

Resources

Roof Framing Videos

by Dave Holbrook

Maybe show biz runs in the veins of roof cutters; there's not one but at least four videos currently on the market. That's good — I can't think of a framing process I'd rather watch, or do. Production values in these videos won't earn any Emmies, but they're good enough for teaching purposes. If you want to brush up on your skills, or train your crew, the question is, Which video delivers the most bang for your buck? Or perhaps a better question is, How much do you want to know?

prepared tables, this is one series where it makes good sense to start at the beginning and own both tapes. And you really need the book along with the videos (you can get it from the same source); on-screen prompts direct you to pertinent page numbers and figure references. Gross actually figures his roofs by drawing them to scale and develops his complete cutting list right at the drawing board. This line-by-line approach doesn't make for stimulating viewing — it's a bit like watching grass

studious type and want to become the master of all (roofs) you survey, here's your guru.

By the Book

Steve Peters's half-scale, ground-hugging wall outlines of simple and complex structures, erected on an actual building lot, provide the most elaborate and impressive setting of any of the roof videos. These walk-in sets provide a realistic venue for a professional demonstration of rafter cutting and stacking, albeit working with 2x4s. In the first video in the *Art of Roof Cutting* series (1998; \$289 for four tapes, 8 hours total; Peters Building Videos, 888/887-3902, www.roofbuilding.com), *Basic Roof Cutting*, Peters takes you through all the steps of measuring and cutting a regular hip roof, relying on the famous little blue book, A.F.J. Riechers's *Full Length Roof Framer*. In *Advanced Roof Cutting*, you're shown how to cut a complex roof over ells, jogs, and octagonal walls, including interrupted hips and valleys, king cripples, hip extensions, bastard hips, and more. Peters tells us that, unlike the video's sectional approach, he typically cuts the entire roof on the ground before assembling a stick. That's the goal.

Peters's mellow, slow-paced delivery makes things fairly easy to follow, but if anything slips past you the first time, just rewind and review. *Super Advanced Roof Cutting* occupies two tapes and solves the problems of variable plate heights on a complex structure.

However, a few things go begging. Gun use is a little scary here; Peters frequently holds components together while his helper shoots nails uncomfortably close to his hands and face. Saw handling could be safer, too. And there's no mention of collar ties, structural hips, valleys, or ridges, or any framing



Buy the Book

Back around 1986, I discovered Marshall Gross's book *Roof Framing* and promptly swapped my pocket book of rafter tables for a calculator with trig functions. As Gross points out in the companion videos, *Basic Roof Framing* and *Advanced Roof Framing* (2000; \$80 per tape, 4½ hours total; Rudd Productions, 888/993-3332), as soon as you encounter a non-45-degree hip, you can toss your tables — they won't help you anymore.

The setting is in the classroom, with a scaled-down, tabletop roof model and a drawing board. Because Gross teaches rafter calculations that favor trig over

grow. Tape one walks you through the calculation of an ordinary hip roof. Tape two tackles irregular rafters. In the interest of time and keeping your attention, Gross glosses over some of the math, noting that the in-depth calculations can be found in the book, along with more complicated roof problems. This is as close to Old World craft instruction as you're likely to find today, but Gross takes clear delight in finally shooting his demonstration model together with his trusty Paslode Impulse.

It's possible that this instruction is overkill for the majority of common roof cutting jobs, but if you're the

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material heavier than 2-by. In fact, there's enough material omitted to fill a second series. But this highly visual set will keep you learning for quite a while.

Tips From the Tracts

A Roof Cutter's Secrets (1997; \$25, 90 minutes; published by *The Journal of Light Construction*, www.jlcbooks.com) is the companion video to the book *A Roof Cutter's Secrets to Framing the Custom Home* and workshops by Will Holladay. In the video (shot at *JLCLive's* Residential Construction Show), Holladay demonstrates how easy it is to develop the few simple formulas you need to cut common and regular roofs using an ordinary calculator. The video provides a well-organized, hands-on presentation of the basics of roof framing, including rake walls, quick dormer framing, valleys, hips, and jack rafters. Holladay also introduces some handy produc-

tion cutting tools and tips for the budding specialist. It's a far cry from everything you'll ever need to know, but if you want to know how to frame a basic roof with a minimum of fuss and maximum efficiency, this tape's for you.

Holladay's book is currently being updated and revised, with an expected fall 2002 release date.

Rafters in Review

The Haun brothers, Larry and Joe, get up on the plates of an actual house frame and have at it in *Framing Roofs* (1992; \$20, 55 minutes; Taunton Press, 800/888-8286; www.taunton.com). Watching two wiry dudes on the grayer side of middle age tightrope the wall plates is downright inspirational. I hope I get old before I die.

I felt a little like I was watching a *Mr. Rogers* segment, though. The Hauns' heads tower above the ridge board. The roof is an easy four-pitch gable config-

uration, with a hip thrown in to make things more interesting, although still basic. If you don't already know most of this stuff, you're a greenhorn. Which is fine if you're just starting out, but if not, you better order this video in a plain brown wrapper and get up to speed in the privacy of your living room. The stronger focus of this production is the concept of efficiency.

Indeed, this is one of a set of three companion videos to Larry Haun's book *The Very Efficient Carpenter*. However, efficiency aficionados will find the total absence of nail guns conspicuous, even if the brothers do smack in those sinkers with single hammer blows. This is one-time viewing material; you should get it in a single pass. The Hauns do show how to safely gang-cut rafters, a real time saver, but you can watch Peters or Holladay do the same thing in sometimes reckless fashion. Be careful out there. 