant wanted speed. It craved higher speeds and pressure. It was fully capable at slow speeds, friendly and well-behaved. When you turned it loose, then layed into it, it set its edge with authority along its entire length, acquired its target and began a trajectory to it with confidence and acceleration more akin to a GS ski than some 113mm waisted freeride ski. This is not a personality I have found in a ski like this before.

Until recently, fat skis generally fell into two camps: Soft and floppy powder surfers with varying amounts of hardpack grip ability (DPS RP112 being an excellent example of the hardpack champion in this category - in my opinion), or strong, burly chargers with the personality of a freight-train (take your pick of any of the burly, pro-stock big mountain sticks). Sure, there are plenty of in-between examples...but generally, people tend to put them into one or the other category at this waist width. The Variant seems to beg for a new category, the precision, surgical freeride. With lots of freeride skis, you either generally aim for your desired line and guide the ski to its destination as it happily surfs and sluffs its way with some desired edgehold along the way, or you force the freight train into an arc and hope you don't need to do any radical changes along the way because once it's set in motion, it wants to stay there, crushing anything in its path. Both types of skis have their place and are fun. The Variant seems to change edges like a GS ski, with instant grip and immediate direction change, and then holds that line until you release it, ready for the next change.



The one difference is the Variant can vary its turn shape mid-stream with no sluff, no slide, no resistance...and the behavior keeps working that way as your speed increases.



While the surfy freeride skis get a bit less precise with line holding at speed, and the freight train freeride skis are just plain gnarly, but stay on-line securely at speed at the expense of low-speed handling and versatility. The Variant has a degree of nimbleness and security at speed that's really addictive. Never nervous, and tracks like a race ski across frozen ruts. I can't say how it handles in soft or windpacked 3D snow or crud yet, but the way it handled in my short couple runs has me staying awake at night. This ski has a completely different shape and personality than the Helix or Double Helix and is a bold new departure for Liberty into new territories of performance....and rumor has it next year will see a narrower version of this design for those who crave a tighter radius.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A Maserati in freeride clothing.

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Nothing (but I have not tried it in anything but hardpack)

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a high-speed freeride machine for those who crave smooth control and GS-like hardpack behavior. I did not try it in soft snow, so I can't comment on its behavior in its intended element.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

If you are less-than-expert ability, demo this ski in the appropriate length to make sure it is not too much for your daily usage. It is a high-octane ski.

LIBERTY:

ExoticSkis.com



**2012-2013 Liberty Double Helix
(quick impression)**

150-121-140 174cm r=25m

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$759 usd

Usage Class:

Freeride - Powder

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"-> 10="I have to own a pair")

8-9

Summary:

[Warning: Hardpack review only...no 3D snow was available for this test...so it is incomplete.]

The Liberty Double Helix is essentially a scaled-up version of the Helix, made wider to provide a bigger platform optimized for deeper conditions. The same lively, poppy, energetic traits evident in the Helix's geometry and construction also exist in the Double Helix, although slightly

more subdued because of the greater mass and wider footprint hosting the skier's pressure over a larger area along its length when skied on hardpack. The resulting "feel" is unusually light for a wide ski having dimensions of 150-121-140, more so than most any other ski this size. Remarkably nimble and lively, even on hardpack. Super friendly, with no hint of bulk or balky behavior. The Double Helix actually feels much more narrow than it is because of its responsiveness to input. Despite its width, the Double Helix can lay down impressively carved turns at slow or higher speeds on groomed, hard surfaces with a surprising grip. I was surprised at how secure and predictable the carving was on this powder ski. Remarkable is all I can say. As with its smaller sibling the Helix, Liberty's Double Helix maintains a feverish following by a huge variety of skiers for a good reason.....people love this ski's personality and handling.

Technical Ski Data:

Vertical laminate bamboo core with quadraxial fiberglass, PTex2000 bases, Rockwell 48 edges, UHMW sidewalls at 78 degree angle. Tip rocker, camber underfoot.

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Superb fit and finish with colorful topsheet (glossy). Progressive, large-radius flex without hinge points or flat spots. Really nice rebound feel and response with hand flexing. Torsionally impressive. Not a stunning look, but great colors.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. More reports as conditions change. I'm hoping to get back out on this ski as soon as three-dimensional snow appears to give it a fair test in its real design element.



Test Results:

My runs on the Double Helix came right after riding the Variant, so I had a pretty high standard for edgehold in my brain when I got on the Double H. The Double Helix immediately gave me the impression of a more Cadillac-like ride than the Helix, slightly slower in the turns, slightly less nimble, but equally comfortable right out of the gate. The Liberty Helix and Double Helix have a reputation for being "instantly friendly" for just about anyone who gets on them for the first time. You make a couple turns left and right, let them run, hit the brakes, speed them up and you immediately know how the ski works. The first impression I got after a half-dozen turns was how little effort it to get the big Helix to move in any direction. Some skis this size feel big. The Double Helix feels light and airy, but you can feel the surface area underfoot supporting your every

move, so it's a source of confidence and reliability, which is something I really like in variable conditions. If you load the ski with pressure and let it rebound, the big Helix will launch you forward in a graceful, playful motion without ejecting you into the next zip code. Vibration dampening is very good, considering how light and playful this ski feels. Warping along the hardpack with a 121mm waisted ski can lead to a feeling of detachment with the surface if the vibrations aren't damped down properly, but the Double Helix just rips along, quiet and well behaved without chatter or feeling unhinged. When you get up to speed, you need to pay attention, because the bamboo core is not a damp, dead fish. The ski is lively and will change direction quicker than you might expect for its size, which is a fun thing. Stability is excellent while maintaining responsiveness. All in all, a really great formula.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

A high performance 4 door Euro-sedan with a tight suspension kit and adjustable dampening controls after removing the excess weight of passenger seats, door panels, spare tire and dashboard. Comfy, speedy, elegant and unusually responsive for its size.

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Nothing (but I have not tried it in anything but hardpack)

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is a remarkably nimble, lightweight powder ski with impressive edge grip on hard surfaces. Fun and snappy with great response. I did not try it in soft snow, so I can't comment on its behavior in its intended element.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

You won't be disappointed unless you want a hard-charging, jam-landing freight train.



LIBERTY



2012-2013 Liberty Helix
(quick impression)
135-105-122mm, 176cm R=24m

Suggested Retail Price (MSRP):

\$695 usd

Usage Class:

Freeride

Rating (with comments):

(1="get me off these things"->10="I have to own a pair")

9 for non hard-charging skiing, 7 for hard-charging since it is somewhat soft

Summary:

[Warning: Hardpack review only...no 3D snow was available for this test...so it is incomplete.]

The Liberty Helix is light, snappy, responsive and packs a surprisingly grippy carving power on hard surfaces without being nervous. A solid, reliable, really fun feeling underfoot. A hugely popular best-selling model for a good

reason. A standard by which many other skis in its category should be judged.

Technical Ski Data:

Vertical laminate bamboo core, quadraxial fiberglass, PTex2000 bases, Rockwell 48 edges, UHMW sidewalls at 78 degree angle. Low-profile tip rocker, camber underfoot..

Pre-Skiing Impression:

Superb fit and finish with Really nice rebound feel and response with hand flexing. Torsionally impressive, snappy feel, really "Green-Theme" graphics, fresh look. Nice light weight.

Test Conditions:

This initial report is the result of two runs on hardpack, ice, frozen granular and hardpack chalky groomer surfaces at a multi-day demo event in Vermont. Terrain was intermediate-level only, so this initial review should be taken with a couple grains of salt. More reports as conditions change.

I'm hoping to get back out on this ski as soon as three-dimensional snow appears to give it a fair test in its real design element.

Test Results:

The Liberty Helix has a reputation as one of the most universally liked, most popular 105mm class skis out there for several seasons in a row. I tried to ignore this and jumped on the 2012-2013 model with a critical attitude, ready to find its weak spots, especially on the firm hardpack at the demo days in Vermont. I immediately took it across the big patch of boilerplate I found as a standardized "let's see how these skis handle bulletproof surface" during my reviews of skis at the event. To my amazement, the Helix carved into the boilerplate (you could not get your poles to make a mark in it) and executed a directional change on it with perfect grip. No slip, no slide, no chatter, no muss, no fuss..just like a frontside carver (and better than some narrow waisted skis I tested at the show!). I was stunned and went on the hunt for more hard surfaces...same story: precise grip and control in long turns, short turns, slow speeds, higher speeds...you name it. "OK" I said...that's that...the Helix is one of the most hardpack-capable 100mm+ waisted skis I have ever tested. Cool.

As I explored other surfaces and pitches at various speeds, the Helix immediately became a partner..fun, quick, responsive and had a great communication underfoot. The bamboo core definitely has a fun property to it. Similar in feedback underfoot to the DPS RP112 hybrid, with a different shape. I kept wanting to find deep snow to play with, or crud to cut into, but with only hardpack, the ski was still fun, fun, fun, and that's what it's all about.

Analogies: (this ski is like...)

Your best dog companion in his/her prime, always ready to go anywhere and do anything, guaranteed to always be fun, time and time again.

Things I Would Change About This Ski:

Nothing (but I have not tried it in anything but hardpack)

Short Answer When Someone Asks "What Do You Think About This Ski?":

This is probably one of the classic and best-loved freeride 100-110mm (+-) waisted skis in existence. I have never heard anyone say they did not like it. I did not try it in soft snow, so I can't comment on its behavior in its intended element. Search the internet ski forums and read peoples' posts about it. I would have this ski as one of the first choices in my quiver, no questions asked.

Advice To People Considering This Ski:

You won't be disappointed if you understand it's not for hard-charging pros, but intended for the majority of enthusiastic skiers out there.

(sorry, no other photos...images corrupted on the chip)

CONCLUSION:

It's refreshing to see smaller, lesser-known ski brands appearing at industry demo events such as NEWSR in Vermont. The costs to attend the events can be huge for a small company since they need to pay for event registration, transporting people, gear, tents, tables, tools and supporting staff with hotel and food expenses. They hope they can attract the attention of some retailers to place orders for their skis. They definitely have caught the attention of the major brands who can be seen checking out these smaller brands during the event.....

Hopefully we will get some more thorough on-snow tests this season of some of these skis we briefly tried last February so people can learn how they handle in powder, crud, bumps and other surface types.

For our past reviews of the Icelantic Nomad and Shaman (essentially unchanged), visit:
<http://www.exoticskis.com/forum/default.aspx?g=topics&f=37>

Let it snow!

Cheers,

Eric Edelstein

