

# Frozen ascents

Lightweight performance drives innovation in ice climbing gear

→ **IMPROVED TECHNOLOGIES**, ice festivals and expanded entry-level products are steadily growing the ice climbing market.

Innovations in product design are driven by continual demand from consumers and the sport's top athletes for ultralight performance. "People expect lighter products with the same or better performance, and you really have to be innovative to meet them," said Mark Mathews, director of sales for Scarpa North America. "Often that means using new materials."

**Camp USA (#3042)** unites materials and design creativity in its new Blade Runner technical ice crampon (**MSRP \$350**) from its sister brand Cassin. Two models with interchangeable components permit easy conversion from technical ice and mixed uses to more versatile mountaineering functionality. The Blade Runner comes with a fully automatic front toe bail and vertical front-points, while the Blade Runner Alpine has horizontal front-points and a hybrid front toe bail for more boot compatibility.

The front plate is contoured to fit the camber of modern alpine boots, making the boot-crampon interface more secure. "We have more cambered and more flexible boots than we used to," said Jesse Mattner, managing director for Camp USA. "Movement and flexibility in the crampon interface lead to fatigue and crampon failure."

Two linking bars integrate directly into the heel piece of the Blade Runner and reduce torsional flex, keeping the crampon stable underfoot. The heel slide and rear down-points are constructed from a hard and strong proprietary steel that is thinner and more durable than chromoly steel.

**Petzl (#5027)** has completely redesigned its Laser Ice Screw Series (**MSRPs \$45-70**), adding ergonomic aluminum hangers for easier handling and in-cuts on the drill teeth to improve entry into the ice. The most radical

addition to the series is the Laser Speed Light screw, which combines an aluminum tube with steel drill teeth. "These screws are for high-end ice climbers looking to shave weight," said technical information manager Rick Vance.



The Blade Runner from Cassin.

Also from Petzl is the Lim'Ice ice screw sharpener (**MSRP \$70**), the first available handheld sharpener. Two guides hone both sides of the drill bit and remove the uncertainty of hand-sharpening with a file.

**Grivel's (#13011)** carbon fiber Reparto Corse ice tool (**MSRP \$750 for two, only sold in pairs**) comes in two models: the drytool- and competition-focused Force and the alpine- and waterfall-oriented Master. A reinforced steel bracket in the neck strengthens the tool and adds purchase while drytooling.

Working with speed-alpinist Ueli Steck, **Scarpa (#36103)** has created the streamlined Rebel Pro GTX and Ultra GTX alpine climbing boot (**MSRPs \$489-569**). The 1 pound, 9 ounce boot (both models) is for fast-and-light alpinism and mixed climbing up to and including vertical ice. A full-length carbon fiber insole board maintains lightweight rigidity and the stretch Gore-Tex tongue reduces bulk, while injected polyurethane protects against lace pressure on the top of the foot. A built-in internal gaiter on the Ultra GTX keeps the boot-gaiter interface trim for superior ankle mobility.

--CASEY FLYNN