



Black Diamond Ethic

Black Diamond Mystic

*"The photograph behind the Ethic was of a banzai tree with a cloudy sunset in the background," said BD's Matt Law. "The texture in the clouds was so intense, and I knew it would create a dramatic color scheme and background for the ski."*

Photo by Tom Rassuchine

catches the attention of other skiers.

Thus designers like Canupp are creating skis with particularly distinct looks as much for the promotion of the product as for the aesthetic. A photo running in a magazine with an easily-recognizable ski could act as a free advertisement for a manufacturer, a concept that Karhu has enthusiastically embraced in their topsheet schemes and production modifications—such as making the logo more readable on the bases for photo and film purposes.

"The industry needs to branch out from the race scene," says Canupp. "Too many graphics out there have what I call NASCAR or 'Euro' graphics. For too long skiing in general has been dominated by the racing scene. We as an industry are finally branching out and opening new doors, but it's a slow process, which requires patience." Canupp's point applies especially to the telemark ski industry, where racing holds substantially less interest for the freeheel population.

"It was time to freshen things up," Canupp decided about the changes for the 2004/2005 Karhu line. "The Jak graphic was getting old and we had some new skis to launch so we decided to make changes throughout the line."

Canupp decided to keep remnants of the old design—done prior to his arrival at Karhu by JDK Design in Burlington—for product continuity, but added his own flavor. Looking to pop culture, he noticed that other companies were using Pacific Northwest artwork, but only in small details. Taking a step further, Canupp decided to incorporate traditional craftsmanship on objects like totem poles into the entire tail.

Inspired by his photos of native artwork on a trip to Alaska, Canupp created a new Jak that continued the recognizable color scheme with the addition of typically snowboard and surf-style imagery to appeal to the younger freeride crowd out shopping for skis.

The application of marketing strategies to skis applies as well to gender-specific markets as it does to youth-driven markets. Canupp compares the trends in women's skis to the old trends in telemark ski design—too many women's skis are simply watered down men's skis, just as a detuned alpine ski became a telemark ski in the early days of freeheel.

"For the 2005/2006 women's skis we focused on what women want rather than

