



Thought you'd like to know...

Take off to the great white north



Cooper has been selling their Weathermaster S/T2 for a few decades now, so they were due for Chip and Joanna style renovation. (Down come the walls - in comes the sliding barn door... sorry, but you know I watch too much TV) We got a chance to spend some quality time in Canada on a frozen racetrack a few weeks ago. Cooper wanted to show off their new stuff and of course they followed the Discoverer / Evolution formula. The already mentioned premium Discoverer True North will debut this coming fall as Cooper's high-end studless competition for the likes of Blizzak and Michelin X-Ice.

Next up, the studdable Evolution Winter that was pitted against the latest and greatest from Nokian. Cooper also unveiled two new Starfire snows for the budget crowd. The RS-W 5.0 for cars and the RS-W 7.0 for CUV and SUV fitments. So how did they perform?

Here are my amateur opinions:

First, they were all amazing. All the brands, (except the tires we tested that came from a certain discount department store chain) Cooper and competitors alike, seemed to defy the laws of physics. The way they grabbed ahold of packed snow and ice and kept you going where you pointed the car was really something. We were driving the stuffings out of the poor rental cars and hardly slid. (I was the only hoser to get a Jeep very, very stuck) For anyone driving like a sane person, they'd be hard pressed to even know they were on ice.

Discoverer True North versus Michelin X-Ice

If your aim is to road race on ice with an unlimited budget, buy the Michelin. It is unreal. In the real world, the Cooper does everything almost as well. The Cooper does stop on ice and packed snow in a shorter distance than the Michelin every time in my testing. And the price point of the Cooper is way less than the Michelin. Giant step up for Cooper.

Discoverer True North versus Blizzak

No contest. Sorry if it offends anyone but the Blizzak seemed to be out of its element here. On the packed snow and ice it just wasn't as grippy as the Cooper or Michelin. Driving like a normal person they're probably fine, but they are pricey.

Evolution Winter versus Nokian Hakkapeliitta 9

Yes, both were studded. This one was interesting considering the cult status of this brand. The Nokian runs a jillion studs and looks sick and if pressed I'd give the edge to it cause you figure it just has to be good, but on the iciest flat track I couldn't really tell much difference. I did notice the Nokian pulled the car a little better up a steep icy hill. But once again consider the price point.

Starfire Winter 5.0 and 7.0 versus Brand X no-name tire

Cooper sold these studless Starfires in Canada the last few years and they really work. If your customer is on a budget I'd have no worries about recommending these. They're light years ahead of the discount department store tire that was studdable but didn't even feel like a winter tire.

In summary

I'd say it's safe to say Cooper has made a major leap forward with their winter tires. Many drivers have sworn by them for years and they've just been modernized in a big way. The venerable Discoverer M+S stays in the lineup as is and the Starfire snows open a whole new price category. There's an interesting back story on how they developed these new snows that I'll fill you in on next time.