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SKIING DRIVES NEWSCHOOL MOVEMENT AS WINTERSPORTS AND ACTION SPORTS CULTURES CROSS-MINGLE

MCLEAN, Va. (Winter 2004-05) - Do you Newschool? If you are over 25, you probably don't. Newschool is a youth movement. It's about music, festivals, and action sports. It's about the fusion of snowboarding, skiing, skateboarding, bike stunt riding, motocross, and surfing. It doesn't matter if you're mountaintop at Vail or tabletop in Vegas. You hardly need snow. All you need is a rail or a table. Many youth between the ages of 12 to 16 either newschool or aspire to.

"A lot of trends are being shared," says Jason Levinthal of Line, a New School pioneering ski company. "There's crossover to motocross, BMX, skateboard, surfing. A skateboarder, a skier, a snowboarder--if they're the same age, they dress the same and listen to the same music. Skiing now has an image that speaks to youth. It's the type of riding feasible in the backyard or the street. If you can't get to Whistler, don't worry—you can still do it at home, because there's a tabletop or rail everywhere."

Once primarily influenced by the skateboard culture, the new school movement is undergoing tremendous cross-pollination. After years of looking like a traditional elite sport—*something parents did*, skiing is now a key driver of the movement, according to SnowSports Industries America (SIA), the national, non-profit trade association that represents snow sports manufacturers.

Thanks to the invention of twin tip ski technology—shorter wider skis with more sidecut and tips at both ends, young skiers are not just ogling their fellow snowboarders on the half-pipe and terrain park. They're outriding them.

The best illustration are the competitions—or comps. The Winter X Games and the US Open are the pinnacle events. Originally a "snowboard only" discipline, the progression of the Ski Superpipe (a super-sized halfpipe) over the past three years has been tremendous; at the last Winter X Games, skiers catapulted to another level with "airs" (tricks riders do when leaving the snow) that surpassed the snowboard competitors.

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“The newschool culture—nobody can fake it,” says Hal Thomson of Salomon. “You are newschool or you’re not. You can’t buy your way into it.”

Winter Sports manufacturers and suppliers are paying close attention to this youth culture. “We’re seeing the youth market as a very important segment. We work with younger kids –or groms (short for grommets) to start their training at an early age—to become an Orage athlete,” says Amy Carey of Orage apparel.

“Today’s youth wants to be able do what ever they like to do no matter the equipment. Slide a rail with a skateboard, or a pair of skis, or a snowboard,” says Levinthal. Rather than pigeonholing kids into snowboarders, or skiers, or backcountry skiers, snowsport manufacturers are focusing on the culture as a whole.

What defines the culture? For skiing and snowboarding, newschool is about the progression of the park/pipe style into the backcountry and all-mountain scenes—a hybrid freestyle/freeride approach. Freestyle with its emphasis on doing tricks in the park and pipe has morphed with freeriding—which includes cruising, riding in powder and trees on and off lift-served terrain. Newschool devotees often are found seeking out all kinds of natural obstacles such as hand rails and stair wells to grind and rip tricks in urban environments like schools, libraries and town centers – skiing and snowboarding have left the ski resorts!

Movies, Music Are Key Motivators

As a spectator sport, newschool movies are as key as the “comps.” “The movies are such a huge part of that demographic,” says Atomic’s Chris Denny. In the fall of 2003, over 30 companies have launched newschool films of note, according to the website newschoolers.com, including some of the leaders such as Matchstick Productions, Teton Gravity Research, Poorboyz, and even the venerable Warren Miller Entertainment Company.

The gear and clothes kids see the pros wearing in the movies, are the items they covet. Music, too is key, though harder to pinpoint—there’s a return to 80’s music—but also hiphop and a wide variety of other styles. Image is crucial. Brand image, logo use, and clean, generally muted but sophisticated graphics are key elements of this culture. Not surprisingly given current events, camo (camouflage) has made a comeback. Styling is heavily influenced by motocross and skateboarding, with the hardcore going for the pierced/tattoo look.

What’s “in” is whatever pushes the limits of the sport, the terrain, and the imagination. Mostly, it is whatever is different from anything done or worn by the older generation. It’s a youth movement!

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Trends

- Skis move on to big-mountain freestyle—geared for park and pipe as well as backcountry-type terrain. “If freeriders are not doing it inbound—they’re doing it outbound—going to the bowl and that there’s their place for the day,” says Atomic’s Denny.
- Versatile, all-around great snowboards, as board technology combines freeride (longer/stiffer) and freestyle (shorter/softer-flexing).
- Girls rock. There are more girl-specific boards, reflecting their increased participation in the sport as well as increased input from women pro freestyle riders.
- Graphics rule. “The race is at the graphic level, not so much in technology,” says Atomic’s Denny.
- Not my parent’s brand. “Kids want a brand that they can call their own,” says Orage’s Carey. “They don’t want to wear what their parents are wearing.”
- Skateboarding and motocross trends influence eyewear and helmet styling. Says Jeff Mechura of K2: “Because skateboarders wear helmets, BMX’ers wear helmets, it’s now acceptable for young riders to adapt to helmets in parks and pipes. And motocross really influences eyewear, especially goggles.”
- Newschool ski poles come with fewer nubs on the grip leaving fingers free to grab skis during tricks.
- Manufacturers bring technical aspects to junior models at affordable price points. “We’re working on bringing the softshell feature into the lower-priced category. More kids want more bang for buck,” says Chris Ellsworth of Sessions.

Alpine Gear

Atomic: The **Stomp** and a limited edition called the **Pimp** are fat twintips for backcountry/big-mountain freestylers. For dedicated pipe-and-park skiers, there’s the **Tweak Regular** (available in 140cm sizes) and the **Tweak Junior**, as well as a junior ski with a semi-twin tip.

Dynastar: For young freeriders, there’s a junior version of the **Legend** series of midfat/freeride skis that combine deep technical sidecuts and titanium-laminated construction. The new **Three Phils** Pro models use the same footprint as the **Trouble Maker** (a benchmark newschool park’n pipe ski) with extra fiberglass for more durability.

K2: The **Seth Pistol** is Seth Morrison’s pro model with Seth Morrison-inspired graphics (a premiere freerider and Sex Pistols fan). Graphics include a “big old gun” on the topskin and an old Union Jack British flag on the base. The **Juvy** (for juvenile delinquent) is K2’s youth all-mountain twintip ski available in sizes 139, 149, and 159.

Line: Line introduces the **Assasin**, a twintip ski with a three-dimensional titanium matrix that acts “like a knife blade that wraps around the core,” according to the manufacturer, providing power and stability for aggressive all-mountain skiing. For powder riders, the **Mothership Flite** is a more affordable version of the Mothership (the original fat—96-mm waisted, all-terrain twintip ski) featuring a carbon alloy band, a carbon fiber strip that helps you jump off snow better.

Salomon: The new **Candide Thovex** and **C.R. Johnson Pro 1080** models—named after recent Games superpipe champions—have thinner tips and tails than the well-known freestyle backcountry 1080, as well as a stiffer base “for higher spring.” Graphics for the CR model are camo; the Thovex progresses from red to orange hues and from mountain to beach settings.

Tecnica: Tecnica introduces the **Diablo** series of high-end boots, including a model for junior skiers. The Diablo last (or mold) positions the foot on the ski for simultaneous use of both downhill and uphill edges to reflect the current technique of using all four ski edges to turn.

Snowboards

Atomic: Atomics steps up graphics to include inlaid diecut topsheets with a three-dimensional look. Look for more girl-specific boards, including the entry-level **Tuesday** with butterfly graphics, and the slightly stiffer **Tica** for larger girls.

Burton: The new all-terrain freestyle **Malolo** (Hawaiian for flying fish) uses an unconventional shape—a moderate 20mm of taper for float in powder. Designed to ride shorter than a regular board and with a slightly setback stance, the Malolo offers stability at straight-line speeds. Graphics feature an overprinted cherry wood inlay, representing the sun as viewed from under water. The **Chicklet** is a board specially engineered for little girls, with a glitter effect applied to the topsheet. For the youngest set, there’s the freestyle **Micro White** (named after Shaun White, the premier snowboarder) with the right flex for tiny park rippers.

Dynastar: The **Team Trouble Maker** is for young riders who want a high-performance freestyle snowboard for the park and pipe. Built with straight ABS sidewalls and all aspen wood core, it is beefed up with 2D-weaved fiberglass reinforcing layers. The soft-flexing entry-level girl’s **Freshy** is ideal for all-terrain, freestyle use in a wide variety of snow conditions—graphics feature a wood nymph riding a crescent moon in a midnight blue backdrop. The **Classic Junior Boot**, for up-and-coming riders, has shock absorbing cushioning built into key impact areas around the outsole to ward off damaging impact from big launches. The **Connect Junior** binding offers many of the features found on higher priced adult bindings. For ease of use, the heel cup is integrated into the baseplate, and a fixed toe ramp and 2D ankle straps require minimal set-up time.

Salomon: Salomon introduces the **Prospect**, a two-boards-in-one concept: for fast freeriding and low-speed freestyling. At the slow speed the board is torsionally soft, but as you spick up speed, it becomes stiffer, for freeriding speed. It features Salomon’s new ABS sidewall construction with a rubber-dampening membrane adjacent to the sidewall—for greater dampening on inconsistent terrain.

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The **Faction** also features this new sidewall construction and a new directional twin shape. The new **Maiden**, an all-mountain female-specific board, uses Skinframe technology with channels that are not just cosmetic to surface of the board but make it lighter, and softer torsionally, without losing performance.

Accessories

K2: New **Juvy** youth helmets come with simple styling (so that kids can plaster them with stickers), breathable and removable liners, and muted, matte coloration. The **Black Hawk One** is the very first helmet/goggle integrated package, with a hybrid motocross and fighter pilot style influence. The strap uses a bungy system—just a clip on the side of helmet. K2's **Public Enemy** pole is meant for the young park'n piper—a composite pole with an ultralight unique grip, it has only two nubs—instead of the traditional four, leaving the top two fingers free to grab a ski.

Scott: Scott introduces a line of freestyle high-grade aluminum poles for newschoolers, such as the **Nightstick**. With its unique texture, subtle colors, and a smaller grip design, it's ideal for both park and pipe and backcountry. Also for newschoolers, Scott introduce the Factor and the Slant goggles, a clean, sophisticated version of the traditional arched goggle with square sides—in a range of subtle, down-tuned colors, as well as some bright hues.

Apparel

Bonfire: As the original snowboard apparel company, Bonfire continues to innovate with a skater- and motocross-influenced collection that speaks to the tattoo and piercing element of the snowboarding culture. The line emphasizes hardcore visual cues from the fabric to the features. Embroideries on the upper seat, for instance, emulate where some girls get tattoos right above “their butt crack.” Canvas-style fabric is combined with biker-style iron crosses and tattoo artwork.

Burton: The 550 goose-down filled **Youth Puffy** down jacket is Burton's adult Ronin 6/4 Down Jacket, re-engineered for little rippers handling harsh winter conditions. It comes with a CD pocket with a clear controller window and big cargo pockets.

Orage: The technical **Laikus** line, geared specifically at the junior freeski market, includes some softshell technology; camo pants in gray and pink for girls, graphite and grey for boys; and all-weather **Denim** pants for boys and girls. A down jacket called the **Lil'I Puffy**, for on- or off-hill use, features faux fur on the hoods for girls.

Phenix: The **Norwegian World Cup** kids' line, inspired by the Norwegian National Team, features a beefy nylon stretch ripstop jacket with a 10,000mm waterproof membrane. The **Pyrus** collection targets kid freeriders, with the **Garuda** jacket modeled after the Belan adult jacket.

Salomon: The **Freestyle** collection epitomizes newschool with baggy corduroy or denim snow jeans and big down hooded puffies. The **Pocket Rocket** jacket and the 1080 jackets match Salomon's

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eponymous freestyle skis. The **Big Mountain** series comes with Gore-Tex protective features—for harsher winter environments. The **All-Mountain** category has comfortable streetstyle models that don't scream wintersports jacket.

Scott: Scott launches a freestyle line of apparel heavily influenced by the skateboard/punk rock culture. The garments are technical—with waterproof zippers, ergonomic cuts, etc. but boast looser fits and an earthtone palette—dark subtle browns and olives.

Sessions: Sessions introduces the **Softshell Hoody**, a 5000-8000mm waterproof/breathable knit-face, all-stretch fabric. It has the look and feel of a zip-up hooded sweatshirt, but the performance of outerwear. A surround-sound collar stores headphones in the hood pocket and an ultra-mini drawcord keeps the snow out. The **Terrain** series of softshell and hybrid softshells are called three-in-one jackets worn three ways—shell only, with zip-in/zip-out track jacket, or vest. Iridescence livens up the **Ridge** series of 10,000mm waterproof/breathable fabrics.

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