

BOARDSPORT

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EUROPEAN SURF/SKATE/SNOW BUSINESS

#104  
DECEMBER  
2020 €5

**RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDES FW 21/22**  
SNOWBOARD BOOTS, BINDINGS, SNOW  
BACKPACKS, SPLITBOARDING, SNOW HELMETS,  
SNOW PROTECTION, SKATE FOOTWEAR, MEN'S  
STREETWEAR AND WOMEN'S STREETWEAR

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# HELLO SOURCE#104

We took a three issue COVID-enforced print hiatus this year, but we're delighted to return to board shop toilet magazine stacks everywhere with this one. I've loved this analogy since the first time I heard it from a good friend of mine and Dragon Lodge Snowboarding honcho, John Bassett, AKA John Dragon. The thought of BSS Mag being read on the toilet by shop staff, sales reps, marketing managers, media etc is oddly satisfying. It's gems of insight like this that make John one of the best dudes in snowboarding and yet one of the most underrated. Dragon Lodge in Tignes has been a snowboarder's haven for 20+ years and what John's done for British snowboarding in that time is next level. I was lucky enough

to work for John at the Dragon Lodge for a number of seasons and saw first-hand the number of snowboarders he'd let crash on a couch for a week and drop by for a few days that turned into weeks and even months. John's an all-round shredder, with one of the finest turns in the biz and putting John on the cover of the mag is what makes the job worthwhile. Big up to you John!

Back to bizniz, and where SOURCE has excelled this year is delivering news and insight during an information vacuum. However, at the time of writing (December 10) our path forward has never been so unclear. While print is timeless and allows us to reach folk sat on toilets in a way not possible by phone, it does mean by the time you read this, things will have (hopefully) gathered momentum. The second wave of the pandemic is well and truly upon us and with big question marks still surrounding ski resort openings across Europe, Switzerland is currently the only place with chairlifts

open and Austria is set to open its uplifting system (for locals only) from Christmas Eve. Missing Christmas has been the worst-case scenario for both brands and retailers and here we are with the majority of snowsports nations still totally unsure of what lays ahead. The USA has been a shining light until now, with lockdown restrictions seemingly far less stringent than here in Europe meaning snowboard retail has been busy across the pond. I couldn't possibly write an editorial in December 2020 without mentioning the boom in splitboarding, and now that the snow has finally arrived here in Europe this looks set to continue on its upward tack while resorts remain closed.

I'll report back in January, when hopefully everyone is going snowboarding.

**Always Sideways**  
**Harry Mitchell Thompson**  
**Ed-in-chief**

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**On the cover** Dragon Lodge Snowboarding's John Bassett. Photo by Owen Tozer.





photo: K. Burkhardt

  
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# NEWS

## #104

### STREETWEAR BRAND SUPREME IS TO BE ACQUIRED BY VF CORPORATION

VF Corporation has signed a definitive merger agreement with Supreme, purchasing the streetwear brand for \$2.1 billion enterprise value. Shares at VF jumped around 13% following the announcement. Supreme's position in the streetwear market presents VF will a \$50 billion global opportunity and access to a young, diverse and inclusive consumer demographic, where creativity and free expression are highly attractive. Similar to Vans, Supreme celebrates youth culture, is a prominent brand in worldwide skate communities and has instantly recognisable products (red box, white 'SUPREME'). It's worth mentioning that Supreme has collaborated and already has working relationships with VF brands such as Vans (since '96), Timberland (since '06) and The North Face (since '07), making Supreme and VF a great fit. VF will benefit from a wider coverage across the streetwear market & attractive consumer segments whilst Supreme will benefit from the operational capabilities of VF Corporation. With 12 retail stores that span across Japan, EMEA and the US, Supreme brings approx \$500m in revenue, 40% revenue growth rate at Supreme is predicted at a sustainable 8-10%, equating to around Supreme's senior leadership and founder, James Jebbia, will stay on in their current roles following the acquisition.

### HYPE CALIFORNIA ACCESSORY BRAND PURA VIDA LAUNCHES IN EUROPE THROUGH HECTIC

Californian lifestyle accessory & jewellery brand, Pura Vida has arrived in Europe through UK distribution company, Hectic. With lockdown preventing sales reps from meeting retailers in person, Hectic are offering all our retailer readers a care package with no obligation to order. Just email Joe@hectic.info to claim yours.

### THE PADDLE SPORTS SHOW, THE NEW EUROPEAN PADDLE SHOW LAUNCHES IN LYONS THIS SUMMER

The Paddle Sports Show takes place from 29th Sept to Oct 1st 2021 in Lyon France and will draw buyers from specialty stores, purchasing centers, rental stations and outfitters across France, UK, Europe and around the world. The show will feature 150+ booths of apparels, boats, boards and accessories and a complete line-up of special events, including talks & summits, the Paddle Sports Product of the Year Awards, film festivals, races, and on water-demos. Expected buyer and exhibitor turnout exceeds 2500 attendees including retailers, exhibitors and media per show.

### WORLD SURF LEAGUE ANNOUNCES 2021 EUROPEAN EVENT CALENDAR

European surfers will now fight for 18 spots on the Challenger Series, through QS events located around the Continent as well as a few locations in Africa and the Middle East. The Top 10 men and 8 women at the end of the regular qualifying season (before July 4, 2021) will have a shot at the elite tours via the Challenger Series. The European QS is a historic leg that travels to France (Lacanau), Spain (Pantin, Las Americas), Portugal (Caparica, Santa Cruz), England (Newquay), Morocco (Taghazout), and Israel (Netanya). The final qualifying event will be held in Anglet at the end of June. The Challenger Series will also feature three events in Europe. The European under 18 Junior Tour will be a four-stop affair with events in Espinho (Portugal), La Torche, Lacanau and Capbreton / Hossegor / Seignosse (France) The European Longboard Tour will consist of two events in Espinho (Portugal) and Newquay (England),

### WAVEGARDEN'S ALAÏA BAY (SUI) TO BEGIN FILLING POOL IN DECEMBER

In the heart of the Alps, Wavegarden Cove's Alaïa Bay in Switzerland is offering 1,000 exclusive sessions during the lagoon's pre-opening period. Continental Europe's first wavegarden will begin testing its waves and machinery in March, with pre-opening due to start in April.

### CHANNEL ISLANDS SURFBOARDS BOUGHT BACK FROM BURTON BY MERRICK FAMILY, STAFF + ATHLETES

CI Surfboards LLC has acquired the brand Channel Islands Surfboards from Burton Snowboards, with the sale due to complete in early 2021. All employees, management and athletes at Channel Island Surfboards will remain in place. CI Surfboards LLC is led by Al Merrick's son, Britt and is joined by family members, senior management team, employees and team riders in the company's new form.

### PADDLE-BOARD-EXPO THE NEW GERMAN PADDLE SHOW AS KASSEL

Taking place from 23-25 September 2021 in Kassel Exhibition Center in Kassel Germany The PADDLE-BOARD-EXPO is the new leading trade show for Kayaks/Canoes, SUP and Foilports in Germany. The latest products for kayaks, canoes, stand-up paddling, foilboards & boats, folding and air boats, paddle clothing, accessories and equipment will be presented. In addition, it will act as a central information and contact point for the rental business, event and incentive as well as water sports tourism. A variety of workshops and lectures will be offered at the trade show

### PATAGONIA HIRES BETH THOREN AS ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION & INITIATIVE DIRECTOR

From Director of Fundraising and Communications at RSPB to Deputy Chief Executive at ClientEarth, Beth Thoren has been hired as Patagonia's new Environmental Action & Initiative Director. With her extensive previous experience, Thoren's addition will help to advance Patagonia's mission to reach carbon neutrality by 2025 as well as working towards a greener planet overall..

### ELEMENT FOUNDER JOHNNY SCHILLEREF LAUNCHES HIS FAMILY BRAND THE HEART SUPPLY

The Heart Supply, is focused on high-quality hardgoods essentials and completes with authentic art. With help from trusted distributors, the brand covers 90% of the world and is dedicated to expand the community by celebrating diversity and bringing more kids from all backgrounds into skateboarding.

### BOLLÉ EXPANDS AUGMENTED REALITY EXPERIENCE TO WINTER PRODUCTS

Bollé has introduced an augmented reality experience for their winter products; shoppers can try on the Nevada goggle and RYFT helmet without even having to go into a shop. The AR experience can be accessed via smartphone and by using the front & rear cameras, consumers can test out the full range of Phantom lenses and see themselves wearing the Nevada goggle.

### NEW BRAND NUURA ENTERS EUROPEAN MARKET

New to Europe is NUURA, a natural cosmetic brand that creates high quality, ethical and environmentally conscious sun and skin care products. NUURA can be found in Europe's top surf shops as well as many zero-waste shops. NUURA stand for One Body, One Planet, One Way Natural Cosmetics

### PRO RIDERS AUSTIN SMITH & ERIC POLLARD LAUNCH SEASON EQUIPMENT THROUGH BLUE TOMATO IN EUROPE

Launching with snowsports store evo in the US and coming through Blue Tomato in Europe, pro snowboarder Austin Smith and pro skier Eric Pollard are launching Season Equipment. Focusing less on seasonal product launches and more on product longevity, their equipment "never expires, and service is included to extend the life of a snowboard or pair of skis." Season are partnering with Nidecker to manufacture through the SWS factory for snowboards and the Amer factory for skis.





# Gloves

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## TRADE SHOWS

PREVIEWS

### ISPO MUNICH GERMANY, FEBRUARY 1-5, 2021

Last year 80,000 visitors from all parts of the world flocked to ISPO Munich to gain inspiration from the latest sports innovations, trends and products that were showcased in the 18 halls. The event proved to be the last big sports trade event before the beginning of the Pandemic lockdowns. For the 2021 edition the show will be completely online which will benefit all the traditional participants, regardless of international travel restrictions. The event format will build upon the positive results of the virtual ISPO Re.Start Days held in June. The show will offer opportunities for brand and product presentation, for discussion and networking as well as maintenance of international business relationships. At the centre of the five-day digital event will be the key topics of creativity and digitization, health and sustainability. During the show the ISPO Munich Online conference program will offer numerous opportunities for discussion and interaction. In particular, the importance of sports and outdoor activities will be examined, and their connection to health, which has been on the rise since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. ISPO Munich Online will offer the well-established benefits of finding new products, brands and business contacts, as well as networking with exhibitors, visitors, media and influencers. Participation in forums and discussions will be via live streaming and chat rooms. Jeanette Friedrich, Global ISPO Group Director, is optimistic about the digital format: "In the past ten years, ISPO has built vast digital competency and reach. We will now use this to offer an online event to the benefit of all participants." Each day of ISPO Munich is dedicated to a different topic: on Monday

it's Innovation & Creativity, Tuesday Digitalization & Sportstech, Wednesday Health & Fitness, Thursday Sustainability and Friday Consumer Insights. The lectures and sessions are planned for the afternoons, so you can concentrate on maintaining existing contacts, meeting new business partners, exchanging ideas and staying up to date.

Brand presence at ISPO will be built around the digital brand rooms within the Expo area. Here you have the opportunity to view products, topics, values and visions in a comprehensive way. Each brand-room is divided into three areas: About, Locations and Showroom. About is for a brief introduction of your company. Locations is an overview of company locations and lists your branches, showrooms and stores worldwide and Showroom is for product presentations with text and images. Brand presence at the show will be at 4 different levels depending on which package is taken; Basic, Advanced, Premium or Event partner.

For the first time, end-consumers will also have an opportunity to experience something that was formerly reserved for industry members: the chance to participate digitally and conduct a direct dialogue with the industry. In brand rooms for product presentations, workshops and master classes, brands and companies will have the opportunity to present themselves and engage with sport and outdoor fans throughout the world. It will be different for sure but we're looking forward to a whole new experience and running into you in the virtual aisles.

[ispo.com](http://ispo.com)

In case snowboard retailers from surrounding countries are allowed to enter Austria and can return to their home country without quarantine, a lot awaits them at the test: Almost 60 brands will be present! Check out the Brand list and the fact that it might be the only event where retailers and industry can meet after a long time of just Zooming. The most important thing on this year's SHOPS 1st TRY is that we can finally ride together again!

A quick look behind the scenes: SHOPS 1st TRY organizers have a Plan B just in case: They are currently working on SHOPS 1st BASE, a platform for snowboard retailers and brands for the times of COVID-19 and beyond. Under the motto "check-select-connect" shops will be able to find out about all brands and all products with just one login! Find out more soon on [www.shops-1st-base.com](http://www.shops-1st-base.com)

Keep your fingers crossed, stay tuned and register now to show the industry that you as a shop are keen to come if possible!

[shops-1st-try.com](http://shops-1st-try.com)

### SHOPS 1ST TRY ALPBACHTAL WILDSCHÖNA, AUSTRIA, JANUARY 24-26, 2021

The organizers of SHOPS 1st TRY hope that the event can take place from January 24 to 26 despite the strict Corona regulations. "If the lifts work, we have good chances", says organizer Muck Müller from Munchie Konsilium GmbH, "because there are different rules for trade fairs than for leisure events". As of today the official regulations for the end of January are not announced yet, but the organizers and the snowboarding industry do not want to give up. "We continue to prepare everything, so that in case we can react fast and just pull together the event! We have our Covid-19 Hygienic Concept ready to show to the Austrian authorities," Muck says. To get this approved there are a few less tents in the area and the entry and exit are separated. There are also two registration tents, only one shop inside a tent at a time, a 'drive-through' concept for the Tyrolean Snackhouse, not to mention spit protectors and face masks (which snowboarders wear outside anyways) should protect from spreading the virus. As we announced a few weeks ago, neither the Highlight Exhibition nor the joint dinner will take place at SHOPS 1st TRY 2021.



# RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE BOOTS FW 21/22

In its approach to 2021/22, snowboard boots are a category that could go one of two ways; tread gingerly towards an uncertain future, or jump in with both feet and take what comes? Andrew Duthie takes a look at brands' varying approaches to what will hopefully be a post-pandemic world.



Vans

### STICK OR TWIST?

Snowboard boot manufacturers certainly aren't marching in lockstep towards 2021/22. You need only consider the differences in approach taken by DC ("We had several innovative projects in the works, but based on the current situation we decided to put them on hold as we are not sure of the investment/revenue ratio.") and Ride ("What's COVID? We are continuing to focus on building the best riding, best working, best looking snowboard boots available to our customers...we are just doing it from quarantine.")

What's on offer from each brand is not just about attitude, however; some brands had their hand forced. Nitro would have had an extra release on the slate were it not for COVID-

DC "We had several innovative projects in the works, but based on the current situation we decided to put them on hold as we are not sure of the investment/revenue ratio."

19's effect on production, while Northwave had to pause a few things due to the lack of field-testing opportunities. Conversely, Rome were left relatively unaffected, having only just overhauled their entire boot range the previous year. "We are happy to roll into the second year of a very dialled down and streamlined offering," says Marketing & Team Manager

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Matt Stillman. Likewise, Flux had only recently upgraded key features like their speed lace system, so are happy to stay the course with their range into 2021/22.

From the looks of things, most brands will be aiming for what Burton's Jan Grimm describes as, "the right balance of offense and defence; still focusing on providing new and exciting products, while maintaining strength and consistency in key parts of the line." Indeed, Burton will be upping their carry-over in 2021/22, primarily to support their retail partners.

The pandemic arrived quite late in Salomon's manufacturing process, leaving them relatively unaffected. "90% of the boot line is refreshed," said Product Marketing Manager Baptiste Chaussignand, before adding ominously, "Carry over program will be mostly focused on FW22/23. The challenges are ahead of us..."

Maybe he's right, and you can expect a few brands to follow his logic at least, in which case next year's version of this article could be low on new, exciting developments in the boot world. But for now, at least, there's still much to shout about.

## LINER NOTES

While there are plenty of advances in exterior features (more of which later), it looks like just about everyone is stepping up their liner game in 2021/22. Perhaps there's a universal understanding that after the year we've just had, heel lift and frozen toes could be the last straw...

Deeluxe have taken this further than most, completely redesigning their already impressive liners so that each is matched to the style of riding for which the boot is intended. They're all fully heat-mouldable, too. DC will be applying their new 'Response' liners across their entire range, including an expanded 'Step On' offering that now includes the men's Judge and women's Mora models. Nidecker, meanwhile, have adopted an antimicrobial bootstink-banishing treatment known as Silveradur into their liners, and Rossignol have jazzed up the inside of their upgraded Primacy Focus boot.

Burton's Jan Grimm describes as, "the right balance of offense and defence; still focusing on providing new and exciting products, while maintaining strength and consistency in key parts of the line."

Head's snowboarding division will be celebrating its twentieth anniversary in the 2021/22 season, and the onset of the pandemic actually provided an unexpected boost for the party planning. "We used the slow time to work on a few very interesting and innovative projects," explains Katharina Acham, Junior Marketing Manager. "Snowboard boots customisable to this level are unseen so far on the market!" Top of the list of new features is 'Liquid Fit' tech, already present in their ski boot line but now coming over to the snowboard boots. A paraffin-based material is injected into areas around the ankle and heel, in order to fully conform to the shape of each individual foot. You do need to get to a Head dealer to have it done, but it only takes a few minutes once you're there. Look out for it in new versions of the Eight Boa and Four Boa Focus models.

## NEW TECH

It's also a milestone season for Northwave; 2021 will mark thirty years since the brand first got off the ground in Italy, and despite the aforementioned setbacks they'll still be marking the occasion with some new bells and whistles. As well as a fresh outsole feature that they're calling a 'popcorn shock absorber', their speed-lace system has been refreshed. Look out for the 'X Track', featuring a dual button release mechanism, on a special anniversary version of the ever-present Decade boot.

Boa looks like it'll be as popular as ever; the wire lace system won't be taking much of a leap forward, but they've got that pencilled in for 2022/23. For the time being, the H4 coiler will be coming to all new boots from DC and Nidecker, as well as Rossignol's updated Primacy Focus and Document models. Even brands with their own proprietary lace systems have Boa present somewhere in the line, with the trend skewing towards higher-end boots like the new Nitro Chase. In Deeluxe's case, they've worked directly with Boa to combine the wire with their own L3 speed-lace.



Burton are backing Vibram outsoles in a big way next year, applying it to their women's and Step On ranges for the first time. Find it on the Ion Step On, as well as both versions of the Photon and Felix. On the insole front, Nidecker are getting exclusive use of the Remind Medic insole for their new Helios APX boots. The lower-end Aero model will also be getting a significant upgrade in 2021/22, with an asymmetrical build previously only seen on more expensive options. Meanwhile, Nitro are replacing some of the rubber in their boots with a new eco-friendly material known as eFoam. You can add "lighter, more flexible and more durable than rubber patches" to its green credentials.

We could go on for a while here, but for the sake of brevity, some other models that have caught our eye include Rome's new Ace youth boot, Salomon's improved entry-level offerings, and the latest incarnation of the Vans Infuse (now featuring a powder shroud over the lace, courtesy of input from Arthur Longo and the crew at Baldface Lodge). There are also some excellent new women's boots incoming, such as the Nitro Futura and Nidecker Helios W.

**A BRIGHTER FUTURE?**

Inevitably, you can expect to see a lot of black on the boot shelves in 2021/22 - it's still the safest choice, after all, closely followed by earthy, muted tones. Aside from the perennial reason that darker designs go with just about anything, there's also a COVID element to consider. As Nitro President Tommy Delgado explains: "For 21/22 we have kept the black colourway of some models completely identical to give distributors and shops more flexibility managing their inventory."

Over at Burton, the thinking is a little different. "In these difficult times, it is all the more important to stay positive and spread positive vibes," says Jan. They're promising a lot of "vibrant colour use" for 2021/22, and if we find ourselves riding high on a post-vaccine cloud on the approach to winter, maybe that kind of stuff will be flying off the shelves. That'd also be a welcome state of affairs for Salomon and their forthcoming fashion-inspired models.



Head

On the collab front, a couple of big-hitting brands have paired up with relative minnows; K2 with independent mag Torment (on the Darko), and Vans with Public Snowboards (on the Hi Standard OG). Meanwhile Deeluxe have let team riders Kevin Backstrom and Miyon Yamaguchi loose with their paintbrushes for the Team ID and Lara ID respectively, and Ride are excited about Spencer Schubert's colourway for the Fuse.

**CONCLUSION**

Along with bindings, this is one of the sectors of the market where brands playing it safe are likely to be accepted by retailers and customers alike. However, it's nice to still have so much good news for feet in 2021/22. Heading into your local shop and trying on your next pair of boots still scores high on the stoke scale, and that ritual will be more important than ever in the post-COVID-19 world. "The last thing that the snowboarding scene needs right now is brands taking the excitement out of our sport," suggests Deeluxe's Florian Heim. "Accordingly, we see it as our duty to come up with fresh, innovative and exciting gear."

Amen to that. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Varied approach to carry-over
- 2 Black is still the new black
- 3 Liners see plentiful updates
- 4 Heat moulding still on rise
- 5 Plenty of newness



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RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

**BINDINGS FW 21/22**

Spare a thought for the most consistently underrated bit of snowboarding hardware - rarely at the top of anyone's wishlist, but completely integral to a truly dialed setup. In a year when customers might be tempted to pass on an upgrade, Andrew Duthie looks at what brands are doing to encourage riders to spend cash on straps.



**DOORS OPEN**

Credit is due to the brands that are minimising barriers to entry during what will be a crucial time for snowboarding - and in the world of binders, that means anyone upping their lower-price-point offering. Bent Metal, for example, will be debuting the Bolt in 2021/22, a more affordable model that still features BMBW's unique Drive Plate tech. The Union Flite Pro and Rosa bindings may not be new, but they've long been among the most impressive lower-priced options. They'll both be getting a significant overhaul next year, without a jump in price to match. A refresh of beginner-friendly offerings has also been promised by Burton, although exact details remain under wraps for now.

Most of Head's binding business is focused on the beginner market, with prices that are hard to beat. They're not resting on their laurels next year, however; redesigned versions of the FX

One and FX Fay have borrowed tech from the brand's ski line, so they'll be lighter than ever before (hence the new 'LYT' suffix). Jones, on the other hand, aren't known for affordability, so it's great to see the mid-priced Meteorite binding join the line below the Apollo and Mercury. Like its more premium siblings, it features NOW's 'Skate-Tech', as well as the ability to flip the straps and change the bushings for a mellower ride. Other welcome arrivals include the Flow NX2-TM, a new take on the NX2's hybrid entry system that's easier on the wallet, and the Gnu Fantast, a female-specific lightweight binder.

**RATCHETING UP**

There'll also be plenty of new releases and tech in to entice riders that left the training wheels behind long ago. Over at NOW, they're getting ready to celebrate their 10th anniversary in 2022; the third incarnation of their signature skate-inspired system will



Carryover isn't unheard of in the binding sector - Arbor, for one, regularly do it with the black design in each of their models, and 2021/22 will be no exception - but the amount of unchanged gear looks set to jump significantly due to potential impact of COVID-19 on shops.

see the bushings moved closer to the board's edge for increased response, and an improved tool-less kingpin system. You'll also find it on the Jones Apollo and Mercury. "COVID and lockdown gave us the breathing space to develop the best line of bindings we've ever made," says founder JF Pelchat.

We're intrigued by Nitro's new 'Factory Craft' line of five new bindings that will have durability and sustainability at the forefront. "Rather than substituting one material with a questionably 'greener' material, the approach is to eliminate parts, processes and decorations that are not essential to the way our product performs," according to Florian Lang from the Product Development team. "No coatings on plastic parts, no plastic packaging or excessive printing, preferably materials of high recycle grade like rubber parts or polymers." With anodized aluminium and cable-reinforced straps, they look like a great option for those in search of something both bomb-proof and planet-friendly.

Female riders should definitely check out what Roxy have in store for 2021/22; the binding line has seen a bigger overhaul than usual, and now features the Lola (performance-focused with asymmetric highback) and the Viva (softer-flexing with full EVA cushioning).

#### COLOUR ME RAD

Under the circumstances, brands could be forgiven for working mostly from the conservative end of the palette in 2020/21, and maybe that wouldn't be the worst thing for retailers. "We expect that they will be happy with our choice to carry over a larger portion of the 'safe' colours and high-volume models," predicts Nidecker designer Lucien Vink, "because nobody will know for certain how the W21 season will affect the W22 market. This way there will be less stock risk and pressure." At the same time, their new Kaon-Plus - an upgraded version of well-received 2020/21 debutante the Kaon-X - will be available in two eye-catching colourways "to help keep excitement on the wall." That sentiment is shared by Ride, among others; "Our line-up has been pretty focused on darker colours (and black) for a number of years," reflects Global Brand Director Jinn Linnberg. "For 2021 you'll see a lot more colour on the Ride binding wall."

Salomon are focusing on "Positive colours, positive graphics" for their line of 2021/22 binders, again turning to team rider and artist-in-residence Desiree Melancon for inspiration. "This peaceful graphic gives us some hope in these weird times," teases Baptiste Chaussignand, Product Marketing Manager. With no great leaps forward in tech planned for next year, K2 have focused on the visuals with team riders Pat Moore, Jake Kuzyk and Kennedy Deck all slated to receive signature designs.



If all this recent turmoil has left you yearning for snowboarding's good ol' days (not that our nostalgia-happy industry ever needs such an excuse), then look out for the new 'OG' colourway for the Nitro Team Pro, which harks back to the brand's genesis.

#### TWEAKED AND TUNED

Of course, not everything in 2021/22 need be about major overhauls and flash designs; we're still going to see plenty of the incremental improvements that make the best even better. Union have been making the most of their new headquarters in northern Italy; at the other end of the scale from their price-point models mentioned earlier, the high-end, Travis Rice-approved Falcor binding will now be constructed using a new forged carbon press, which results in higher quality and reduced waste. Ride are making their A9, A10, C9 and C10 models available in a smaller sizes, opening up a lot of choice for female riders, while the upgraded toe interface of Burton's Step On system will bolster its already sizeable fanbase - as will the extended range of both Burton and DC boots that'll work with it.

The Flux CV will feature the brand's new 'buffalo' highback, with "horns placed on both sides". If you're picturing the kind

## 2021 2022 TEAM BINDINGS



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SERIES

FLUX

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RIDER: TOMOHIDE INOUE  
PHOTO: TAKASHI IWATO





K2

Amplid are one of the few brands opting for 100% carryover for bindings. "This lowers SKU and gives the retailers the chance to keep the retail prices up, so that the stock value does not decrease," explains founder Peter Bauer.

of pointy protrusions found on Desperate Dan's cow pies, don't; instead it's a subtle addition that's built into the classic highback outline, but one that's unmissable when you see it up close. It'll also feature an improved baseplate, with a higher heelcup for increased response. A new highback is also coming to the Drake Reload, as well as refreshed ankle straps that provide a different level of support when they're swapped over. Rome's high-end 'Asymwrap' chassis will be keeping its winning combination of edge-to-edge response and nose-to-tail manoeuvrability, but has had a fifth of the weight shaven off. Look out also for their new improved DuraCush footbeds, and kid-friendly Ace bindings to pair with the boots of the same name.

#### CARRY ON CRANKING

Carryover isn't unheard of in the binding sector - Arbor, for one, regularly do it with the black design in each of their models, and

2021/22 will be no exception - but the amount of unchanged gear looks set to jump significantly due to potential impact of COVID-19 on shops.

Amplid are one of the few brands opting for 100% carryover for bindings. "This lowers SKU and gives the retailers the chance to keep the retail prices up, so that the stock value does not decrease," explains founder Peter Bauer. K2 are also carrying quite a few models forward after chatting to their key retailers about where the risk lies. SP are working along the same lines; "In order to give our retailers as much safety and security as possible," says Mats Engeler, Head of Product Engineering, "we will reduce our bindings portfolio for the next year to the needed basic colourways and models."

Despite the big announcements from Nitro that we mentioned earlier, a large part of their line will be carried forward "to give distributors and shops more flexibility with their 20/21 inventory." Finally, Clew are considering some minor adjustments, but don't be surprised to see much of a muchness from the step-in upstarts as they head into their second full season.

#### CONCLUSION

As with all things retail for 2021/22, it's hard to say where the sweet spot will be between playing it safe during uncertain times, and getting the stoke levels up with new and eye-catching gear. Fix may have the answer; to quote Jason Broz, Head of Global Operations, their development is "moving forward like it's 2019". But while that means new models and designs, they're also providing what they're calling an "icon colourway" for everything, which will stay for the foreseeable future. "When COVID hit, we stood back and looked at the big picture and asked "what would we want if we were a retailer in this situation?"", continues Jason. "Consistency was the answer. Keep the same pricing, offer the same quality and durability that Fix has become known for, but don't change every single model year-after-year."

Meanwhile Rossignol are going down an even more conservative route, dropping their percentage of fresh gear from 60% down to just 10% in a move that Snowboard Category Manager Arnaud Repa considers a no-brainer. "I hope COVID-19 will make everyone think differently and understand we can't continue like this," says he. "We need products that last longer and can easily be taken apart to be recycled. This needs to be taken into consideration as early in the development process as possible. Carrying over a large proportion of products will be tomorrow's standard procedure, if not already today's."

Time will tell if such a sea change occurs in the bindings market; but for now at least, retailers have ample opportunities to manage the risks in a way that feels right for them. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Carryover not new to category
- 2 Plenty of newness
- 3 Eco consciousness integral to category



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retailer profile

## ALTON PREMIUM BOARD STORE FELDKIRCH, AUSTRIA

Alton Premium Board Store is a family run business in Western Austria where GM Thomas Alton's Mum and Dad still oversee the back office and sales and siblings work alongside him on the shop floor. Thomas is a boardsports visionary with strong connections in park building and the Austrian snowboard and skateboard scene in general and we talk business and adapting to the new normal.

### Please tell us about the history of Alton Premium Board Store.

My grandpa started the shop as a shoemaker in the 1950s. Back in the day, it was a difficult time after the 2nd world war, but with my grandma's support, passion and a big heart they made it work. My dad also made his way up as a shoemaker. Step by step the shoe store became a sports shop with fashion and "cool" soccer goods. I was born 1982 (kid nr. 2 out of 4) and started feeding into the family business very early at 12 years old. When I wasn't at school I was busy building our first skate & snowboard offering. In winter 1994, we got sold our first boards and since day one I was super excited and fell in love with both snowboarding and skateboarding. In 2000 we built the Alton Premium Board Store much bigger and my second passion (building snow parks) evolved. So in winter 1999/2000 my own company "Parkdesign snowpark – management" was born. So now we stand at 21 years of park design and 26 years of Alton Premium Board Store – we are a big family, we are all owners. The best back-office dude is still my Dad and Mum still fills in on sales duties while Elisabeth (youngest sister) is the boss for all the shoes & fashion, Geli (oldest sis) also works in the back office. My role is the Premium Board Store, outdoor area and the snow park.

### How much of your orders did you cut back on in March, or any time since then?

We didn't cut anything on back. We made our magazine/winter catalogue as always and pushed things forward. We are still looking forward to a good season. September was awesome and October was a killer! But to be fair nobody expected that we would get another lockdown right now until December 6th. Our family business is strong, we realise that we are all in the same boat and we are motivated to get stranger after the lockdown. We will review our stock at the end of the season and I think that we may reconsider our order decisions for 21/22.

### What percentage of old stock are you sat on compared to a 'normal' year?

Last season wasn't that bad, so it's: 20% snowboards, 15% bindings, 15% boots, 10% mens outw, 20% wms outw, 5% goggles, 5% gloves.

### What were some of the best things brands have done for you since the start of the pandemic?

Telling us they are happy to have up to 70% of carry-over. I think this is a really cool move. It will help us to make business with the same stuff the next season.

### How do you expect brands to drive consumer demand with zero events?

That's really difficult. We have never built an online business because we are a local shop and talk to our customers directly by having cool in-store relationships. So, I hope the brands won't focus solely on the internet and will try to find other solutions to keep their customers!

### Which brands are super hot right now and which products are selling well so far this season?

Volcom first as always. Burton is still our partner in crime. Jones Snowboards are super hot, especially the splitboards, Tubbs snowshoes, bib pants. And of course Slash Snowboards! Gigi is a good friend of ours, the coolest guy!

### What are you hoping/expecting to see in product lines from brands for 21/22? Carry-over, smaller lines, more newness?

Carry-over and the most important thing is no big sales discounts. We can all make some business by taking a step back, and then there will be no need for massive discounts.

### Tell us about how you've used social media to stay connected to customers during the lockdown in November?

We are using Insta, FB and our website to stay connected and bring a smile to people's faces. We are FaceTiming or Whatsapp video calling our costumers, giving them support and personal consultation (the same as we did in the first lockdown). It works pretty good. Our customers can find the right thing they like, sizes they need. Once that's done, we send the stuff out.

### Sticking your finger in the air, how do you expect this winter to unfold?

Our idea is to push the scene locally and the next generation. We can all see the big change and a step up into the next level with kids snowboarding. Our objective should be showing our kids how cool it is to shred! Put them on a board and let them have fun. You can check out the Alton Mini Shred Day. It's for 2+ years-old kids, crazy cool!

IG @snowparkdamuels, @altonpremiumboardstore & @alton\_feldkirch altonpremiumstore.com



RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

**SKATEBOARD FOOTWEAR FW 21/22**

How will skateboarding shoes evolve amid the ongoing pandemic and unprecedented boom in participation? For answers, here's our Skateboard Footwear Fall/Winter 2021 Retail Buyer's Guide by SOURCE Skateboard Editor **Dirk Vogel**.



What a year! First the pandemic, then the unexpected skateboard boom that shattered hardgoods supply chains. In our summer issues of SOURCE, we were wondering whether all the new participants would also boost skateboard footwear sales? Now that 2020 is finally making an exit, industry insiders have a clearer picture. “The boom is definitely real for skate hardgoods, but as most of these consumers are new participants it’s going to take a while for a knock-on wave of sales to hit skate footwear. That being said, our partners who have a strong digital presence have also seen a surge in skate footwear, too,” said David Atkinson, Sr. Merchandising Manager, Action Sports at Vans Skateboarding.

Over at Sole Technology Europe (és, Emerica, etnies), Bas Janssen, Senior Sales & Marketing Manager EMEA said: “We are seeing a major increase in new skateboarding participants as well as product sales, both in our DTC channel as well as at wholesale. I think with the current situation with COVID-19, a lot of people have been working and learning from home so there’s been bit more free time to skate. Skateboarding offers an opportunity to be outside to be mentally and physically free.”

“The boom is definitely real for skate hardgoods, but as most of these consumers are new participants it’s going to take a while for a knock-on wave of sales to hit skate footwear. That being said, our partners who have a strong digital presence have also seen a surge in skate footwear, too,” said David Atkinson

**MARKET & PRICE POINTS**

The pandemic has disrupted many industries, and flatlined others (think hotels, airlines, restaurants). Even the skateboard shoe market is getting rattled, with brand monopolies tumbling. “Here in the US, both Adidas and Nike have cut back on some skateboard shops. Although I do not agree with these brands doing this, I am hopeful that it will give room for small skateboard-specific shoe brands like State to get introduced to these retailers’ customers,” said Kevin Furtado, Owner and Founder, The Free and Liberated State.

Asked about the integrity of their supply chains amid the pandemic, most brands in this guide reported initial shortages during the onset of lockdown measures, but almost full recovery at the time of writing. “The supply chain was a bit difficult in the beginning, but has shown improvement, while demand has been steadily increasing,” said Brian Barber, General Manager, Osiris Shoes. On the subject of price points, consensus among brands is avoiding price increases at all costs. “Per usual – pricing holds for the most part,” said Brent Phelps, Brand Manager at DVS. The main price window for skate footwear remains between €65 to €110, with every brand knowing its place. “Price points for és are usually a bit on the higher side due to technology used in footwear, complex design and materials used. Our sweet spot is €85 to €100 but for FA21 we are also introducing more basic styles at €80,” said Bas at és.

Speaking of next season, nobody has a crystal ball for what the new year will bring, but here are 3 Major Trends in Skateboard Footwear for Fall/Winter 21:



1. Winterized performance. Cold season in Europe calls for tough footwear, especially in a winter when many indoor skateparks are shut down by Covid-19. At DC Shoes, look forward to “new boots and sneaker-boot variations of new Manual High and Kalis Vulc Mid in partnership with Cordura fabric for extra durability and resistance to the elements. As well as partnering with Sympatex on a fully waterproof version of our heritage Navigator boot. All our products are water resistant.” For Element, “half of our winter range in part of the Wolfeboro segment, which means Winterized products and hiking inspired silhouettes.” The brand is introducing new materials including the Trailtech 2 Outsole made of Phylon and recycled rubber.

State relies on mostly wax-coated, or water-resistant suedes, while etnies Winterized collection is, “specifically designed for the cold winter days, gusseted tongues, treated suedes and leathers, lugged outsoles and all that.” At Globe, Head Designer Morgan King is stoked on: “customizing one of our classic styles, the Motley Mid with a winter pack featuring a heavily articulated lugged outsole – waterproofed leather – polar fleece linings and a full rubber toe cap to keep the water out!” DVS is headed into cold weather with “moisture wicking linings/ cold weather rubbers” while Osiris is, “bringing in a Clone Tundra featuring lined shearling and weatherproof materials.”

2. High-tops go big. The trend towards taller silhouettes has been simmering quietly, with some high-profile pro skaters filming entire video parts wearing high tops. For FW21, expect some fully-fledged performance beasts that go well above the ankle. The Omen high top from Emerica packs skate performance into a classic-looking package. At Globe, Morgan King reveals: “Our main new style the Dimension. The Dimension. This all-new skate shoe is aesthetically inspired by the DNA of our past heritage classics, with a modern focus on skate function and durability. This layered vulcanized high top has been designed and tested for skateboarding.” At Fallen Footwear, CEO Ronnie Mazzei revealed that “Elliot Sloan’s signature shoe will be a mid-top.” Speaking of mid-tops, the shoe that nailed the formula is going strong next year: “The Half Cab is back! And you will see more of it in the line and in special projects, alongside more archive styles that have been upgraded for skateboarding like the Authentic Hi and the Mid Skool. We have explored some elevated materials in this line with pearlized leathers, pig suedes and metal hardware,” said David Atkinson at Vans.

3. Athletic tech. The revival of 1990s tech shoes evolved into designing today’s performance-driven shoes with the latest technologies, but a retro feel. This is embodied by the latest offering from éS: “The Cycle is a new silhouette we are launching in F21 that has a hybrid athletic, skate feel, good for both onboard and off board activities.” Brent Phelps at DVS sums up the new formula as follows, pointing out the classic Commanche and new Wos collection: “The trend in heel air moves beyond athletic and running to definitely a sought-after, throwback, skate tech. Layered, pieced, colour block is key to the overall trend evolution.” Also watch for technologies like Vibram new impact reducing foam compositions.

#### SILHOUETTES & COLOURS

Next season’s workhorse silhouette, the shoe that everyone wants to skate, is a slim-fitting low-top with suede panelling and reinforced outsoles in either a vulc or cupssole construction. Look for understated, shred-ready models such as Nassim Windrow (etnies), Passiph & The Pitch (Element), Keys, Vista, Pacifica Cup (State), The Patriot, Trooper and Bomber (Fallen), Graff (Osiris). David at Vans is also announcing The Wayvee low-top model: “It is a progressive design but with all of our skate heritage tech in it – we worked closely with all our athletes to make sure it was what they felt like they needed.” And over at Emerica, the crew is psyched on the new Temple court silhouette with a soft suede patch in the ollie zone.

In terms of colours, winter usually means more understated tones and monochromatic palettes. But get ready for some excitement with the Vans Skate Slip On in a dark cheetah animal print with a shiny buckle as part of “a H2T pack for trans Vans skater Cher Strawberry.” At Osiris, Brian Barber announced the Forever collection featuring classics like D3 and Graff, with “throwback printed designs as well as featured colourways from the past. Also, we will be keeping our goal of putting out fresh and exciting colour-pops.” Plus, the summer trend towards natural rubber



outsoles continues, but paired with black uppers instead of white or pastels for a rugged, timeless look.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental consciousness is at an all-time high, and skate footwear brands are minimizing their impact – not just with air pockets in the heels. At etnies, it’s a full-circle approach from materials all the way into packaging, said Rick Marmolijo: “Most of our sustainable materials are used in our lifestyle collection, from recycled rubber, recycled PET laces, organic cottons and new for F21 Biodye. Currently, all of our boxes are made of recycled cardboard and do not use glue when they are constructed.” At DC Shoes, big news for 2021 includes partnerships with Bloom (insoles made from recycled algae), Refibra (material made from upcycled cotton and wood pulp) and Abaca (material made from banana tree palm fibres): “The big initiative we are focusing on as a brand in 2021 is our contribution to the sustainability efforts we are seeing on the marketplace. Starting in Spring '21 we are partnering with brands like Scafè - that make material made from recycled coffee grounds - as well as debuting our new vulc franchise called the Manual that is vegan friendly.”

David Atkinson at Vans sums up new environmental initiatives: “In addition to exploring new more natural and friendlier rubber compounds and reducing packaging, the big factors come from manufacturing where we have made targets under VF: An absolute reduction of Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions 55 percent by 2030, from a 2017 baseline year. An absolute reduction of Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by 2030, from a 2017 baseline year focusing on farm-to-retail materials, sourcing operations and logistics.” Morgan King at Globe pointed out partnerships with Waste 2 Wear, a producer of fabrics made from recycled plastic bottles as well as Wolverine leathers: “We believe sustainable, durable, long lasting shoes are the key to not only the market but keeping our environment intact.” With that said, let’s hope for a safe and healthy 2021 in skate shoes – and beyond. ☺

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

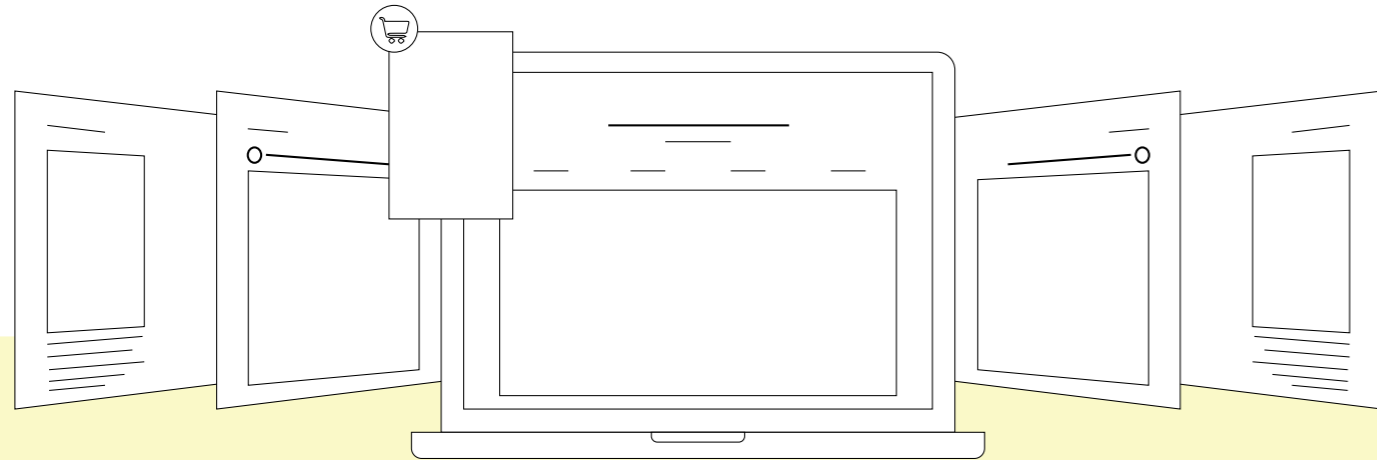
- 1 Steady price points
- 2 Darker colourways
- 3 Slim low-tops
- 4 Durability
- 5 Upcycling, plant materials
- 6 Hiker boots





## USING DIGITAL TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR B2B SALES

Even before COVID hit, things were a-changin'... the writing was firmly on the wall for the old school approach. It was the beginning of the end for writing orders in a notepad or - worse - over the phone from a paper catalogue. The pandemic was the nail in the coffin. The digital transformation of the boardsports industry is here; we take a look at the major players in the game and check out the advantages, and potential pitfalls, of the different technologies out there.



**B2B**  
Business to business sales platform

**ERP**  
Enterprise Resource Planning, business software

**DAM**  
Digital Asset Management system

**“With COVID, 2030 basically got pulled to 2020. And with it, all trends that relate to digitalization. And the businesses that were more digitally native have already replaced over 90% of their lost sales”. Tobias Lutke, Shopify Plus.**

written and submitted, then exported back into the ERP for treatment by sales coordinators. In short, when a retailer logs onto a brand's B2B space, they're seeing a brand's catalogue through the lens of the provider's framework. The goal is for everyone to sell better and work less, using the technological advantages to make the process faster and more accurate than old-school manual order form processing.

B2Bs have won legions of fans as reps, techy retail buyers and dealer services teams hail the time-savings and ease of use...but we also heard frequent grumbles from brand IT departments as they invest time and energy to support rapidly changing business needs, and struggle to make urgent repairs as bugs arise.

But sell-in is universally better because of these platforms. “Yes, that's true, says Picture's Global Sales Manager Gérald Matter. “A B2B makes life easy for the shop: not an Excel ATS, but photos + price, click, order. Easy. We have a very limited stock for reorder...only 7% of our total sales. But on reorder alone, our B2B has grown our reorder business by 50%”. This was a common theme; there's no question

Brands are unanimous; implementation of a B2B sales platform is a Good Thing and helps them to sell better. Of the brands we spoke to, most use off-the-shelf platforms like Elastic and NuOrder; K2 use Mobimedia and Picture Organic Clothing use Salesforce's own B2B. Dependence on custom-built, in-house solutions is trending down. “We have been shifting to Elastic from our customized BIN (Burton Information Network), which will go offline next April”, says Burton's Territory Business Director Dominik Flatscher. “Burton will use Elastic for Preseason Order W21/22 intake and expand to a B2B Platform covering all needs including Preseason, Reorder, Closeout, Shipment Tracking and so on”.

From a brand's perspective, the way these platforms work is broadly the same; data is sent from their ERP into the B2B platform, where it is presented to prebook and reorder buyers within the architecture of the provider. Orders are

“In these strange times we have been pushed and inspired to come up with new ways to do business.

We were already making plans with Elastic Suite, our B2B platform when the Covid-19 outbreak occurred but the pandemic put our plans on the fast track” Katrina Stronkhorst, Protest.

that a B2B enables shops to check inventory and order at their convenience. Retailer Claude Ticon from Manly Sport in Morges (CH) is a user of Elastic, NuOrder and others. He said: “We appreciate the ease of ordering. But some of these B2B platforms are way too complicated, and it's difficult to find the products you're looking for. We do a bit more business, especially on reorder, thanks to B2Bs”.

The merchandising advantages are also hard to deny. NuOrder's Cillian Drury showed us his slick virtual showrooms, digital catalogues and immersive, 360° linesheets which are their key advantages, and have won them over 2500 brands globally. Better than an unsustainable and dog-eared paper catalogue, for sure. Competitor Elastic, who are more present in the outdoor space, put their focus on ease of use and customisation of experience. European MD Johan Westerholm says “Curation and segmentation to get the right product mix to retail partners is what Elastic enables brands to do. Dealers and buyers have become accustomed to using it. In Europe and North America, we are the B2B of choice among surf/skate, outdoor and snow hardgoods and softgoods manufacturers. With such an unparalleled client list having adopted Elastic already, we have become the standardized buying experience between brands and their retail partners”. Standardization is good here; there are a lot of best practises in this area which custom built B2Bs can easily miss without solid roadmapping and frequent releases.

It's important to note, however, that an off-the-shelf solution is not, by definition, going to fit all businesses perfectly...tweaking will be required. Brands we spoke to complained of slow development progress and sometimes-patchy support from the providers. Also, B2B systems do not come cheap, and the upfront investment costs need to be offset against the forecast sales increases. Which you might have made anyway, of course.

“Overall we're happy, but there is still too much we need to do ourselves”, say Nitro. “All the IT companies always say no problem, but when it comes to solutions it's more difficult. Never trust IT people if they tell you they understand your business. They all need to get more experience to do it better”, they caution. Since B2B providers are key parts of our business, it's up to us as the industry to explain and show them the nuances of our world and the specific technical requirements that we need.

From a shop point of view, it seems retailers are happy to use B2Bs, albeit warily. “Today, clients don't want to wait; they want to know if the product is available right away. So it's undeniable that the B2B systems boost customer experience. And it's really convenient; I've already placed plenty of orders on a Saturday night, from home, with a beer in my other hand. Classy, huh?” Steve Wasmer from Technosurf Proshop in Grand Saconnex (CH) told us. “But we've had some problems with clients because of stock issues; you check the live stock and find the perfect product, make the sale, the client pays, then two days later you get an email apologising and saying the inventory was off. Everyone is disappointed; you lose the sale for sure and probably the client too”.

Whilst the accuracy of the platform is dependent on the quality of the input data, the platforms themselves are only as efficient as the people operating them. Training is also important - both on the front end and back end. “Yeah, training of employees is key - they have to work with the system on a daily basis. This leads into a lot of synergies where employees can concentrate more on important things and less on system or manual work”, emphasized Burton's Dominik Flatscher. Retailers we spoke to were also keen for platform training; none had received any so far and all said they'd benefit. In short, whether brands or shops, we're all still snowboarders first and businesspeople second, so that intuitive B2C-style experience is definitely what we're looking for, even in a B2B context. No-one ever needed an instruction manual or training session to use Amazon, after all. NuOrder's Cillian was quick to cite their mobile app as a useful and popular tool for retailers to use to check inventory and submit orders; this is a definite plus, as in our experience the mobile web experience of a brands' B2Bs aren't especially clean.

As more and more brands begin to use off-the-shelf B2B platforms, they'll also be able to leverage the advanced functionality tucked away within the systems. No brand we interviewed felt they were maximising the potential of their solution yet. Understandable, as the tech is all pretty new...and constantly evolving. It was encouraging to hear that efforts are being made to integrate B2Bs with the other parts of brands' digital ecosystems - particularly for DAM/ product assets or logistics information. Fewer passwords to remember, and easier to get more done, faster, on the shop side.

Any advice for brands who haven't taken the plunge yet? “Definitely go for the latest version”, says K2's Carsten.” And it's definitely a good idea to take lots of time and choose the perfect system for your needs. It can get very expensive if you don't have a clear plan and strategy”, confirms Nitro. According to the B2B providers out there, onboarding time is between one and four months depending on the complexity of the integration. And from there on out, the sky's the limit.

### CONCLUSION

This is happening and being a part of it will make your life easier and improve the way you work. Ultimately this is something everyone is going to need sooner or later; whether you're a retailer, brand or somewhere in between. Alternative platforms like Shopify Plus, RepSpark or Joor have yet to make inroads in our world but are very present in the apparel / FMCG worlds, and offer compelling platforms with undeniable performance advantages. Over to Cedric Nidecker, CSO of the Nidecker Group, for the last word; “Any tool which can give our distributors and dealers a better experience, and add value to our business, simplify their lives and give them more time to service and inspire our customers is a no-brainer”. Hear, hear. ☺

### PLATFORMS OF TOMORROW

Elastic	SalesForce	
NuOrder	Pepperi	Joor
MobiMedia	Shopify Plus	RepSpark





## RIDE, PROTECT & SHARE

**Ride, Protect & Share, these three words represent the essence of who we are: a snowboard, ski, surf, and outdoor clothing brand who, while not taking ourselves too seriously, still want to effect change.**

At a time when the textile industry is responsible for 8% of the world's carbon emissions and where the climate crisis has reached its peak, we all have our role to play to make a difference. Since Picture started in 2008, we have always sought to push one step further to minimize our impact on the environment. Our commitment to a sustainable, ethical, and environmentally-responsible approach covers every aspect of our business, from the supply chain, to manufacturing, to shipping.

To reduce the consequences doing business has on both the climate and people, we need to wipe out our dependence on fossil fuels. Curbing our impact on the environment and limiting growth, changing conventional production models, and promoting reasonable consumption are all key pillars of this evolution.

Okay, great, but alone we are just a drop in the bucket. This is where B-Corp certification has meaning: using business

and our influence as a force for good. We need to galvanize as many people as possible from our community – partners, and stakeholders in the outdoor and apparel industries - to participate in the energy transition and in removing carbon from the global economy.

**Fighting climate change through our passion for boardsports and great outdoors, this is our mission.**

*Julien, Jérémy & Vincent  
Picture's co-founders*



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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# TECHNICAL SNOWPACKS FW 21/22

Social distancing has pushed up the already growing numbers of backcountry fans. Experienced riders and newcomers will be out seeking the perfect bag in stores. Retailers' main concern will be to keep the shelves replenished. **By Rocio Enriquez.**



Backcountry riding was trending before the virus hit. The quest for infection-free riding has given it an extra push. "Numbers of people heading into the backcountry will be at an all-time high", predicts Dave Trenholm from Dakine. The technical backpack market will benefit from this. "The bag business seems to benefit from the boost in outdoor activity during COVID", says Florian Lang from Nitro. "More sports enthusiasts will switch from the slopes to off-piste. They will have to change their equipment", foresees Jan Sallawitz from Evoc. Backcountry riders need to carry some essential gear in order to ride safely. Experienced riders have made their requests loud and clear and brands have responded with innovation. Thanks to this, new fans will find a substantial range of technical backpacks to suit their needs.

Storage is pointless without a comfortable carry system. This is even more relevant for the trending disciplines of splitboard and touring. Functionality is key. "The mission of a technical backpack is to provide safety and confidence in the mountains. Therefore, it has to be functional and easy to use", says Maxime Lemaitre from Picture. "Riders expect packs to efficiently hold all the technical gear they need", says Seth Lightcap from Jones. Dave Trenholm sums up customers' expectations to durability, well-thought-out features and fit. Versatility is also expected. "Customers want backpacks that can be used all-year round rather than being limited to on-hill use only", says Gaz Poole from Snokart. Demand for sustainability keeps on increasing. "Sustainability remains a dominant topic, it's the new normal", says Tobias Maletz from Ortovox. "Consumers focus on the carbon footprint of their backpacks, without compromises to style and function", warns Maxime Lemaitre. "We are pushing a sustainable model for both pre-customer and post-customer areas", announces Jens Hartmann from Amplifi. Buyers reward brands who pay attention to sustainability and brands are reacting accordingly.

### NEW FOR FW21/22

New collections are fine-tuned to suit modern backcountry riding. The result is lighter packs with a good fit, clever storage sections and comfortable carry systems. Nitro introduces the Slash Pro 24 and the splitboarding specific Split Pack 30. Dakine has refined many features to meet these needs, including innovations to their helmet and goggle carry. These updates can be found in the new Premium Poacher Series. Amplifi's solution to airflow issues on their Snowlite pack maximises ventilation around the spine and shoulders while keeping the weight down, additionally its auto compression hip belts eliminate the swing weight. Evoc will launch the new LINE PRO, which provides comfort and ventilation on the ascent and back protection on the descent. It features the new Liteshield Plus technology which is En1621-2 certified. Its elements move independently, adapting to all movements while remaining close to the spine. Ortovox has developed the CLASP system. It allows the pack to fit tightly to the back of the rider without restricting the freedom of movement. The side compression system pulls the pack towards the body's centre of gravity. Picture focuses on security, protection and versatility. They offer storage for safety gear and safety print inside every pack, a thermo-moulded back panel, removable waist belt and stowable ski and ice axe webbing. Jones provides useful pockets, including two oversize hip ones, a fleece-lined goggle pocket and a helmet pouch. All their packs also include a front load strap for locking your board when climbing. Snokart bets on integration and builds its packs to work seamlessly with the luggage.

Brands take consumers' demands of sustainability seriously. Fabrics play a big role; most brands are already using recycled polyester. Picture steps it up with recycled lining and buckles. Dakine uses a new recycled, GRS certified high-density Nylon on the new Poacher Series. Amplifi has Bluesign approved and Oeko-Tex certified components. Ortovox uses recycled polyester on the packaging too, to make the product climate neutral. PFC and PVC free fabrics are seen throughout Jones, Nitro and Evoc's ranges.

### RETAILER SUPPORT

The best support for retailers is to educate customers on technical features. Dakine, Jones and Picture make product videos. Snokart provides screens with tutorials about how to pack your bag. It also offers Zoom training sessions for retailers' staff. Arva shows retailers how to display packs showing all the safety features.

The popularity of backcountry has kept the sales of backpacks, products essential to this activity, steady. Brands who invested in this segment will reap the benefits this coming season. Newcomers will flock to the mountains and backpack brands have the right product to secure their business. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Growth of Back country boosts backpack use
- 2 Functionality adapted to modern back country riding
- 3 Comfort and light weight for ascents
- 4 Protection and good fit for descents
- 5 Sustainability key in purchase decisions



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- WANJA BACH (DE)
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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# MEN'S STREETWEAR FW 21/22

As the pandemic lockdown stretches into winter, streetwear brands are flaunting their creativity. See the coolest trends and styles for cold weather season in our FW21/22 Men's Streetwear Retail Buyer's Guide by **Dirk Vogel**.



DC

While skateboarding had an unexpectedly hot year in 2020, streetwear is officially sizzling right now as well. At least looking at recent market transactions: Global streetwear hype leaders Supreme recently became part of the VF Group, home of Vans and The North Face, in a \$2.1 billion deal. Impressive for a label started out of a New York skate shop in 1994, but even more impressive keeping in mind that previous owners, Carlyle, had purchased a roughly 50% stake for about \$500 million in 2017, giving Supreme a valuation of nearly \$1 billion. So Supreme more than doubled in less than four years, indicative of streetwear's ongoing appeal.

But asking the man on the street, not everyone is on board for the sell-out. "Before it was called 'streetwear' in the early '90s, it was skatewear. I am convinced that skateboarding and streetwear are in a consequent correlation to each other. It gives streetwear a second life," said Julian Wolf, Head of Marketing at Homeboy, adding: "After all these sportive, tracksuit brands like Fila and Ellesse or luxury brands like LV and GUCCI kind of ruined the term 'Streetwear', the skateboard scene set it back and redefined it as it was initially. Because skateboarding gave streetwear a totally different vibe, there is again demand for the modified and more authentic look of it!"

Others consider streetwear and skateboarding separate entities, including Rey Gautier, Global Creative Director at Element: "There has been an evident increase in skateboarding and by default, this also draws a parallel with apparel and affiliated products. However, the beauty of skateboarding is that it evolves independently extremely fast, so whilst the demand for streetwear may benefit in some respects from the demand, the boom does not define the direction of either."

the beauty of skateboarding is that it evolves independently extremely fast, so whilst the demand for streetwear may benefit in some respects from the demand, the boom does not define the direction of either." said Rey Gautier

### MARKET SITUATION: STAYING OPTIMISTIC

Speaking of demand, a look at current market numbers signals trouble brewing among young consumers. According to recent report, the coronavirus pandemic has caused teen spending on apparel to decline by 11% on last year, and 48% of teenagers reported a pessimistic outlook for the economy, up from 32% in 2019 (Piper Sandler). "The whole market is facing a very tough situation due to the Covid19 pandemic. People are forced to stay at home, many retailers don't know how to survive the next months," said Patrick Kressner, Head of Design and Product at Iriedaily, adding: "The good news are that people seem to have more money in their pockets, because they maybe weren't going to holidays, concerts, out for lunch or they just saved some money for later. They have to stay more or less at home or in their area. But people are bored. They start or re-start new hobbies like skating, biking, hiking, or whatever they like. Or they simply spend their money for new clothes." In other good news, price points are on par with last season and supply chains remain intact for endemic streetwear brands. Let's have a look what's coming down the pipeline for FW21/22:





## Artist Series Decks | Rapid Space

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Homeboy

### SEASON TREND: FUNCTIONALITY

The miraculous summer of skateboarding makes way for a long, cold winter. Especially because lockdown measures are back across Europe and indoor skateparks remain mostly closed for health reasons. So skaters are back on their DIY grind, out in the urban jungle, hitting up carparks, abandoned buildings, and DIY spots under bridges. All of which requires warm, functional, and movement-friendly clothes. As Rey Gautier at Element sums up the season's focus: "Functionality appropriate to its intended use – bridging skateboarding and nature (outdoor) whilst remaining totally relevant in urban environments – it's all about multifunctional use for us." Look forward to rugged hoodies with insulation and water-repellent surfaces, like the Vans Versa hoodie from last season. Also, technical pants with stretch and breathability built in, as well as layering pieces that can step aside as the skate session heats up. DC Shoes is heading into the season with two themes: "The Outdoorsmen concept comes from the great outdoors mixed with workwear construction details meant for the utilitarian. This where skate meets comfort and luxe details. The Cold City concept is based off the cold city streets and off the mountain vibes. Built for those exploring the city with some attitude. This where the streets meet the great outdoors," said Amran Bachrain, EMEA Product Manager at DC SHOES.

### FIVE STREETWEAR TRENDS TO WATCH IN FW2021

#### 1. BAGGY PANTS

The ballooning of pants has been going from the fringes to centre stage in recent seasons. Next year will mark the breakthrough, said Julian at Homeboy: "We got laughed at for four years because even in the boardsports scene, the skinny pant was pretty anchored. SS20 everything started changing though and for FW21 the baggy will have replaced the skinny completely in the boardsport segment. We were the first European brand selling baggys in the nineties, are still one of only a few baggy brands and we are definitely the most authentic one today." Rey at Element also sees a clear trend towards larger fits and workwear in early 1990s style.

#### 2. TECHNICAL GARMENTS

True to the season trend towards functionality, people want extra support from their garments on missions through the city. Patrick at Iriedaily said: "The main trend for us this season is called Urban Nomad. For us urban

nomads are people that like to travel self-determined. From every place they visit they take inspiration for their wardrobe. That's why the urban nomad look is a wild and colourful but stylish mix of ethnic inspired patterns, basics and functional garments." At Element, Rey outlines the components of functional technology as follows: "Our focus in pants has been placed on hybrid outdoor and skate – mainly inspired by climbing and hiking pants. Mixing a lot of insulations, Sherpa fleece, Oversized Checked Wools, Heavy Cord, Heavy Brushed Fleece and Recycled outerwear yarns. Interesting textures created by mixing fabrics together." At DC Shoes, Amran announced: "A large portfolio of heavy canvas jackets, puffy jackets, baggy pants made from cotton herringbone twill fabric (283g/m<sup>2</sup>), and a brand new tees range using new designs, new washes and ink execution."

#### 3. FLEECE

Across all brands, fleece is a hot ticket this season packaged into zip-up jackets or used as ultra-warm lining. Rey at Element announced: "We have developed a versatile collection of reversible Sherpa and Polar fleece garments to be compliment the outerwear collection. One of the highlights is the collaboration between Element x Hotel Radio Paris with Polartec fabrics, bridging our vision of skateboarding, culture and nature." Also heavily trending is corduroy, a winter staple reimagined in 'fat' silhouettes on pants and tops. "X-Tra Baggy Cord in black. The cord pant is the perfect piece for the winter. The mix between the super comfortable fabric, the classic look and the trendy silhouette makes it a piece you definitely want to order," said Julian at Homeboy.

#### 4. LOUD ARTWORK

Despite the cold, streetwear likes to send a loud message this winter season. Look for prints and fabric treatments in rich colourways and patterns across pants and outerwear pieces. As for the palette, Patrick at Iriedaily is banking on: "Seasonal colours are powerful natural, warm autumn tones in many shades from caramel, warm reds, browns and greens. We combine them with super dark and intense colours." When it comes to prints, the crazier – the better. "Crazy graphics like the ones Ozzy Wright has been painting on his surfboards for years will stay strong on tops. Otherwise, subtle embroideries will prevail and therefore discreet but special silhouettes will come to the fore," said Julian at Homeboy. Element is staying true to their nature focus with, "soft and abstract camouflages taken from the view of mountain ranges for example applied to heavy Sherpa fleece."

#### 5. SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

The year 2020 marked a major awakening of global environmental consciousness. Boardsports brands have long been leading the way (think Patagonia) and innovations for reducing the environmental impact of streetwear continue. "As a member of the Fair Wear Foundation we have a strict schedule and have to plan all work steps in time to avoid overtime in the factories. Iriedaily has maintained the Fairwear leader status again. This makes us proud and we are highly motivated to work together with the FWF for fair working conditions and wages in our factories," said Denise Graff, Brand Marketing Manager at Iriedaily. True to their brand philosophy, Element is also backing eco innovation: "We have greatly increased the use of sustainably sourced fabrics and yarns in partnership with partners such as Repreve, Recover, Polartec & Sympatex amongst others." At DC Shoes, Amran said: "Starting Fall 21, the DC Apparel range sees a shift in its denims production to one of the cleanest process known today with 80% less water, zero-chemical."

#### SEASON ESSENTIALS

Before we run out of space for this article, here are some FW21/22 essentials to look out for. Never leave the house without a mask during the pandemic and find some innovative choices from boardsport brands like Element: "We have a neck warmer / face mask hybrid as part of the accessories collection – again, multi-functional use." Denim is trending this winter, but it is getting more rugged: "Denim will stay strong, but while light denim is still a big part of the sales, indigo will overtake slowly. Twill and work wear materials will also still be a big theme," said Julian at Homeboy, who also suggests a fishermen's beanie as THE head covering for the season. What else? The trending in-between-seasons jacket is a denim hybrid coat, or shirt jacket, that can be worn solo during autumn and as a layering piece for extra warmth during the height of winter. With streetwear styles like these, the season is bound to be hot! ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Tense consumer environment
- 2 Function over fashion
- 3 Fleece, corduroy, heavy yarns
- 4 Technical garments
- 5 Baggy pants
- 6 Loud prints on tops & bottoms
- 7 Fishermen's beanies





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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# WOMEN'S STREETWEAR FW 21/22

Nobody rolls into cold weather season with hotter style than women's streetwear brands.

Get all the must-have pieces and trends in our FW21/22 Women's Streetwear Retail Buyer's Guide by **Dirk Vogel**.



### MARKET SITUATION

The summer's skateboarding boom was particularly strong in the women's segment, and endemic streetwear brands are feeling the tailwinds. "For sure the demand for streetwear is bigger than it was in the past. The interest of younger generations to a more self-driven lifestyle, which skateboarding impersonates, shuts down a lot of rules when it comes to dressing up," said the team at Bleed Organic Clothing.

Over at German OG streetwear brand Homeboy, Julian Wolf, Head of Marketing said: "From our perspective the situation in European boardsport retail is remarkable. But let's be honest... by saying 'boardsports retail', I mean skateboarding. The booming of skateboarding has a huge effect on streetwear and therefore also on us as a streetwear brand!" While the market is trending up, prices have remained flat despite headwinds in supply chains. Actually, value propositions are stronger than ever, as Element Global Creative Director Rey Gautier pointed out: "Having printable tees using 100% organic cotton starting at 25€ is a strong call. Same on jackets with recycled polyester using Repreve starting at 130€."

### SEASON TREND: UNISEX STYLE

Putting a finger on next season's leading trend, Ines Schwitzky, Category Manger Women at Iriedaily said: "Right now we see a big comeback of the '90s skate culture within streetwear. Especially for women's streetwear this comeback has a big influence on how girls dress. The look is baggy, oversized tops and bottoms and skate shoes. Unisex is key." According to the team at Bleed Organic, this opens up more choices than ever: "Clothes are getting more diverse in fit, sizes and style, giving women the possibility of wearing whatever they want and how they feel." Baggy pant pioneers Homeboy are on the same page: "It is very important that we sell it as a unisex style. This makes it more transparent for us, but also for the customer, and customers

all receive the same authentic product." At the same time, Rey at Element said: "Unisex is present, however, we purposefully lean towards femininity within streetwear."

### SILHOUETTES

According to the season's unisex focus, silhouettes are getting wider and more comfortable. "The clothes are turning to a more loose and comfy fit. Tops are getting more boxy, pants change to a more loose and comfortable fit. Overall comfort and function but still being dressed is key to our styles," said the team at Bleed. At Homeboy, baggie pants are designed with, "wide cut and baggy legs, but at the hip and bottom well fitting, slightly tapered and cropped." At female streetwear pioneers Nikita, Stephanie ter Hürne, Brand and Marketing Europe, said: "The Covid-19 pandemic for sure had an impact here as well, because of the curfews and the increasing of home office work we experienced that the trend is going towards cosy stuff, like jumpsuits, joggers, hoodies with extra soft materials."

Julian Wolf, Head of Marketing said: "From our perspective the situation in European boardsport retail is remarkable. But let's be honest... by saying 'boardsports retail', I mean skateboarding. The booming of skateboarding has a huge effect on streetwear and therefore also on us as a streetwear brand!"

### MATERIALIZATIONS

Speaking of materials, the trending fabric of the moment is fleece. The key piece for Nikita is, "the Cruiser pull over is a really cool and unique combo of Sherpa fleece and regular fleece. The Poppy fleece is a ¼ zip Sherpa fleece with a great fit and cosy material." At Iriedaily, fleece is central in the season's must-have combo of their, "Team Sherpa Coat combined with one of our Hopi Fleece Troyer and our new wide leg Civic pant. This look is cosy and stylish and the best for autumn." And guess what Bleed is pushing this season? Fleece! "Our Hemp Hoodies are bringing cosiness, function and style through our hemp and cotton American fleece which has its natural colour and is combined with an all-over print inspired by things we find on a walk through the woods."

### COLOURS & ARTWORK

Finally, what are trending colourways for FW21/22? At Nikita it's all about, "our blush pink, slate, navy and white colour story, which has been received really well so far." At Iriedaily, the standouts are, "shades of browns combined with orange, camel and warm reds. It is the ultimate autumn colour palette with a vintage touch." Element is banking on, "muted and subtle colours," while Bleed has a palette with, "lots of earthy tones. Warm ochre, woody greens, smoky blue, soft white and solid black." In terms of graphics, get ready for big 1990s-style logos by brands like Nikita and Iriedaily, plus season classics like checks and all-over prints, plus artwork designed by the great outdoors. With that said, consumers are looking to stay warm, stylish, and comfy this season, and endemic streetwear brands are delivering just that across the board. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Demand for women's streetwear
- 2 Longer tops, looser fits
- 3 Unisex styles
- 4 Muted colours, full prints
- 5 Comfy fleece and linings
- 6 Hemp and natural fabrics





## BIG WIG INTERVIEW NORTHWAVE'S DAVIDE ROSSETTI

For the past 3 years, Davide Rossetti has been General Manager at Northwave working to advance the company to the next level. Before heading to Northwave, Davide worked as Product Manager, then Marketing Manager of the Safilo Group's Sport Division bringing with him great expertise. Since joining Northwave, the company has been undergoing a rebranding process. Davide explains to SOURCE just what that process entails, how Northwave have used the events of 2020 as an opportunity to learn, the importance of flexibility both in the supplier-brand-distribution relationship and changing market conditions.

### Tell us about your background and what led you in your career to running Northwave.

I have over 25 years experience working in the sporting goods industry. Since my early days, I've worked in multinational companies, where I was lucky enough to be able to work in both the wholesale and retail areas of business; in doing so, over the years, helped me build a solid knowledge of both parts of business. I've known Northwave since the early 90s when I was working at Safilo Group. At Safilo, I initially worked as Product Manager, then I progressed to Marketing Manager for the Safilo Sport Division (including Smith Sport Optics, Carrera Sports, Polo Sport RLX, etc...). In late 2017, Gianni Piva (Northwave Founder and current President) called me, proposing to me the position of General Manager at Northwave. The job would be to help transition Northwave to the 2nd generation and lead the company to the next level and I didn't waste a single second in accepting the position and the challenge - especially for a brand I've always admired.

Over the last 2 years, we were all working on an intense company re-engineering process that would allow us to bring the company from what it is today to what it wants to become in the future.

### How had the company performed in the three months leading to March 2020?

Over the last 2 years, we were all working on an intense company re-engineering process that would allow us to bring the company from what it is today to what it wants to become in the future. We've worked on every aspect, from strategical to operational levels. I'm very proud of the team here and for the first two months of 2020 we were displaying positive results. Those first months were going in the same direction of 2018/19, with solid double-digit growth. In the first days of the pandemic, there was a lot of uncertainty as nobody knew what we'd be facing in the

As you know Northwave is both a bike and snowboard business. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have highlighted to us just how fast the bike business is changing and developing, this has motivated us to push, even more than we ever expected.

coming months. But everybody here acted responsibly, putting a lot of effort into doing what was necessary, to the point where we were working as full on as we would usually do working in the office.

As you know Northwave is both a bike and snowboard business. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have highlighted to us just how fast the bike business is changing and developing, this has motivated us to push, even more than we ever expected.

### What have been the biggest lessons learnt since the pandemic hit Italy?

I always think in turbulent times there are opportunities for the ones who are willing to face them and take the challenge. So, for us at Northwave, the pandemic will simply accelerate the processes that are already in progress, with the team working hard to ensure Northwave continues to move in the right direction.

Which opportunities are you looking to take advantage of?

The market dynamics are changing and as a result, you need to learn how to react quickly to the different conditions. I think every company has understood that deep change is needed at the operations level and that digital is not the future: digital is now. Last but not least, the organisation of risk management is also a critical issue.

### Shops cut orders dramatically in March. If we're lucky and the winter goes very well with good snow fall and people go riding, how have you prepared yourself for a potential supply issue?

Needless to say, the tail end of the last sales campaign was impacted by the beginning of the pandemic. Moving goods from Asia isn't as easy and is far more expensive than in the past. At the moment, I don't see any potential issue impacting the supply chain as the 'supply' issue over the summer was mainly caused by production issues in Asian countries, China mostly, due to the pandemic.

### How are Northwave & Drake shaping 21/22 lines to suit the pandemic? Carry-over?

Throughout this year from the bike business, we learnt we needed to keep the supplier-brand-distribution triangle close. Flexibility is not an option, it's mandatory. Together, we need to find the best way to pass through this tough time, whatever it takes, because after all, this is a health emergency, not an economic emergency. As we learnt last summer: As soon as the pandemic restrictions are eased, consumers rush to experience freedom again. And this is what we exist for - providing products for consumers to enjoy.

### What are you doing in the ecommerce channel to ensure your wholesale partnerships remain intact?

The primary objective of our website is to offer full visibility of our collection irrespective of the consumer's location. We haven't run any promos/ offers/ discounts/ etc... and as a reference point to our position, we have left everything at full price. Taking into consideration both bike and snow, we're distributing in over 45 countries around the globe and wholesale is our primary scope of business.

### Any overall notions or thoughts on the snowboard industry's path out of the pandemic?

It's difficult to say something relevant considering almost nobody really knows how this winter will pan out. Although, I can say that for the coming March, we're having the same thoughts and worries for the bike business that we're experiencing now for the snow side of things. There are lots of lessons that can be taken from this situation, such as clarifying ideas and to make decisions on things that were always being postponed. However, above all else, the number 1 lesson is to understand how to support distribution, particularly distributors who predominantly work in one season only, a lesson we can demonstrate this winter season.

### How will you be celebrating the brand's 30th?

We're currently going through a rebranding process and in mid-2021, our new logo will enter the market. This is a major step for us. There are a number of product releases and communication campaigns dedicated to it. We would've loved to have had a couple of big celebrations in Europe, an idea that we haven't totally discarded, but it's an idea that we are going to have to keep on hold considering the current situation. So, for Northwave's snowboard business, I'd say celebrations will mostly be postponed to the 21/22 winter season.

### How will Northwave and Drake be supporting retailers without events this winter?

This is one of the major weaknesses of this winter. Needless to say, everybody will be missing ISPO as a trade event but we are still confident there is going to be somewhere in January and February that will serve as a space for demos, events, etc, despite the restrictions due to the pandemic situation. There is no way our dealers can pre-book without testing new products. Digital content can help. Social media can support. Virtual product presentations are now part of the process. But testing products is not just an option. There is no other way when it's about evaluating new products

### Which are your strongest performing territories and where do you see biggest potential for growth?

France is as always one of our main territories, but our focus is to gain space in the DACH area and revamp our presence in United States and Canada with our new distribution setup. This was for a couple of decades where Northwave and Drake was developing the largest part of its business. The consumer and dealer awareness is still there and with a solid team with only one option in front of us.

### Which b2b systems are you working with for stock management, catalogue creation and ordering. How has it helped the business and how do you see this growing in the future?

Since the pandemic started to spread, we accelerated most of our projects, where digital transformation (together with sustainability) is one of the main pillars for the future.

For this reason we are re-engineering our flow of information from the development of the collection to the accessibility for our dealers and so provide the best possible service. It is not an overnight process as it implies several internal changes. We see it as the only possible way to support our network in the future to able to compete in the coming scenario. ☺



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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# SNOW HELMETS FW 21/22

The helmet has become an essential part of any rider's kit, regardless of age or discipline. With widespread use comes education. Brands need to keep on being technologically innovative and consumers will reward them with good, steady sales. **By Rocio Enriquez.**



Giro

The conversation about the pros and cons of wearing a helmet on the slopes has definitely died down. New generations have no time for it and have pushed their views onto the older ones. For kids, it is an essential part of kit, and will remain so as they grow older. Also, improved helmet design in terms of comfort and aesthetics makes people more open to wearing them. "Helmets not only fulfil their safety aspect, but are now also super comfortable, warm and stylish", says Katharina Acham from Head. Pro-Tec sees the increasing focus on helmets as an opportunity. "We are hoping to catch some latecomers to helmet-use, as well as new fans of the sport", says R.P. Bess. Nowadays it's rare to see an exposed head on the mountain. Consumers understand the benefits of wearing a helmet and are willing to spend more for the right protection. "As people understand the need for a helmet, they are ready to spend more than what they did on the first helmet they bought", says Marine Cessans from Rossignol. The debate has moved on to more specific issues, such as which technology is most reliable or what is the best compromise between safety and comfort.

With the acceptance of helmet use, came the education of consumers. They are now very aware of the existing technologies and features a helmet can offer. The combination of comfort, fit and safety is the holy grail of head protection. Consumers reward brands that can offer the best compromise. When it comes to comfort, goggle compatibility and lightweight construction are key. Helmet / goggle integration improves performance. A light helmet

"The practice of wearing a helmet is no longer just appealing to grizzled mountaineering experts but also to the "turn earners" and "backyard explorers", says Darius Heristchian from Giro

is easier to wear and easier to carry. This is especially important for the increasing numbers of touring and splitboarding fans. "The practice of wearing a helmet is no longer just appealing to grizzled mountaineering experts but also to the "turn earners" and "backyard explorers", says Darius Heristchian from Giro. Users are also aware of the different levels of protection and the technology available for them. "Consumers know what they are looking for in a helmet and respect knowledgeable retail staff", says Tom Lazarus from Dirty Dog. "Consumers are now very well-informed about how a helmet may protect them in case of an accident. It is becoming their key purchasing driver", says John Lloyd from Koroyd.

### TECHNOLOGY

Development in impact protection is an ongoing one. Giro builds up on the success of its signature Spherical MIPS for rotational energy management. They had implemented it into their racing and freestyle models. Now they are extending it to all mountain and backcountry riders with the Grid Spherical MIPS style. "Light



“This system ensures that Koroyd is placed in smaller areas which are typically affected during an impact” says John Lloyd



affecting sell-in of FW20/21 as a result. Brands and stores have worked together on solutions to keep them both going. Many brands have postponed the launch of new models. Instead, they have carried over many styles from last season, so retailers can fill up the gaps in stock.

Brands are offering many POS solutions to support sales. Triple 8 has developed a branded tree display for twenty helmets. It is also providing a gondola display for helmets and pads for selected retailers. Koroyd has a new piece that can be used as a tabletop display or on a slat wall system. It will also include, for the first time, an integrated Koroyd part to communicate how the technology works. Oakley offers a complete shop-in-shop system that includes goggles, helmets and apparel, to showcase the brand. It will also have special solutions for presenting goggles and helmets on the shelf or counter. POC has helmet stands with assorted imagery options to tailor it to each particular helmet. Spy+ bases the POS programme on athlete collaborations. It will also add a new artist collaboration with San Diego artist Damasso Sanchez. Roxy and Quiksilver developed a new display that showcases goggles and helmets either combined or individually but had to postpone it due to the pandemic. Instead, they are focusing their efforts on providing education about technology and features. Their e-learning module for internal use and clinics help clients present their ranges at the beginning of the season. Education is a great form of support for such a technical product. Head is producing high quality videos with features, technology and fit to present the helmets to potential customers. Rossignol will be distributing posters explaining the IMPACTS technology.

Helmet use is so widely accepted in every age group and riding style that sales of this segment are expected to have a steady increase. With brands offering the right technology and retailers presenting it clearly to the customers, helmets should not stay on the shelves for long. ☺

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#### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 essential part of kit
- 2 Consumers very educated
- 3 Balancing safety & comfort
- 4 Lightweight and breathable styles for splitboarding

NILS MINDNICH



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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# SNOWBOARD PROTECTION FW 21/22

The rising popularity of backcountry riding is driving demand for body protection.

Brands are responding with user-friendly products that mitigate the traditional reticence for wearing protectors.

This will secure an industry segment that promises a steady growth. **By Rocio Enriquez.**



The trend, kicked off by helmets a few seasons ago, has extended to other parts of the body. Body protection is not a niche product for rail-hitting park riders anymore. "If you avoid injury, you spend more time on the hill", says Amplifi CEO Jens Hartmann. Many factors have contributed to this. The growing popularity of backcountry riding brings about the need for the right protection to enjoy it. The effect of climate change on snow conditions is partly to blame. Finding good powder requires off-piste exploration. "The search for great conditions takes more effort than it did in the past", says Evoc's Jan Sallawitz. The backcountry is also favoured these days by snowboarders aiming to avoid the risk of infection. Some look at splitboarding as a way of keeping away from lifts. Riders who climb up the mountain and push their limits on the way down want reliable and comfortable protection. "Users will demand their body protection to be truly lightweight and breathable", says John Lloyd from Koroyd. For Simon van Lammeren, founder of Xion, it is a simple equation. "Reducing the risk of getting injured allows riders to push their limits and enjoy the sport to the fullest".

Still, body protection is no rider's favourite piece of kit. "That's why making it thin and comfortable is important", says Patrick Lambert of ForceField. Brands are focusing on developing body protection that is easy to wear. "It is now easier to find what you need in terms of balancing comfort and protection", says Damian Phillips from POC. Alex Sardella from G-Form says: "Soft-shell protection is at the forefront of the market trends". The key is to offer all day protection without noticing it. "We aim to create flexible, invisible and reliable protection with adaptive characteristics", shares Amplifi's designer Tom Howells.

Increasing numbers of kids and women in snowsports have also contributed to the demand for body protection. "Kids and women have more exposure than ever with social media. They encourage younger generations to take up the sport, younger generations who are more prone to wearing protective gear", says Noah Todaro from Triple 8. They are boosting the sales of gear/apparel with low-key added protection. Still, it is the spine that riders are most keen on protecting. Amplifi, Xion, XBrave and POC report their biggest sales last season in this segment, a trend likely to continue. Protection developers are putting their brains to the matter. "Our new technology improves the efficiency of existing back protectors by up to five times", announces Thomas Saier from Adam's Four.

The goal is the same for all brands: to make protective gear that you forget you're using. XBrave is building on the acceptance of its super light, thermo active underlayer Pro 2+ back protector. It is adding chest and shoulder protection with the Pro 3+ and Pro 4+ styles. Xion focuses on comfort, breathability and flexibility. This has produced the popular D3O Viper Stealth vest, with back protector and adjustable waist. POC is constantly evolving its own Visco-elastic Polymer Dough (VPD), now offered in back, knee and elbow pieces. It moulds to the rider's shape with body heat and hardens on impact. Evoc is equipping all upper body protection with its LiteShield Plus. This is an extremely lightweight and flexible pad with multiple vent channels for maximum air circulation. Koroyd will launch a new backpack insert. They claim it to be the thinnest and lightest protector meeting the EN1621-1 test protocol for spine protection. Adam's Four is launching the new RSP (Rotational Spine protector). Expect to see this patented technology featured by many major brands. Amplifi has added a knee protector to its range of MKX injected pieces. "The new MKX is only 10mm thick. It has great shock absorption, is extremely flexible and creates no heat build-up", says Tom Howells. Amplifi is also investing efforts in sustainability, with the incorporation of Miharo, a fast growing and highly renewable natural fibre. Blended with polyester, it offers the anti-odour and moisture regulating properties that users request.

Snowboarders are becoming more aware and educated about protection. Brands are listening and delivering. The better protective gear is, the more likely it is people will keep wearing it. This is good for industry figures, for user safety, and ultimately for the sport. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Backcountry driving demand
- 2 All-day protection, without noticing
- 3 Splitboarding popularity demands comfortable + lightweight
- 4 Improvements increases acceptance
- 5 No injury, more riding





RIDER: ALEX STEWART



# EVOLUTION



RIDER: ETHAN MORGAN



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## RETAIL BUYER'S GUIDE

# SPLITBOARD HARDGOODS FW 21/22

Splitboard brands always talk about the massive potential for growth in the sector; and despite COVID-19 (or perhaps even because of it), 2021/22 looks like it could be the year to boost the number of backcountry partakers higher than ever. Andrew Duthie rounds up how brands are adjusting to the new normal.

retail buyer's guide



Arnpold

### COVID DIVIDEND

"There has been a TON of demand for our splits online in Autumn 2020," says Seth Lightcap, Global Marketing Manager for Jones. It's a sentiment echoed across much of the splitboard sector, and one that has in no small way influenced how companies will be approaching the 2021/22 season. Having the option to ride at a time when the lifts might not even be spinning is attracting more mountain-dwellers to the poles-and-skins option.

"It really feels like splitboarding is going to receive significant focus in this socially distanced pandemic climate," notes Mervin Co-Founder Pete Saari. "Like mountain biking, which boomed this summer, splitboarding offers you the complete experience of exercising and keeping fit on the climb and endless thrills on the descent." Arnaud Repa from Rossignol sums it up pretty neatly: "It is a niche market that takes its roots in isolation, therefore is well prepared for pandemics."

Then there's the sustainability angle; having done away with the need for chairlifts, gondolas, piste-bashers and mountain cafes, splitboarders tend to be an eco-conscious lot, so it's a chunk of the market that'll be primed for carryover more than most. Borealis owner Ben Hall certainly thinks so: "To me, the carryover approach is, quite simply, more sustainable and in complete opposition with the 'consume > throw away' culture we live in. I think it's good to focus on making high-quality, long-lasting products, if possible, made using materials with a reduced impact on the environment."

"It really feels like splitboarding is going to receive significant focus in this socially distanced pandemic climate," notes Mervin Co-Founder Pete Saari.

### BASE CAMP

With all this fresh interest, it makes sense to begin with what's out there for newbies. After also witnessing a spike in inquiries post-COVID, the team at Never Summer set about creating lower-priced options for the uninitiated of both genders. Gone is the carbon fibre that's found on the higher-end models, but, to a degree, changes to the thickness and taper of the cores have compensated for this.

Less costly boards are great, of course, but for anyone new to splitboarding, there's plenty more on the shopping list. For that reason, Burton will continue to offer all-in-one splitboard gear packages for both men and women in 2021/22. Similarly, K2 are adding a new model called the Freeloader which features a new, significantly lighter core designed for touring.

Want to get the kids into the backcountry? Nitro potentially have the answer in the form of a new kids-specific splitboard, the Miniganger. Don't worry about having to find skins and bindings to fit; both are



“We believe it will be important to offer retailers and consumers some fresh products and drive excitement through this,” explains Chris Siebrecht, Sales & Marketing Manager.

provided in a neat little entertainment package that'll knock the Playstation 5 into a cocked hat.

Over at Union, they've got some new approach skis on the way. The Rover, built at CAPITA's Mothership facility in Austria, will give riders the opportunity to stick with their solid board and standard binders, making it an affordable way for never-evers to enter the backcountry. Look out for a compatible backpack too.

#### ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

For customers already familiar with the art of glide, there's plenty to get excited about for 2021/22. Arbor are among the brands avoiding carry-over in the splitboard sector altogether. “We believe it will be important to offer retailers and consumers some fresh products and drive excitement through this,” explains Chris Siebrecht, Sales & Marketing Manager. “We hope this decision will be appreciated by our retailers”. Among the new arrivals are two women's models; the split version of Marie-France Roy's Veda freeride board, and a camber version of the Swoon. All Arbor splits will now also feature 'Rise Above Plastics' construction which eliminates the need for fiberglass in the topsheet, as well as the option to buy pre-cut skins.

Rossignol have also looked to one of their standard-bearers in order to up their women's offering. Freeride World Tour three-peater Marion Haerty gets a split version of her After Hours, which leans a bit more towards backcountry freestyle than most. Meanwhile Burton have added a split version of the resurrected Leader Board. “This is geared towards more technical mountaineering-style splitboarding,” says Lesley Betts, the B's Senior Product Line Merchandiser.

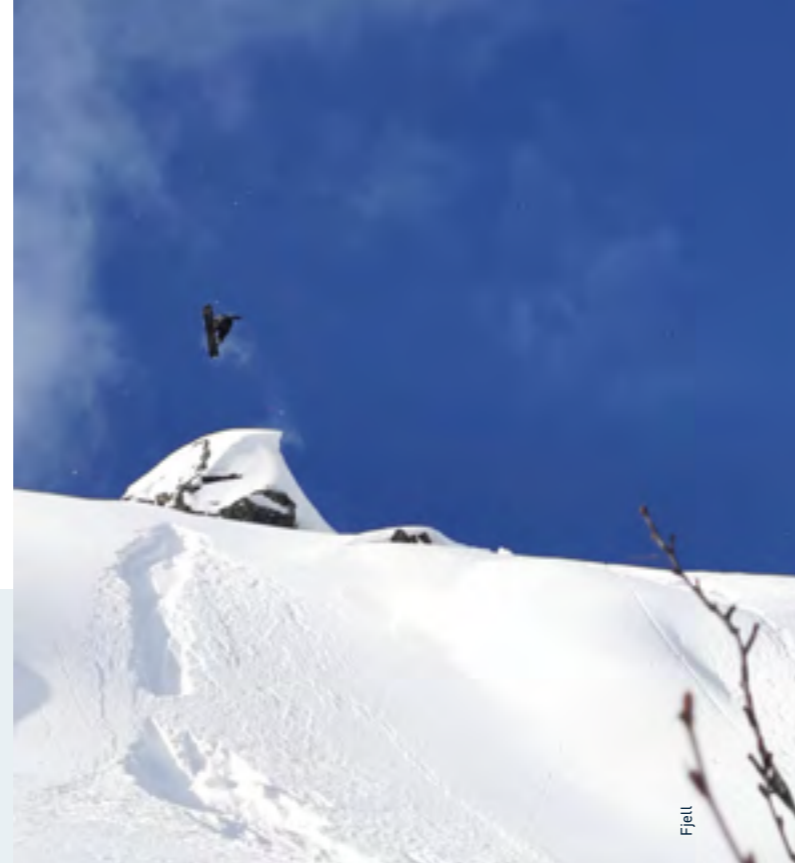
Even more fresh gear is incoming from Nitro; even with the Incline boot and Vertical binding barely out of the gate, the brand is doubling down. The Skylab boot features a single-piece construction on the lower section, making it all but impenetrable, as well as lightweight. What's more, it's reinforced against the wear and tear caused by bindings and crampons on the way up. There's also a set of 4-piece foldable poles on the way. With skins also available, as well as a range of decks (including the new split version of the Slash), as of 2021/22 Nitro will be joining the ranks of brands offering a full splitting setup.

Endeavor have looked to the past for inspiration, resurrecting topsheet technology last seen on Option snowboards (RIP). According to Brand Manager Joel Giddings, Armtex is “a continuously laminated fiberglass topsheet that is pre-cured under tension. This provides insane pop and flex memory. Added to this, no plastic topsheet is required, reducing weight and the need for more plastic to be out in the environment.” A new urethane configuration, designed to prolong the life of their splitboards, will also be applied in 2021/22.

Old hands and newbies alike should be seeking out quality backcountry safety gear – and if it lightens the load on the ascent then all the better. While Black Diamond will be carrying over more of their line of accessories than usual, look out for the new smartphone-compatible Recon LT transceiver (“the lightest digital fully featured beacon on the market,” says BD's Jonathan Hilborn). There's also the new Transfer LT shovel, registering a mere 405g on the scales.

#### CONTINUITY CANDIDATES

Of course, this is splitboarding, where the need to refresh the whole line on an annual basis wasn't a given, even before the disruption caused by the pandemic. Mervin, for example, were already planning on carrying forward the Gnu GORP and Lib-Tech Split BRD. “We hope that it gives retailers the confidence to bring in splitboards knowing



they will not be made obsolete due to changes in graphic direction,” says Pete Saari.

Salomon were likewise committed to a 100% carryover of splitboard gear, as were West. “The good thing here is that we have plenty of stock, and we take the risk of stock for our clients, says David Lambert. “Shops always order splitboards with caution on quantities, and they know they can count on us to have enough stock through the season.” Northwave's crampon-friendly Domain CR boot will also return for 2021/22 unchanged, which makes sense given its niche-within-a-niche target market.

Jones gave their splitboard line a major tech overhaul for 2020/21, so the following season will see a lot of carryover, aside from the fact that the clips will be upgraded to various versions of Karakoram's new 'Ultra' offerings. The high-end Ultracraft and Ultra Solution will be the only models on the market to feature the new Ultra 3C clips.

Gigi Rūf is now taking orders for his third season as complete owner of Slash Snowboards and the brand marks its 10th anniversary in 21/22. “We debuted the Vertical Split for 20/21 and it's been a huge success, sold out in November! The only adaptations I'll be making for 21/22 will be to get rid of the through-bolts and update the other split in our line, the Brainstorm Split with insert mountings which will leave the base untouched and make it a storming price-value board. We may update the Vertical Split graphic... it's still being debated!”

Another brand mixing up their fastenings (switching to Phantom Hercules hooks) but keeping everything else essentially the same is Stranda. It'll be the third year that their Shorty Backcountry splitboard will feature the same topsheet graphic. “Still a great seller for us”, is shaper Mats Drougge's rationale, and it's one with which it's hard to argue. While the look stays the same, the size range is expanding, which is an approach you'll also see from Gara (“Why change something that works well?” - owner Ota Tyl) and Fjell (“With all the noise in the world, we think for us it will be even more important to keep the silent expression in our design” - Co-Founder Kjetil Bjørge) in 2021/22. Then there's Korua, arguably the masters of the carryover. “We have been doing this since the very beginning,” explains Nicholas Wolken, “and it has been appreciated by our retailers.”

# GARA

## SPLITBOARDS

### SAFARI



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K2

to them online. Given the niche nature of splitboarding, the amount of technical info that needs explaining, and the importance of promoting mountain safety, the decline of face-to-face interaction could spell disaster.

Unsurprisingly it's the dyed-in-the-wood splitboarding specialists who are making the strongest case for physical sales. "We believe the brick-and-mortar game for snowboard and splitboard gear will remain strong in the future," notes Spark R&D's Dan Ventura. Kyle HansenKahn at Karakoram agrees; "Small shops are vital in their role as community hubs. While that may look different for a while moving forward, I think that need for local community organisation will always have a place in snowboarding". Jessica Deiber, PR manager at G3, doesn't mince her words: "Our retailers are our lifeblood."

Having said that, Plum's Thomas Debray makes the point that all brands should have already been offering the required info online even before COVID-19, saying that "there are not enough store retailers yet to correctly address all the end users so we do our best to inform people on our website with tutorial videos, product descriptions and spare parts."



Konvoi

Across the sector, most brands are striking a balance between the two - one that is likely to tip one way or the other, depending on what happens in the coming months. In short, retailers should be prepared for anything.

**CONCLUSION**

Even during a pandemic, it's wise to take a glass-half-full approach. However, in the case of splitboarding, it looks like fate might soon be topping said glass up to the brim. If brands and retailers alike can ride this wave of interest whilst pushing good information to customers of all levels, both in person and online, then expect 2022 to be the year that human-powered snowboarding got turbocharged. ☺

Visit our website to see in depth brand previews of this category.

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**HIGHLIGHTS**

- 1 Carry-over endemic to splitboarding
- 2 Boom on the cards
- 3 Bricks & mortar vital to category
- 4 Only essential upgrades

There's not much movement in the splitboard bindings category; most brands are staying the course for 2021/22, and SP are actually going in the opposite direction. It was a decision directly inspired by the COVID-19 situation, confirms Mats Engeker, Head of Product Engineering. "We wanted to make sure to support our partners in the best possible way. In order to give our retailers as much safety and security as possible, we will reduce our bindings portfolio for the next year to the needed basic colourways and models."

Union's Expedition binding has been renamed the Explorer, and will see some significant upgrades; both the ratchets and ankle straps have been improved for 2021/22, and the entire 'Forged Carbon' build has been spec'd up courtesy of a new forging press at Union's own factory. Meanwhile the Expedition name will transfer over to the brand's overall backcountry product line, which includes the Rover approach skis mentioned earlier.

Stock, and we take the risk of stock for our clients, says David Lambert. "Shops always order splitboards with caution on quantities, and they know they can count on us to have enough stock through the season." West Snowboards

All this might mean fewer options for things that really pop on the shop floor, but given everything that's happening, it does seem to make sense. Plus, Amplid's Peter Bauer identifies another positive to be gleaned from the situation; "There is less pressure in RnD, and you can focus on new technologies with more time."

**ONLINE VS INSTORE**

The age-old question 'is the internet ever an acceptable substitute for shop-floor service?' has taken on a new dimension in the age of COVID-19. All across the retail sphere, shops have had to get used to the idea that more and more of their customers will be coming







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## SP BINDINGS

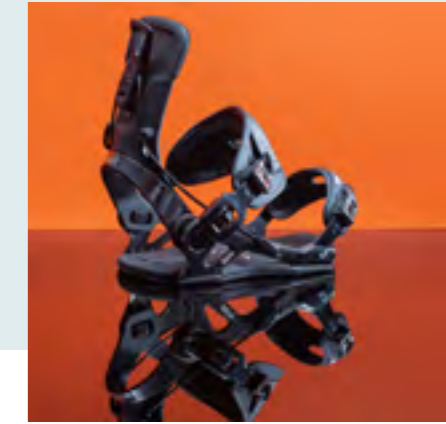
Since hitting the snowboarding world in 1988 as SnowPro, SP Bindings has become a brand well-known and respected for their high-quality and long-lasting products. Dominik Lyssek, SP's Global Marketing Manager, gave SOURCE an insight into SP's inner workings.

### Tell us about the development of SP Bindings. How and why did the brand begin?

The company SnowPro was founded in 1988 by Thomas Krenn, who's still the owner and CEO today. Back then SnowPro manufactured plate bindings for snowboarders. Over the years, other models and product categories have been added, including step-in and soft bindings. The great hype about soft bindings started in the early 2000s; that was when SnowPro became the SP Bindings brand. At the same time, wilder designs and new product developments came into play. Our FasTec system is a good example of this. It is still an integral part of our own bindings at SP but is also used by many OEM production partners. For example, the gold medal winner at the Olympic Games in Sochi used our system in the halfpipe.

### Who are the key players in your team and what are their backgrounds?

Thomas Krenn is our founder and CEO. He's been a snowboarder himself from the very beginning. Robert Longin is responsible for sales. Robert can be called an Austrian snowboard pioneer and he knows the scene like no other. Our product development genius is Andreas Janisch. He is the head behind our innovative ideas. They are put into practice by Mats Engeler, the product manager and production manager. All of our team members are passionate about snowboarding and have been part of the industry for a long time and



are deeply rooted in the scene. Many have been part of it for over 30 years. The nice thing is: All of us still feel the same love for snowboarding, are on the mountain as often as possible and test our products around the globe. We have a clear focus towards the new and continued development of our products.

### Where and how do you manufacture the bindings?

We started with a production facility in Birgel in the Eiffel, Germany. The site still exists today, but other products from other SP business areas are now being manufactured there. Our bindings, just like the OEM production, are produced in our own factory in Asia. Fair working conditions and above-average remuneration for our employees are important to us; this is the only way we are able to produce extremely high-quality injection moulded parts there that are equal to our local quality standards. In combination with the in-house assembling, this gives us a high degree of flexibility in order to be able to react quickly and actively to changes in the market. This was a great advantage, especially in this season marked by COVID-19. We didn't have to lay off employees or stop our production. With SP-Connect we also produce another brand of the SP group at our Asia plant.

### What is your USP?

Our main sales feature is certainly the convenient 'rear entry' in connection with the Auto RS system. This means that the ankle strap is also lifted when the binding is opened using the fold-down highback. This makes getting in and out much easier and more comfortable and at the same time the straps can be adjusted more precisely.

### Who is your target consumer?

Every snowboarder - because our system is super easy to use, comfortable and at the same time offers maximum stability and

performance. Not only do beginners love our FastTec system but we also have an extremely large number of regular customers who swear by our system. Since our products last a long time, we also attach great importance to the long-term availability of spare parts. This is also an important selling point when it comes to sustainability. Beginners, freeriders, park kids or split boarders - we have the right binding in our range for every rider.

### How are you marketing the brand?

We focus on the product and its quality and we think they speak for themselves. In this respect, perhaps we're not as "loud" in marketing as our competitors. For example, we don't have an international professional team with big names. Instead, we invest in the longevity of our products and offer top rate customer service.

### Why should retailers carry SP?

Very simple: At first glance, the customer can see the benefits our products offer, and our products are very easy for retailers to explain to customers. The functionality of the system, and the advantages it offers, becomes clear to the customer within seconds. In addition, SP boasts a long product life and spare parts being readily available. ☺





## MEOW

After spotting a gap in the market for a skate brand for women, Lisa Whitaker started Meow Skateboards - a brand run by women that supports women skaters, photographers, videographers, artists, and freelancers. Next summer, Meow looks to grow their presence in the European market via two new distribution partnerships; a perfect time to do so considering the post-lockdown sales boom of skate hardgoods and the continuing increase of women and girls taking up skating. SOURCE interviewed Meow Founder Lisa to discover more about the brand.

### Tell us about Meow Skateboards. How did the brand begin?

Meow Skateboards was started in 2012 as a response to a void in the industry. I've skated most of my life, had the opportunity to travel, compete and was sponsored in the late 90's before shifting my focus to videography and documenting the girls skate scene for Girls Skate Network (my website and later YouTube channel). When the economy crashed in the late 00's the small amount of support for the women was the first to get cut. I was covering events with many of the top women skateboarders in the world who didn't have board sponsors, or they were just flow and not included with the team or marketed.

After getting a decent tax return, my husband suggested I start my own company and helped me get it off the ground. Being a part of the team at Rookie Skateboards was such a fun and memorable time for me



and now I was in the position to be able to provide that for the next generation. It started off very small and organically grew to what it is today.

### Who are the people on the management team?

I handle all of the day-to-day operations and get support from team riders, artists, photographers, videographers and friends.

### What is your brand known for? How do you stand out?

Meow Skateboards is known for the talented group of individuals on the team and being a woman-owned and ran skateboard company stands out.

### Where is the brand distributed, what is your most successful territory in Europe and why?

The brand is currently distributed throughout Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan and the United States.

We do well in our current territories thanks to our partnerships with 24/7 Distribution, HOEP Brands and V7, but also really excited to start working with Nineteen76 and Centrano starting Summer 2021 which will make Europe our fastest growing market.

### How do you market the brand?

Meow Skateboards has a diverse group of team riders from legends to up-and-comers, X-Games champs and Olympic hopefuls to community leaders and scene builders. We reach most of our audience through social media, supporting girl and queer skate meet ups and team riders at events.



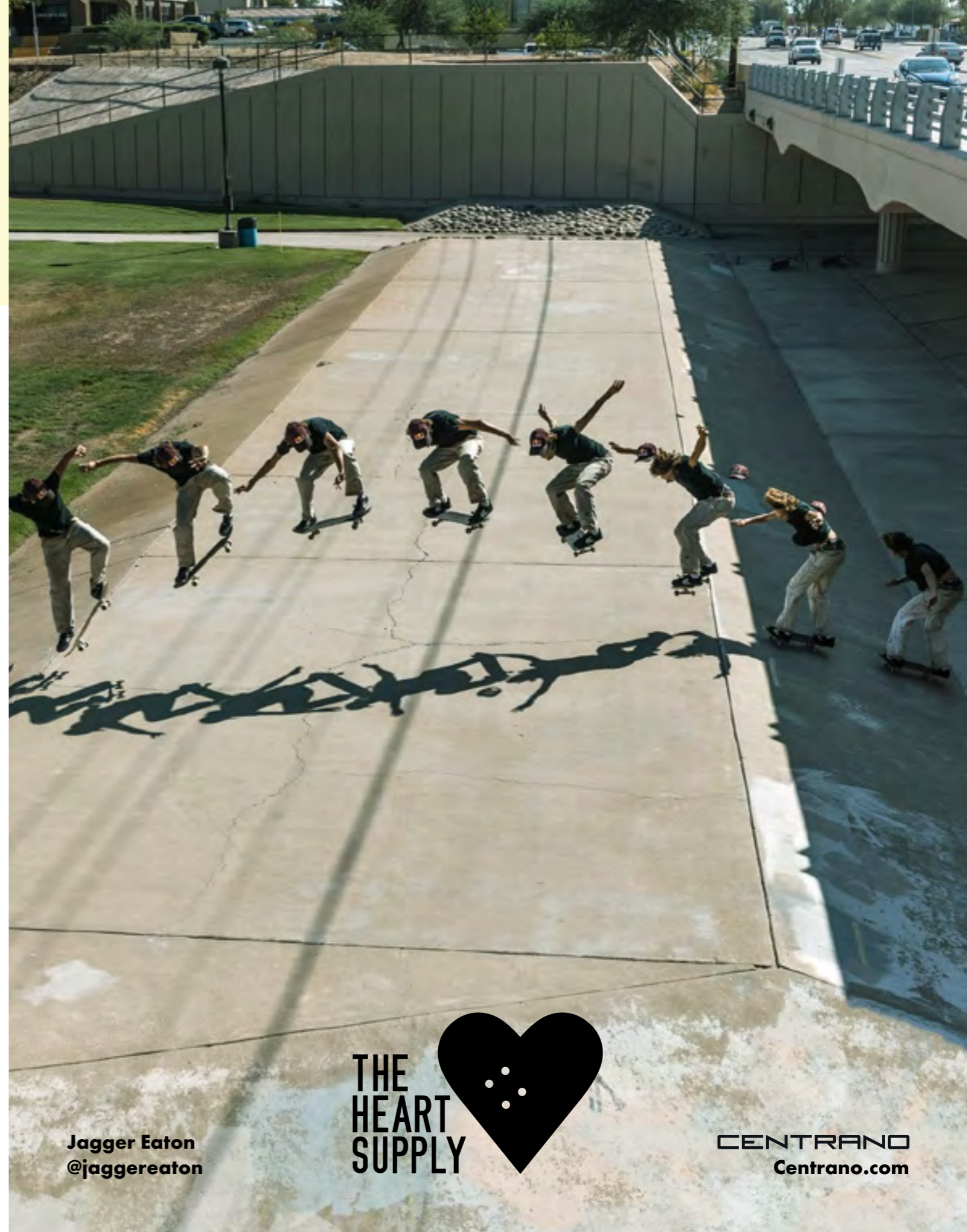
### How did the pandemic affect your business?

This has been a crazy year! Once lockdowns and restrictions started happening, I was worried shops wouldn't be able to survive. However, that uncertainty only lasted a week or two before the demand for individual sports/recreation equipment went through the roof and started a global hardgoods shortage.

Growth had been steady, but demand is at an all-time high. We have been going months at a time without boards due to production delays and have a waiting list well into mid next year. I'm fortunate that this is a good problem to have, so many others aren't as lucky.

### How do you see the future for girls skateboarding?

I've seen several ups and downs over the last 30 years, but we've hit a tipping point and I don't see it going back. There are more girls getting into skateboarding than ever before and I'm looking forward to the progression over the next few years. ☺





# LOVEINC

## LOVE INC

UK-based Love Inc started out life in 2006 as an apparel brand, but have since shifted their focus to gloves with a top team of riders including Olympic bronze medallist Billy Morgan, Tyler Chorlton and PJ Gustafsson. They still produce pieces of apparel such as their top performing 'Skiing Is A Bit Shit' t-shirt. Read on for more on a rider owned and operated brand.

### Tell us about the Love Inc.

Love Inc is a premium snowboard apparel company with quality and functionality as its main focus. We are rider owned and driven. The company was started way back in 2006 by me. At the time I was a frustrated graphic designer and snowboarder and was fed up of seeing everyone wearing the same clothing. I knew I wanted to make a difference and knew I wanted it to be in the winter sports industry. The brand started off with just a small t-shirt line which were all hand printed and numbered. Over the years the business has developed and seven years ago we made the jump to specialise in gloves. We now have a full range of gloves that change year on year and a couple of signature gloves for riders on our team such as Tyler Chorlton, PJ Gustafsson and Billy Morgan. Our gloves are all designed and hand made in the UK and address problems where we always felt other glove companies fell short. We aim to produce the best gloves on the market at a competitive price.

### Who are the people behind the brand?

The main person behind Love Inc is myself. I have a great team with me in the form of our Pro riders who test the products we sell and their feedback goes into the following year's range. It couldn't all come together without the help of people like Tyler, PJ and Bill Cockrell.



### What is your USP?

As well as being an independent UK company we believe our USP is quality and functionality. We aim to address design issues that other gloves don't think about from sewing our liners into our gloves to they don't come out when your hands are sweaty, to the leather we use. Each pair is lovingly made with Love (pardon the pun).

### What is your best-selling product and why?

Our best-selling product is the "Skiing Is A Bit Shit" t-shirt. Last season we were selling them quicker than we could make them. Closely followed by our Full leather G'Love Glove in White. I believe the t-shirts sold so well as it was a bit of light-hearted comedy poking fun at the skier/snowboard divide!

The gloves on the other hand sold really well as they were just bullet proof and we made them in white which always seemed to be popular. The gloves evolved over a number of years making the latest versions the best we have ever seen as all the feedback from previous years went into them.

### What is your most successful territory?

Our main distribution countries are the UK and Germany, the UK for obvious reasons and Germany as we have always been popular in Germany. I think the people over there love the British heritage of the brand and the solid craftsmanship. Online we sell all over the world and ship to 52 different countries

### How do you market the brand?

The marketing of the brand has changed over the 14 years we have been in business. To start with it was mainly Gorilla marketing involving sticking stickers on every chairlift in the land and giving away a tonne of freebies.



From there we developed a marketing strategy and started to advertise in magazines and online. We are also heavily into social media as we believe it's where most people see our products, we use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Along with print and digital we couldn't do what we do without word of mouth and our brand representatives and sponsored riders, they really do get the word out and highlight our brand to people.

### Where do you see the best opportunities for growth?

Territory-wise I see the European market as our number 1 focus and would love to crack the US market as it so huge and has so much to offer.

### Why should retailers carry your brand?

Retailers should carry our brand as we produce quality, functional products that are fit for purpose and look great and we also have a good team to back up the credentials. We are also rider owned and driven and the mountains are our home. We also sell and ship to 52 countries online so we have proved the business works and there is a market for our products. ☺

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# NEW PRODUCTS

## 01 / DEELUXE DEEMON L3 BOA

Through the years, the Deemon has emerged as DEELUXE's all mountain flagship boot. With the perfect blend of comfort and response, it's a home in any terrain. A new flex window provides a smooth and consistent riding experience while a rubber print throughout the ankle zone makes the boot even more durable. DEELUXE's new Double Back offers additional protection from binding abrasions and boosts control and precision. They have also added a fully customizable BOA® FitSystem that uses a proprietary configuration found exclusively on the Deemon L3 BOA. And to maximize performance and comfort, the boot sports their all-new Stage 4 liner and Freeride Tongue, which provide a truly custom fit. [DEELUXE.COM](http://DEELUXE.COM)



## 02 / STANCE LEDGER ISHI GLINSKY SOCKS

Artist, Ishi Glinsky, investigates traditional techniques of his tribe, the Tohono O'odham Nation, as well as other Nations to create contemporary homages to sacred events and practices. Made in their Infiknit™ material, the sock never rips, never tears. Made for good. But if you're pushing and rip one, they have got you with their lifetime guarantee. [STANCE.EU.COM](http://STANCE.EU.COM)



## 03 / PACSAFE METROSAFE X ANTI-THEFT 25L BACKPACK

An epic, anti-theft backpack that's comfortable to carry and fits everything you need for a day in the city. Carry-on compliant and made from recycled Pet bottles, it has hidden pockets, a fleece-lined laptop sleeve, luggage slip and lockable zips. Enjoy the day while patented anti-theft technology like cut-resistant paneling and RFIDsafe blocking pockets protect your gear and identity. Protect Your Valuables – Protect Our Planet. Available in 4 colours Black, Carbon, Dark Denim and Utility. [PACSAFE.COM](http://PACSAFE.COM)



## 04 / POW TRANSFILMER GLOVE

Don't let the name fool you, this glove is a backcountry/touring necessity. With its convertible mitt and open forefinger, the Transfilmer Flip Mitt does it all - from easy camera/smartphone operation to turning screws and peeling off skins. Featuring a WINDSTOPPER® soft shell, "Grade A" leather palm and premium anti-pill micro-fleece lining with a sock cuff for added warmth. [POWGLOVES.COM](http://POWGLOVES.COM)



## 05 / EVOC SNOW GEAR ROLLER

The Roller is a padded transport and travel solution for snowboard, skis and equipment. It features a separate avalanche equipment pocket, fits 3-4 pairs of skis or 2 snowboards comes with a replaceable skate wheel and is collapsible. In the Multicolour Edition, the travel essential is available in three sizes from F/W 21. [EVOCSPORTS.COM](http://EVOCSPORTS.COM)



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**COMPOSITE BOARDS**  
THE ABOVE AND BEYOND

The most exciting newcomers in the AZTRON line in 2021 must be the FALCON foils with Wings and carbon glider plane. The 6'6" hard foil is a perfect hybrid board for all kinds of foiling activities. Our Soft Top ECLIPSE collection has now extended with upgraded design and choice of sizes in 10'6" and 11'0".



**MARKET INSIGHT**

'Still Crazy After All These Years'. Especially 2020. For most, 2020 will be a year to forget as quickly as possible. For others it turned out to be better than anticipated.

It certainly has been a year of ups and downs. In the early part of the year, the tail end of the winter season was going well. Distributor orders for winter 20/21 were coming in very nicely and all was good. Generally, there was a very positive feel.

BANG. Late March. COVID. Lockdown. Overnight, business fell like a lump of led. It just stopped. Early April and some sectors felt the start of a 'COVID-bounce'. Skate in particular went ballistic – as an 'acceptable outdoor activity' participation grew which then translated to sales.

Paul from Blacksheep in Manchester said: "It exploded – it went off the charts. It's a solo sport... so that helps. The Olympics next year, the Tony Hawk Game... that all helps.

It's also self-generating; more participants generate more participants in the same way that stock shortage creates a demand in itself. If people think that they can't get it tomorrow because it may sell-out then they'll snap your hand off. It all came together to bring us a 10-year boom."

BOOM. In early June, further restrictions were lifted, and the tap was turned on for watersports. SUP in particular went nuts with many suppliers selling out. The staycation really kicked in and all tourist areas of the UK were overloaded.

Paul from Zuma Jays – in Bude, the heart of the West Country said: "It's been good, very good. Amazing. We've done 6 months' business in 3 months and we'd had to split the team into two [COVID protection] so everyone had to work double as hard when they were in the shop. Of course, we missed the Easter period and the early part of the season but no complaints at all and it's still busy." [November].

What were the main problems? "Stock management, stock availability and customer expectations. Customers nowadays have a 'want it now' attitude and don't appreciate that we're a small West Country surf shop. They're used to getting everything immediately – of course we've done all we can, but expectations are high, and it is sometimes difficult to meet those expectations."

"Don't get me wrong – business has been great and we truly are grateful but sometimes it just feels like groundhog day - like it was 20 years ago, which is great, but let's not forget that we're here to surf as well! It's not all work."

At Ultra Sport EU it was just the family keeping the business going and they found themselves working 7 days a week, 12-14 hours a day, for 2 solid months. They experienced record days, record weeks and record months. They had one brand that will end the year tripling its business. The COVID-bounce was really kicking in... for some.

September – winter nerves started jangling and it felt like the Fat Lady was warming her vocal cords. It was obvious that retailers would need to be cautious and cut back on their pre-orders.

I've said it before but COVID has brought out the best of some people in our industry. The 'we're-all-in-it-together' approach had been adopted by most – but not all. Some brands failed to identify this and shoved their products through the doors. Hopefully, when it's all over those who have not shown the 'brotherly love' will get their comeuppance - buyers have long memories!

October came and hopes were high, but we were all hoping against hope itself. Winter sports holiday bookings were non-existent, and retailers (and brands) were now getting anxious. The UK is notoriously early with its winter sports business when compared to our EU brethren (I can still call them brethren as we are not divorced as yet!) and, of course, we don't have plentiful resorts. Scotland, whilst great, is not going to get us out of this situation. If people cannot (or will not) travel to get to resorts, they are not going to buy any kit. That is stating the very obvious!

November brought a new lockdown and sealed the miserable deal. Cancellations were rife and retailers were reporting sales reductions of up to 85%-90%.

I touched base with Chris from Snowfit/Revolutionz in Norwich just after the second lockdown hit. I think it is fair to say that we were both equally sanguine about the situation – but also both more-than-a-little depressed. "The shop's closed. Whilst we are doing all we can to stimulate online sales, we are one of the few remaining real bricks and mortar stores and we know our customers will miss coming into the shop. We also know that, right now, almost nobody is booking any travel and therefore not buying kit."

Snowfit/Revolutionz have taken a proactive approach to the situation and have written to all suppliers outlining their position. They're being fair to everyone and, like all winter sport retailers, they are seeking understanding and support. "We really are all in this together and we want to treat everyone fairly and in the same way. At the same time, we're doing all we can to stimulate online business and we have come up with a few unique ideas to give our customers as much of an 'instore' feeling as we can. Some kit is selling and I'm confident that if and when we're allowed to travel business will really take off - I certainly hope so!"

So, looking on the optimistic side and hoping that this lockdown helps the health of the nation, if/when we are allowed to travel in the new year (please God) then we can surely hope that people will be flooding to the hills with kit flying off the shelves. We're never going to pick up the lost ground, but it may (please) give us a decent end to the season.

Brands really need to understand the situation in the UK more clearly– no travel, no winter sports, no sales. This will massively impact on the 21/22 pre-sell and season and it's not clear that the industry outside the UK really understand this... yet!

Of course, we hope that there will be a COVID-bounce for the follow-on winter season – we have enthusiasts that are being starved of their 'fix'. We have a host of new board enthusiasts, courtesy of skate and surf. Surely some of those newbies will want to transfer to the snow – so it could, just could, be a great follow-on season. However, that hope is unlikely to boost retailer confidence and transfer to an uplift in pre-orders.

Whilst I talk about the 'COVID-bounce' in this piece, I want to make it clear that I am all too aware of the terrible consequences of COVID. We would all surely be better off without it but ... overall .... boardsports will hopefully come out with a new intake of practitioners – I sincerely hope so. Stay safe, ride sideways but look forward to a better future.

**UK**

- PORTUGUESE
- GERMANY
- FRANCE
- SWISS
- SPAIN
- ITALY

**GORDON WAY**



## MARKET INSIGHT

### FRANCE

PORTUGUESE  
GERMANY  
SWISS  
SPAIN  
ITALY  
UK

At the end of 2019, France experienced wide-scale social mobilisation following the government announcement on their planned pension reforms. Black Friday only worked as well as it did in 2019 because a lot of people had anticipated the disruption and got their presents in advance. The outcomes from the end of 2019 were actually pretty positive in

fact. Despite the tense social climate during this key holiday period, visitations and sales in shops were pretty good. The lights seemed to have turned green for the start of 2020 and retailers were feeling quite optimistic... But in spring 2020, France and the rest of the world was hit by an unprecedented health crisis that paralysed the whole planet, a crisis which left no-one unaffected, bringing with it an economic crisis on a planetary scale. Europe was easily the continent the most affected by COVID-19 and France was sadly in the top 5 most grief-stricken countries per population.

Faced with this extraordinary, unprecedented situation, the French government imposed strict lockdown measures from 14 March 2020, leading to a total duration of 8 weeks confinement and paralysis for the whole economy. On 14 March all non-essential shops, i.e. all retailers in the boardsports sector, had to close. Schools, colleges and universities as well as cafés and restaurants and any venue receiving the public had to shut their doors. Only essential businesses were allowed to stay open, provided they adhered to specific rules and protective measures. To counteract the lockdown and ensuing economic shutdown, the French government provided support packages aiming to safeguard existing jobs and businesses. It was an unheard of, a comprehensive support plan put in place by a government reacting to the urgency of the situation, softening the immediate impact of hitting the pause button on economic productivity at a national level.

For surf shops and coastal shops, the sudden closure on 14 March put the brakes on the normal summer season launch and of course our snowboard shops lost six weeks of solid business, including the busy Easter period. The summer season, and the tourism associated with water-based activities, generally kicks off in France during the Easter holidays but this year there was no tourism because everyone had to stay home and all shops were closed. Even though some shops tried to get themselves organised by setting up drive-in collection systems, shops suffered enormously overall from the closures and were in fear for their futures. At the same time, for shops with a strong online presence, Internet-based sales didn't really slow down during lockdown. While consumption was slightly down in the first two weeks of lockdown, it did pick up again quickly from the start of April onwards.

The 'deconfinement' (end of lockdown) and the reopening of shops took place on 11 May 2020. All shops could reopen their doors so long as they adhered to the rules and implemented the special protective measures. For themselves as well as their customers there was hydro-alcoholic gel, social distancing and masks strongly recommended but not obligatory. At the start of June the beaches reopened and the activities that go along with that were also allowed, meaning that people were going back into the shops to get kitted out.

This economic uptick, sparked by the end of confinement, accelerated during summer in France with productivity showing signs of dynamism in all sectors. In fact, France saw the strongest economic upturn in Europe, much faster than Germany or even the United Kingdom. As for welcoming customers back into shops and how that worked, the story was the same from all shops: the regulations established by the government were all respected and accepted, by customers and shop staff alike. Shops got themselves organised and all applied the government recommendations: hydro-alcoholic gels available at the shop door, displays showing the protective measures in force and, even though the vast majority of shop staff already wore one before 20 July, face coverings for all became mandatory and was also adhered to.

Confinement had created a deprivation effect in consumers, igniting a strong desire to rediscover freedom and outdoor activities. The situation benefitted our open-air sports and therefore our industry. Foreign travel was still partially-limited this summer, which forced French people to take their holidays in France, leading to increased local spending. While it's true that foreign tourism was hugely down this year, shops had their hands full with customers from within our own borders. For the coastal shops, this worked quite well with an increase in visitors compared to previous years. It was predominantly the technical sections that worked best, no doubt because people couldn't wait to do these nature sports again after the period of restrictions. There were a lot more customers with an above-average basket price this year. The coastal shops saw a big boom as soon as they reopened with unheard-of visitations and sales for the time of year. Buying habits also changed, before people would take a lot longer to think it over and gather information. This year purchases were more instinctive, the fear of tomorrow perhaps.

At the more urban shops, skateboarding and especially the street segment gained mass appeal. Skateboarding had been sharply on the rise for two years already but the post-COVID period heightened this craze with sales more like that of Christmas. People were looking for alternative means of getting around. Even though tourist visitation numbers were much lower this year in the large towns, the summer season was really good with this "skateboarding boom", and it was mainly hardgoods and shoes that sold the best despite numerous shortages in equipment at suppliers. There were loads of new skaters or old skaters taking it back up after a long hiatus. And just like in the last few years, the number of women skateboarding is constantly on the rise.

Overall the boardsports market and, more specifically technical equipment, seems to have flourished amidst this sanitary and economic crisis. But France has remained on alert with the health situation continually morphing, watched closely by a government constantly changing the protective measures in force. Faced with the arrival of the second wave, on 30 October a new, month-long lockdown was imposed by the government to try to slow the epidemic's resurgence. All non-essential shops, and so boardsports retailers, were forced to close once again. Here's hoping that the winter season can go ahead in our resorts anyway, and that it turns out something like the summer season on the French coast. Watch this space...

**BENOIT BRECCQ**

# THE SHAPE OF FREEDOM

## SOURCE OF PURE SENSATIONS



Photo: Atis Erics - Rider: JP Janik

 **DUPRAZ**



## MARKET INSIGHT

### GERMANY

PORTUGUESE  
FRANCE  
SWISS  
SPAIN  
ITALY  
UK

2020 and what a rollercoaster ride it's been so far! Economic data has probably never been so immediately connected to private perception, with COVID-19 restrictions directly affecting both private and professional life alike. The ultimate mental stress for any business!

But how did 2020 start? For the last quarter of 2019, the GDP closed out flat for Germany. Stable.

At the turn of the new year, December 31, 2019 to be exact, the WHO China office had been informed about cases of pneumonia in the city of Wuhan. For Germans, it was just another virus on the news, far away. Nothing to be worried about. The first few European cases of COVID-19 soon became an avalanche, followed by restrictive actions implemented by each German federal state more or less individually.

On March 22, Germany went into lockdown mode. While the economy had been stable for the first two months, the index for consumer confidence (GfK market research) and the general business outlook (ifo Institut) showed a decrease towards the end of Q1. This resulted in GDP declining by 1.8% compared to Q1 of 2019.

Fighting the effects of lockdown mode, the German government implemented an extensive plan including financial emergency aid, loans, monthly support, and short-term working benefits.

Malte from Surfline Kiel recalls the situation as being a shocker. "Last winter wasn't great, but we restocked late season regardless. Then, we were shutdown with a great sense of uncertainty and were left guessing at how long this situation will last."

For Mosaic Skateshop and distribution, Philipp Schmidt reports: "Low temperatures in the first months of the year caused a slow start to the season, then the lockdown was announced and basically stalled everything. Unsure of the situation they were in, dealers started asking to cancel their pre-bookings for spring. Imports had been delayed, and on top of this, our own store in Gießen was closed. That uncertainty was a huge challenge!"

Waketoolz Shop and Waketoolz Wakepark opened their season just a week prior to being locked down, on March 15. For CEO Andreas Voss the wakepark season was stopped before it even began. "We lost nine weeks of business and were finally able to re-open on May 18. During the first weeks, we had to keep our changing rooms, showers and catering closed. We basically had to tell our customers to turn up, get their gear ready while they were waiting on the lawn, shred, and leave as quickly as possible."

It soon became clear that the lockdown would lead to serious economic consequences. In Q2 the German GDP dropped by 11.3% compared to Q2 of 2019, while the GfK index peaked negatively in May with -23.1 points. During June, the unemployment rate jumped up by 1.3% to 6.2% (compared to June 2019), despite the short-term working benefits helping to keep a lot of people employed.

During lockdown, consumers focused on buying online which led to a strong increase in online retail sales in March, climaxing in April (Destatis). On April 20, the lockdown was relaxed by the federal states with varying rules for re-opening brick-and-mortar stores. Numbers of COVID-19 cases dropped significantly in Q2, bringing back confidence and positivity. Early June, the German government decided to install another economic stimulus package to stop the downwards trend. Among other tools, VAT was lowered from 19% to 16% from July 1 on, for the rest of 2020.

In Q2 things started to brighten up for most boardsports dealers. "It took about a week for people to re-discover life, then people started coming in their masses. Most were looking specifically for watersport hardgoods", says Malte (Surfline Kiel). Hannes Winter who runs HW-Shapes in Rostock

had roughly the same feedback: "People needed to compensate for the fact that team sports were still prohibited. They came looking for skate gear, surf hardgoods and wetsuits. Apparel sales had been slow at first, then they started picking up as well."

Philipp (Mosaic) renders the situation: "After re-opening, with temperatures climbing, retail and wholesale saw sales of skate hardgoods turn extremely positive. On the other side of things, in production countries COVID-19 provoked delays and product shortages. The supply chains couldn't keep up with the demand."

In both indexes, GfK and ifo, the general business outlook started recovering in May and June, peaking in August and September to an almost pre-COVID level. After rock bottom in Q2, the GDP jumped by 8.2% in Q3 (compared to Q2/2020). Not all retail branches experienced the same recovery. Though, believing the positive feedback from boardsports dealers that offer a variety of skate and watersports hardgoods, this industry has profited from its outdoorsy character more than others.

"This year, we've been able to track a 50% conversion rate from first-lesson beginners to a repeat-visit rider. Even in September and October we had double digit growth in visitors compared to the previous year", reports Waketoolz' Andreas Voss.

In Q3 and Q4, the second wave of COVID-19 didn't spare Germany. After a steady but moderate increase in August and September, the number of new Covid-19 cases exploded from October onwards. Closely following the decision made by a couple of neighbouring countries, the German government decided to switch to lockdown-lite by limiting personal contact and leisure activities, for the month of November.

"Despite the second lockdown, we're going to close 2020 with a positive company result. In particular, the wholesale business delivered good growth for us", sums up Philipp (Mosaic).

For many boardsport stores, snowboarding and winter sports are an important part of their business. In summertime, retailers could rely on the whenever, wherever properties of their product portfolio. Snowboarding is different. Besides good snow conditions, freedom to travel is generally required. For November, overnight stays within Germany for leisure purposes are off-limits. All nine neighbouring countries are declared risk areas (by RKI) making easy travelling basically impossible.

"We're already preparing our shop for winter, when it transforms into a snowboard store", says Malte (Surfline Kiel). Snowboarding usually generates 40% of their annual turnover. "With all the travel restrictions and lockdowns applied, we don't expect much from this upcoming winter", states Malte.

Markus Burgstaller from Sports & Trends in Gilching reports: "Skate hardgoods are still selling, but snowboard gear hardly moves. Due to the restrictions, we had to cancel all of our snowboard day trip offerings, which usually keeps our winter customers entertained."

The COVID-19 situation in Europe might disable cross-border winter tourism. Classic German destinations for alpine winter sports have already seen a huge growth in demand, but the second lockdown brings back a serious level of uncertainty.

On November 13, Bayerische Zugspitzbahn Bergbahn AG would have opened Germany's highest elevation ski resort Zugspitze. "We could have opened on time with very good snow conditions, the slopes have already been prepared. We're now on standby until end of the month. In the meantime, if temperatures drop, we will start producing snow for our lower elevation resort, Garmisch Classic. Given the indoor restrictions, we have improved our outdoor catering immensely with a varied offering of BBQ, tea-bars and we've even converted an old cable car cabin into an outside kiosk", reports Verena Altenhofen (company spokesperson of Bayerische Zugspitzbahn Bergbahn AG).

ERIC BRUWELEIT



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## MARKET INSIGHT

### ITALY

PORTUGUESE  
GERMANY  
FRANCE  
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SPAIN  
UK

What a year. 2020 was a real rollercoaster ride. The end of the year is still full of uncertainty and fear of what's still to come. The second COVID wave is giving everyone a hard time. We also have to deal with restrictions that change on a daily basis. As 2020 comes to an end, the COVID denial movement has hit an all-time high, with big cities such as Milan, Torino, Naples and Rome seeing aggressive demonstrations; storefronts have been destroyed without reason. Restriction fatigue is becoming a nationwide feeling. Many Italians feel the

media are making the situation out to be much worse than it actually is and many also feel that the restrictions on social lives are causing our youth to suffer the most.

2020 had shown us times of both shadow and light. Of course, the lockdown in March/ April was very bad for business, especially for retailers that didn't have an online presence. The re-start in June 2020 gave us hope and we had a successful summer season, nobody was expecting the boom that boardsports saw; a boom that is still holding steady. Especially skateboarding, which was sold out everywhere. Skate completes are still hard to get hold of and the number of beginners taking up skating was tremendous. Stores are still fighting to get products in, and suppliers are seeing an all-time high in skateboarding hardgoods sold. A key retailer from the Milan area, who does not want to be named, put it like this: "The lockdown was a shock, but our online store saved us. With the re-start we could really come back stronger than before in terms of hardgoods. Clothing sales were stable but during those months, but we did not see any increase. The number of skate schools that are fully booked is a very positive sign that skateboarding has gone mainstream over the last few months."

### SPAIN

PORTUGUESE  
GERMANY  
FRANCE  
SWISS  
ITALY  
UK

The intensity of the pandemic has made 2020 a testing year for Spain. However, the impact has not been negative for the boardsports industry. With socialising and travelling on hold, Spaniards have spent their saved euros on boards to have fun.

One year into the pandemic and Spain has suffered worse than every other advanced economy. Over reliance on tourism had the country ill-prepared to face a health crisis of this magnitude. The government's own poor financial health subsequently limited

the amount of help given to businesses. The Prime Minister secured an amount from the European Recovery Fund but gave up on the loan portion of it soon after. This avoids an increased debt but, with less stimulus, it could slow down recovery too.

Initial containment measures in Q1 and a full lockdown in Q2 resulted in a slumped GDP. Spaniards clung on to hopes of recuperation in Q3. These hopes were crushed by a midsummer halt of international tourism and a rise in outbreaks. Still, reactivation in this period threw a surprising positive result of a 16.7% increase. Good news, but not enough to put Spanish minds to rest. The last months of 2020 have suffered a merciless second wave that could endanger the growth forecast for 2021. To avoid it, outbreaks need to be dealt with.

New restrictions balance the health of both people and the economy. The restrictions avoid a total shut down, so the impact might not be negative for the boardsports industry. Imposed curfews leave no fun to be had in the evenings. The boom of boardsports experienced over spring and summer could even be reinforced.

Skateboarding stores have reported an unprecedented popularity of the sport, a trend that is keeping steady. Seasoned skateboarders have

Also, Alex from Fakiestores in Merano and Silando says, "the year's taken a positive turn. Of course, our yearly turnover will not be the same as usual but the fact that skateboarding is doing so well makes me feel good, as that is why I started the store in the first place."

What's crucial now is that ski resorts are able to open during the winter season. Nobody knows whether resorts will be able to open, and if they can open, how long they can open for. With infection numbers rising rapidly again, nobody can project if the winter season and tourism will be able to take place, something many boardsport and sport retailers are very worried about.

The summer season went well, with many Italians not traveling to foreign countries but staying local: visiting our own national beaches and doing as much outdoor sport as possible. This being something surfing could also benefit from, with general sales during summer and rental businesses doing very well.

In general, the clothing side of businesses have seen an overstock in many stores which is keeping store owners worried about the future, many have calculated more conservatively with their SS21 purchases and want to be prepared if a new, strict lockdown hits us again.

2020 made Italy more digital and everyone seems more tech savvy than last year, something many are happy about however others see going digital as a big challenge that Italy needs to face; a challenge that comes with many benefits as well as challenges for smaller businesses.

2020 is coming to an end and everyone hopes that 2021 will bring us more stability, predictability, peace and freedom as that's what our economy, and especially our society, will need to get back on track again.

#### FRANZ JOSEF HOLLER

treated themselves to new kit with money saved from staycations and not going to bars. New adepts and the eruption of women onto the scene have contributed to this skate bonanza. Gabi Blázquez of Sk8land store in Madrid had daily sales, even throughout August, when there is normally no one in town. He expects to end the year with a 10-15% sales increase. Rafa Sánchez of Back in Black, also in Madrid, confirms the trend. "There was a lack of stock from all brands. 25 years in the industry and I have never seen anything like it".

Lack of stock also affected kiteboarding and SUP. Before the pandemic, kiteboarding and SUP were seeing an increase in popularity. The post-lockdown effect resulted in even more newbies trying kiteboarding, with SUP becoming quite widespread. "Everyone will have an inflatable SUP board. It will be the beach equivalent of the bike", says Borja Herrero of Kite Oliva in Valencia. This surge in demand required adjustments. This year, managers spent more time looking for stock than actually selling stock. Retailers have been pre-ordering more to secure sufficient stock. This will help brands manage production more efficiently.

Snowboarding stores tell a different story. The season was blessed with good snow and great sales early in the year, but spring lockdown cut it short. There was hope that the increased demand to slide sideways seen in cities and beaches will permeate up to the mountains, however mountains are reliant on snowfall and open resorts. Mombisurf sits in Baqueira Beret and hasn't reopened since lockdown. Early year sales were great, but it will take a fantastic Christmas to balance the loss in spring. Back in Black, also a snowboarding store, experienced sales this autumn. Despite having autumnal sales, this year's sales are next to nothing compared to last year, as people are still waiting to see what happens. A good season will mark the difference between ending the year on a profit or at a loss. If there is a white Christmas, snowboarding stores will be ready to serve the hordes of customers they expect. Unlike stores for other boardsports, they have the stock

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## MARKET INSIGHT

### PORTUGUESE

We have reached that time of year where we look back over the ups and downs of the past 12 months. For the worst possible reason, 2020 will go down in the history books; the COVID-19 pandemic completely changed the action sports industry and the whole planet as we knew it. It's been a roller coaster of a year: the whole world had a ticket, even if they didn't want to ride it.

GERMANY  
FRANCE  
SWISS  
SPAIN  
ITALY  
UK

In January and February, brands and retailers were hyped, preparing to enter the 'Spring 20' season with a bang! Portugal had the best possible economic forecast for 2020 due to the five-year tourism boom we'd been experiencing. For the

first time in the country's history since the democratic revolution in 1974, Portugal had a positive State General Budget of 0.2%. But all this collapsed like a house of cards when the 'tsunami' hit. Portugal was forced into a nationwide lockdown on March 18 which lasted until the beginning of May, which caused a brutal economic shock. During this tough time, brands and retailers had to reinvent themselves to survive, mainly by switching to focusing on online sales, an area of business that has registered a massive growth. Websites and social media were the only way to maintain engagement with customers, so businesses relied on using sales campaigns to try to sell products, most of the time campaigns included home delivery with free shipping.

Some international media outlets referred to Portugal as "the Portuguese miracle" since the country had some success at managing the first wave of the pandemic, with a lower death count compared to fellow European countries. Lockdown and other restrictions saved many lives and subsequently kept the National Health Service stable and far from being overwhelmed.

As of May 4th, Portugal started the gradual process of returning to the 'new normal' via a multi-stage plan: To control the spread of the virus, smaller stores were allowed to reopen before bigger stores. Surfers and skaters (as well as the whole of society in general) hit the streets again and went back to doing what they like doing best whilst following safety

### SWISS

GERMANY  
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The year 2020 is reaching its end and it's about time. As you might imagine, it hasn't been an easy year at all, the anti-Covid restrictions have been dictating things since March across the whole of Europe, and Switzerland is no exception. For the most part it seems as though the most difficult thing is not the closures or the lockdown as such but the uncertainty of what's to come, even in the near future. Obviously the closures caused some damage and the

financial aid that took its time to come caused some problems but clearly the worst part about it was not knowing what tomorrow would bring. How can you plan ahead when you don't know what next week will look like, whether you can even open or not? Will you be financially supported by the State? Do you have to make redundancies? Will the financial aid come if you are able to stay open with restrictions on the number of people in the shop? So many questions still to consider to this day and not just for our retailers but in the vast majority of the active population in all sorts of businesses. What's more, in Switzerland we have this special ability to be able to legislate by canton (region) and, of course, federally (nationally) which makes it even more complicated. So as I write these lines it's still the case that shops in Geneva are closed while those in Lausanne and Nyon (in the neighbouring canton) are still open, even though they are just a few kilometres apart (25km between Geneva and Nyon). This uncertainty weighs heavily and the damage is clear. Of course, it's too early to take full stock of it as we are still in its grip, just like almost everywhere in the world, but it's sure to leave its mark, even in the small, rich country we live in. Obviously, like in any crisis, there are those who

measures and keeping socially distant. Due to the cooperation between the Association of National Surfers, the Portuguese Surfing Federation and the WSL EMEA with the authorities, surfing was one of the first sports to receive a green light for restarting.

The restart allowed a crucial movement of customers back into the surf and skate shops that were trying to recover from the shutdown and were fighting to survive. Several stores cancelled some of their Spring 20 collection orders to reduce stock. Others with an overload of stock focused on marketing campaigns and promotions to sell their products. There was a lot of concern, uncertainty, and anxiety. The arrival of summer, the boarders opening, and the influx of Portuguese and international tourists resulted in an outdoor activity boom and an improvement in sales which exceeded many people's expectations. Summer saved many stores from closing. Many shops went from stock overload to a lack of it, skateboards and bikes saw a huge rise in demand while at the same time surfboards, wetsuits and accessories also saw a huge demand. This showed that, more than ever, people wanted to enjoy the freedom they'd lost during lockdown. As for apparel and shoes, the demand was not so strong.

"After lockdown I was afraid and thought I would have to close the shop," said Xenico Vidal, CEO of XEN&CO Surf Shop, one of the core shops in the Cascais area. "Since the government allowed small shops to open first, before bigger stores, people started to shop local which saved us. Surprisingly, we doubled our sales compared to 2019. We stopped applying discounts because our profit margin was very narrow. We gained some new customers that didn't know of us before which is great. Let's hope we all can overcome this situation."

The arrival of Fall 20 collections left stores divided between hope and fear. Since September, the number of infections started rising again (much earlier than expected) and forced Portugal, as well as their European neighbours, to adopt tougher measures to try control the pandemic. This involved restricting people's movements and closing stores earlier. At the time of writing in mid-November, stores and restaurants must close on weekends after lunch, which is kind of a semi-lockdown. The second wave is here. This will be a tough winter, so take care and stay safe.

#### NUNO PRÍNCIPE

come out better off and unsurprisingly it's the big online players that are winning and they are all in double figure growth. Of course, it's not all roses for them either, logistics are very difficult to manage, mainly because of the increase in volume and lack of workforce through quarantining and other kinds of leave. Then there was a boom in individual outdoor pursuits (or small groups) this summer, which is now looking set to continue into winter. Amongst other noteworthy phenomena, it was a good summer for skateboarding with sales levels that we haven't seen in a really long time. Chrigu from 3Sixty in Stans and Schwyz is very happy with skateboarding sales this summer. The salespeople at Doodah in the large Swiss towns tell a similar tale with really good rates of sale. The arrival of Wing Foiling has also made some people happy and Steve and Thierry Wasmer at Technosurf in Grand-Sacconex (Geneva) say they are really pleased with the enthusiasm for this new sport and the sales it is generating.

This winter is touring time, and for boardsport aficionados, splitboarding is en vogue. Sales have gone through the roof this autumn, everyone wants to get into it and demand is soaring. So most splitboard and splitboard binding brands have been sold out since mid-November. This is once again clearly down to the enduring consequences and presence of Covid in 2020. Will resorts open? If so, with what restrictions? How will winter sports enthusiasts deal with being shut into cable cars with lots of other people? All these questions will lead you to ask yourself if it's not time to invest in a splitboard... and for those who are still debating whether to get set up while they read this, don't wait too long because soon there won't be any left.

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**Job Description**

Employee: Open  
Job Title: European Sales Manager  
Department: Sales  
Reports to: GM Europe  
Direct Reports: Customer Service

**Summary:** The primary responsibility of this position is to create, build, and execute comprehensive sales and distribution plans for the Brixton Europe market that will result in robust revenue generation – in conjunction with leading a high performing sales team.

**Essential Duties and Responsibilities:** (Other duties may be assigned on an as needed basis)

- Create and achieve comprehensive sales plans for the BRIXTON business in the Europe
- Own, manage, and measure the sales force to ensure maximum performance
- Manage, execute, and track all brand initiatives on a seasonal basis
- Establish, develop, and maintain exceptional business relationships with current and prospective retailers & distributors in the assigned territory to generate business
- Perform business reviews with cost and pricing figures, and compile data of competitive activity
- Analyze market feedback and provide prioritized needs to the brand team
- Prepare and analyze sales trends, identify market and customer requirements, and communicate sales information to management on a regular basis.
- Perform regular market visits
- Maintain and analyze sales reports for regions and categories
- Provide detailed sales reports to be used and referenced company wide
- Research and report on market activity and recommend action plans to capture business opportunities
- Investigate potential new market opportunities and create a strategic plan to execute
- Ensure sales teams have all tools required to maximize revenue
- Establish and cultivate relationships with key retailer personnel in order to influence and execute strategic direction with these accounts.
- Track YOY / Seasonal and category growth within the specified account base
- Work with individual reps to insure tools and data are provided for hitting revenue targets
- Calendar road time to key specialty accounts
- Plan and execute targeted product & sales programs to drive revenue
- Architect and execute multi-channel sales strategies with an emphasis on account relationships and growth
- Lead aggressive company launches into adjacent markets and product categories

**Experience and Background:**

- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration or similar work experience
- 5+ years of related experience in sales management
- Experience in building and leading a sales team
- Integrity, passion, energy
- Highly motivated and target driven mindset
- Digital-First mindset and understand Consumer trends and opportunities
- Proven work experience in Sales
- Excellent selling and negotiation skills





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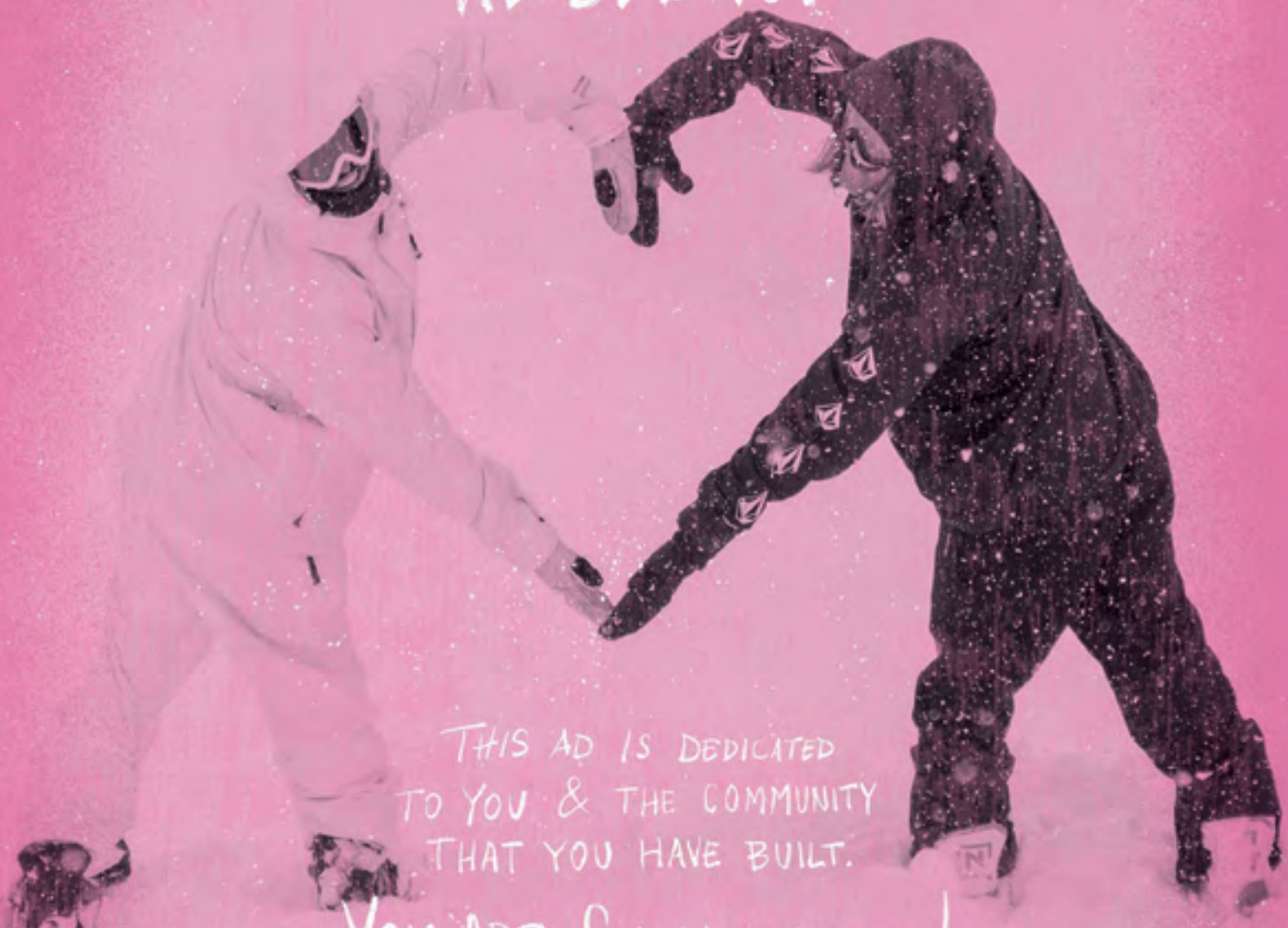
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