

The year in gear

More winter gear than ever has a high-tech twist: Insoles that heat up with the push of a (smart-phone) button, a helmet that lights up for safety, and headphones and an app that turn your phone into a walkie talkie. This season, you may also notice more women’s-specific equipment, backcountry gear, and kids’ products with a practical slant. Add to that some of the most versatile bindings and skis. Here are a few of the year’s highlights.

BY KARI BODNARCHUK | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



SIMS snowboards makes a comeback
It makes sense that SIMS Snowboards has launched a new women’s all-mountain free-style board: The legendary snowboard mak-er, now celebrating its 40th year, was one of the first to create a women’s-specific board in the 1990s when it produced the Shannon Dunn Pro Model. This year’s new SoFun women’s board, which comes complete with original sunflower graphics, lives up to its heritage. The twin-tip Shockwave cambered board (a rocker-camber hybrid) makes carv-ing smooth and easy, and offers great edge control on New England’s hard-pack. The company, which relaunched last year as a Made-in-America brand, produces its boards at Never Summer in Denver. Check out the SoFun or the new Dealer’s Choice freestyle board at Thuro in Brookline (617-501-6389). *\$489.99. www.simsnow.com*



High-tech insoles provide warmth
Keeping your toes toasty with electric boot warmers once required wires and bulky bat-tery packs. Not anymore. Burlington-based ThermoCELL makes several wireless heated insoles, the latest of which can be operated by your smartphone. The ProFLEX Heavy Duty Heated Insoles connect to your phone by Bluetooth and can be controlled through the easy-to-navigate app, which works with iOS and Android devices. The fast-charging batteries reach full power in less than two hours, and can last up to 8.5 hours per charge. Three temperature settings range from low (100 degrees) to high (115 de-grees), or opt for “no heat” mode. The water-resistant insoles come in five sizes, covering women’s 4.5 to men’s 13, and can be trimmed to fit boots for skiing, snowshoe-ing, shoveling the driveway, or wherever your adventures take you. *\$199.99. 866-651-7579, heat.thermacell.com*

A kid’s jacket for all seasons
Patagonia’s new 3-in-1 Jacket can help kids dial in the right layering system for the con-ditions, year-round. This super-versatile jacket, which comes in boy’s and girl’s ver-sions, has a waterproof and breathable outer shell that fends off moisture from spring showers to heavy wet snow. The shell has a helmet-friendly hood, chest and hand-warmer pockets, storm flaps covering all zippers, and a powder skirt to help keep out wind and snow. Its zip-out liner adds an ex-tra layer of warmth, yet this full-featured jacket with its fun quilted design can be worn on its own. Snap Patagonia’s insulated Snowshot (boy’s) or Snowbelle (girl’s) pants to the shell using a loop attachment on the jacket, and help keep the snow out and pants up for play. Increase the pant legs 2 inches as your child grows. The best part: All pieces are made from recycled materials. *\$229 (jacket), \$149 (pants). www.patago-nia.com*



This flashy helmet boosts visibility
Make sure your fellow skiers and riders can see you, whether you’re carving turns at night, in snow flurries, or under flat light. Slokker Sports has released Bakka, an Italian-made helmet with flashing red lights on the back that allow others to spot you in low-visibility conditions. The LED lights are powered by a watch battery that’s simple to replace. The helmet also comes with an integrated visor that easily flips up out of the way while remaining attached — great for preventing lost or dangling goggles. With the visor down, you have plenty of space for your prescription glasses. The visor’s photochromatic and polarizing lens changes color based on the conditions, and blocks UV light. The well-padded and comfortable helmet also has an adjustable size dial on the back for obtaining a snug fit, and plenty of vents that can be opened to boost air flow. For kids, check out Slokker’s Jaky Junior hel-met, which has integrated high-quality goggles, but no lights. *\$422 Bakka; \$188 Jaky Junior. 518-423-7952, slokkersports.com*

Keep an eye out for Look bindings
Look has replaced all Rossignol bindings this year, and also released a new series of Pivot bindings that offer dual compatibility with alpine (ISO 5355) and walk-to-ride (ISO 9523) soles. That means you can use your traditional alpine boots and still keep your Pivot bindings if you transition to walk-to-ride (WTR) boots with rockered soles — just make a simple adjustment on the toe plate. For a great all-mountain freestyle binding, choose from the Pivot Dual 12 WTR (DIN 4-12), Pivot Dual 14 WTR (DIN 5-14), or Pivot Dual 18 WTR (DIN 8-18) bindings. These sturdy offerings provide great lateral support, shock absorption, and elasticity (the Pivot Dual 12s have 45mm of lateral toe elasticity and 28mm of heel elasticity), meaning you can dig in and charge hard on those groomers without popping out of your bindings or stressing your knees. *\$375-\$475. www.look-bindings.com.*

Cooldest camera on the slopes
Any old action camera can record photos and videos for uploading to social media after your adven-tures, but the Sioeye Iris4G live-streams so your friends can follow the action in real time. No need for a phone either: You can transmit footage through the camera’s pre-installed T-Mobile SIM card. The sophisticated but easy-to-use camera sets up quickly using the handy touch-screen LCD and the Sio-eye (pronounced SIGH-o-eye) app, which works with iOS or Android mobile devices. Set the camera for time-lapse, slow-motion, single-shot, burst, or video capture, and start shooting. The camera re-cords up to 4K high-definition video or 18-megapixel wide-angle still shots, or streams live to You-Tube, Twitter, Facebook, and other accounts through Sioeye’s servers. As a backup, you can connect your phone and the camera via Bluetooth or HotSpot to stream. The camera comes with a burly wa-terproof housing, and works with helmet and other mounts. *\$429. 206-701-0343, www.sioeye.com*



One bag to organize double the gear
Hit the slopes with kids in tow and you quickly realize how much gear you need to carry (even with the kids’ help), and how easy it is to leave a trail of equipment between the car and ski lodge. David Abramowitz, owner of Westwood-based Kulkea, gets it. That’s why he created the new Tandem Ski Boot Duffel, a semi-rigid bag that can swallow all your mini-me gear. The cleverly designed 64-liter bag offers double compartments throughout for organizing two sets of children’s ski or snowboard boots (up to size Mondo 22.5), helmets, extra layers, hats, hand warmers, and more. The duffel, which measures 13-by-32-by-12 inches, has a handy shoulder strap and grab handles, and comes with several small holes on the bottom and sides for venting and letting snowmelt from boots escape — a smart feature. Sturdy zippers help keep everything contained even when you’ve packed to the brim, and the water-resistant polyester and tarpaulin material allows the duffel to take a beating and still protect your gear. *\$119.95. 781-366-0754, www.kulkea.com*



Lace up these skates and hit the ice
K2 has released a new line of recreational ice skates that are perfect whether you’re heading to Frog Pond on Boston Common or Stowe’s new ice skating rink. The company has launched the Marlee Ice (girl’s), Raider Ice (boy’s), Alexis Ice (women’s), and F.I.T. Ice (men’s) skates. The children’s skates come in three adjustable sizes (sizes 11-2, 1-5, and 4-8) so they can grow with your child’s feet, and has speed lacing, which enables your child to tighten the laces with one pull. The men’s and women’s boots come with standard lacing (upgrade to another model for the speed lacing or Boa system), and K2’s proprietary SoftBoot technology, which makes the boot super comfortable, yet offers the stiffness needed for control. They all come with well-cushioned liners and water-repellant outer material for keeping your feet dry and toasty. *\$69.95 (kids), \$79.95 (adults). 866-302-9996, www.k2skates.com/en/ice-skates*

Alpine boots blend comfort, performance
Rossignol’s new Alltrack freeride boots give you the support, comfort, and versatility for hiking to secret stashes and then attacking groomers with ease. The shell’s Sensor Grid technology helps create a lighter weight boot without sacrificing stiffness around the foot, and the ski/hike feature lets you release the cuff for easier walking and hiking, and then lock it down to create the power and rigidity needed for the descent. The Thinsulate heat-moldable liners keep feet warm and well cushioned, and the women’s-specific liner has a comfortable furry feel and is shaped to support narrower heels. Both the men’s and women’s versions come in two different lasts (100 or 102), and the flex index ranges from 90 to 130 for men, and 70 to 110 for women. Swap the grippy alpine soles with the rockered Walk to Ride soles (sold separately) to add more walking comfort. Look for Alltrack boots at The Ski Monster on Canal Street in Boston (617-275-2561). *\$299.95-\$699.95. 888-243-6722, www.rossignol.com*

Volk’s top new touring ski
Take Volk’s new VTA88 Lite into the backcountry or skin up a mountain before the lifts open, and you’ll have extra energy to keep going all day. The featherweight ski has a wood core with a full carbon jacket, explaining why each ski weighs just 2.34 pounds (for the 170cm version). This year’s VTA88 also has a three-dimensional topsheet with a special ICE.OFF coating that prevents ice and snow from sticking on top and weighing you down. The unique ridge design also contributes to the ski’s light weight (by cutting out extraneous material) and stability. The ski has an 88mm waist, a rockered tip, and a great turning radius, and it ranges in size from 160cm to 180cm. Overall, this playful and responsive ski loves to climb, performs well in powder, and handles itself well on groomed runs. *\$1,065. www.volk.com*



Hit the slopes with these walkie talkies
Pop Outdoor Tech’s wireless headphones into your helmet and then chat with your friends — anywhere on the mountain or beyond — at the push of a button. The CHIPS 2.0 Wireless Headphones fit into virtually any ski or snowboard helmet, and connect to your phone by Bluetooth. Download the free ODT Audio walkie talkie app, invite your friends (also using their CHIPS headphones) to connect, and then press a button on the right earpiece to enter walkie talkie mode (a tiny microphone on the right earpiece picks up your voice). The only caveat: You and your buddies must have cell service or WiFi for the walkie talkie mode to work. With controls on both earpieces, you can play, pause, and skip audio tracks, adjust volume, answer calls, and even chat with Google or Siri. The rechargeable lithium battery lasts up to 10 hours, and the headphones work down to minus-4 degrees Fahrenheit. *\$129.95. 310-677-0190, www.outdoortechology.com*

Kari Bodnarchuk can be reached at travelwriter@karib.us.