

fancy footwork

ABLE TO MAKE OR BREAK YOUR DAY ON THE HILL, THE HUMBLE SKI BOOTS HAVE COME A LONG WAY. WITH HELP FROM SPECIALISTS PROFEET, ALLOW US TO SHOW YOU THE LATEST INNOVATIONS – FIT AND FUNCTION ARE THE ORDER OF THE DAY



1 Salomon Falcon CS Pro, £325



2 Head I-Type 12, £200

So they make you walk like an astronaut and are an instant bunter spotter if the clips are left flapping in resort, but boy can they help your skiing. Get the right pair of ski boots and you'll have control and precision through your turns, get the wrong pair and you'll be in a whole new world of pain, unable to do a turn on the lift, let alone down that face you've had your eye on.

While it may seem that manufacturers merely focus on new ski technologies and top sheets (skis with reverse cambers, Dynastar's saucy new Trouble Makers), they've also gone into overdrive in boot innovation. While sloppy rear-entry boots are but a distant laughable memory, bi-injection moulding, poly-ether plastics and flex patterns are the buzz words on the boot technicians lips, and are coming to a ski boot near you this season.

1 salomon
This season Salomon, with its Falcon range of boots, has introduced a new heat mouldable thermo-plastic in specific problem areas, such as the forefoot of the boot shells. The beauty of this new plastic is that it can be heated up and moulded without the need for a

workshop press. It merely moulds round the customer's foot after it's been heated in any old oven for a short while.

head

2 At the comfort end of the scale, the latest cappuccino ranges of boots are the Peaks and I-Types from Head. The front part of the boot, in a U-shape underneath the balls of the feet, fully flexes so walking from coffee shop to cable car is comfy, then click into your bindings and the boots are back to the usual rigid support you'd expect.

atomic

3 The Atomic Hawx boot arrived on the market last season and is still considered pretty revolutionary. It works with the bio-mechanics of your foot, so if the ball of your foot bends, the boot does too, just as if you were wearing a pair of running shoes. To get an idea of the sensation, imagine how awkward jumping on the spot would be in a pair of ski boots. Now imagine jumping in normal footwear, and that's how it should feel in a pair of Hawx too. When your ski flexes as you turn, your boot will too. The pair to look out for this winter is the Hawx 110, aimed at good intermediates to experts.

Thanks to Profeet for this feature. Profeet, specialists in selecting and fitting ski boots www.profeet.co.uk



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Atomic Hawx 110, £300



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Fischer Soma X 100, £280



5

Lange Banshee, £270



4 fischer & nordica

Stand in a relaxed pose and most of us will find our feet naturally splay out from the heel. It's known as duck footed, yet most ski boots are designed to keep feet parallel, which can cause stress in your knees and excessive pressure on the outside of your forefoot. That is until Fischer introduced the Soma stance into its Tech boots, which brings the heel in, and Nordica designed its Doberman range to accommodate the toed-out stance. With these obliging boots, stress is eased up through your joints and you'll have better steering and edge initiation control.

lange

If you're a fan of hitting big lines and taking the park ethic to the whole mountain, you'll be looking for specific features beyond bog standard. So Lange has created the Banshee, with extra grip and stability underfoot for confident hiking, and extra shin protection for comfortable hucking.

While these innovations are unique to particular models and brands, the whole boot world has continued to advance in design, custom mouldable liners, flex patterns and fit adjustments. What may only be on a top-end boot this season will soon filter down to become the norm, if it's a good enough concept.

But most importantly, when you're looking for the boots to bring you greater comfort and/or control, seek out a professional boot fitter. Nine times out of 10 they'll know just by sight which brands are going to better suit your feet, and they can assess and advise on the best fit for your foot, your bio-mechanical make-up and fitness level. At the end of the run, it's all about the fit, not the features. **t**