

Big News at G3: And we're not talking Telemark

Contributed by Craig Dostie
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Something big is brewing at G3 these days. "Really Big!" says Oliver Steffen, president of Genuine Guide Gear (G3). "It's WAY bigger than tele," he added. So, while it may surprise some, G3's next big product release will be an Alpine Touring binding.

Our first hint came at the summer Outdoor Retailer show in Salt Lake City in August, 2007. We bumped in to Steffen in the aisles and he looked around, as if to indicate it was a secret he was about to share, he dropped his voice a notch and said, "we're working on something new."

Knowing better than to ask what, the dance to extract information began. "When?"

"I'll let you know when we're ready," he replied.

So the sleuthing began. Unfortunately Oliver has managed to cull a serious loyalty and code of silence among those in the know and mum's been the word ever since. The most we could find out was that there was a sales meeting scheduled for November 8th, so that was set a potential announcement date.

Fast forward to yesterday (Nov. 1, 2007). With the sales meeting around the corner, perhaps a hint might leak out. First Oliver wanted to know what we'd figured out. To date, not much more than intuition had already implied. If you recognize the market trends, you already knew where G3 was headed.

When he said big, "really Big", he was referring to the difference in the size of the market. As anyone who has their eyes open has noticed, the number of backcountry skiers has grown dramatically in recent years, but telemark equipment sales are down. What's up is sales of AT boots and bindings. It's the logical area for growth since it is easier for alpine skiers to become backcountry skiers by simply changing their binding and adding climbing skins.

So the critical question, without revealing all was, "Is it going to be light weight, or beefy?"

"Put it this way, you're really going to want to tour on it. There's a lot of good stuff out there, we just think we have the magic combo. Take all the best stuff out there, just cherry pick and cobble together your dream binding and you'll probably come out pretty close. If you just stand back and do that stupid easy exercise you'll go...ooooh [with the knowing aha tone]."

When will it be unveiled? Oliver kept his poker face on but did share, "We're skiing on it now, and there's lots of ways to introduce stuff but we're not comfortable releasing it yet. Like any project we're not as far along as we want to be. The devil's in the details, so the things you don't think are going to be a problem turn out to be some of the biggest problems, and the big stuff that you're prepared to spend a lot of time on, it's like, whoa, we just past that by with flying colors. So it's always the stuff you don't expect that hangs you up. That said, it's a project we've been working on for a long time that's going to have major, major market share so we'll release it when we're ready, and not before."