2009 Editors Choice Selections - Boots

Contributed by The Editors
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2009 Backcountry Magazine Editors Choice Boot Selections

Colorado to California, Massachusetts to Montana; more than 40 men and women testers from ten states converged on the slopes of Powder Mountain, Utah for Backcountry's biggest-and-best boot test ever. Frozen chickenheads to boot-top powder, inbounds bumps to slackcountry buff, conditions were perfect for real-life testing and 60 AT and tele boots were pounded for six long days. Only the best survived—and you'll find best of the best here: The Editors Choices for boots are...

MEN'S EDITORS CHOICE TELEMARK BOOTS

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|EC Boots| title=|Black Diamond Push Boot|}images/stories/editors_choice_2009/Push_Black_Diamond_Boot.jpg{/rokzoom}

Black Diamond

Push

MSRP: $679

Specs: 4lbs 2oz.; Sizes: 24.0-30.5;

www.bdel.com

By BD's reckoning, this is a mid-stiff boot, but don't let that fool you into thinking it delivers middle-of-the-road performance. Rather, it's the "ah ha" feeling of striking a perfect balance thought one eastern tester. According to one aggressive-skiing jurist, "though the cuff is firm, it activates with a smooth forward transition into a much stiffer bellows which allows one to really get down and dirty with the boot."

The Push's stock BOA-laced liner feels like a custom fit without needing to be molded, though it can be molded to provide a more precise fit. Testers loved the "heel hug," a sensation enhanced by the well-placed in-step buckle. Again, the cuff felt a bit high to some, and thus less appropriate for long tours, but perfect for side country. For most testers, this was the boot of choice from BD offering plenty of power for big skis and vertical appetites, but not too big to lug uphill.

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|EC Boots| title=|Scarpa Terminator X Pro Boot|}images/stories/editors_choice_2009/TxPro_Scarpa_Boot.jpg{/rokzoom}

Scarpa

Terminator-X Pro

MSRP: $685

Specs: 3lbs 12 oz.; Sizes 26.5-30.0;

www.scarpa.net

The four-buckle Terminator-X Pro proves that with the NTN system, you don't need to have stiff bellows to have tons of power and edge control. With dramatically softer bellows (than those of last years T-X), the Pro brings the classic, sensually smooth engagement of tele back to the NTN realm. Not only that, but without the duckbill in front, that soft bellows and free flexing cuff (in walk mode) make jaunts across the parking lot, or on a dry trail uncharacteristically (for tele) “natural,” said one tester. "This boot proves that NTN isn't a one dimensional system. The power to edge transfer is a sensation I've never had like this, in tele. It's like I'm [expletive] the mountain bareback."

Don’t worry about the soft bellows compromising torsional rigidity, Scarpa adopts triple injection technology with all their NTN boots, providing an extra stiff frame around the base of the sole, and looping over the toe box in front of the bellows. The Intuition liner is heat moldable, but for many, pre-lasting should eliminate that step unless you want a super snug, customized fit. Don’t forget, it has Dynafit inserts too, so you can ride free, or locked heel. One California testers summed it up best: “An excellent boot in fit, form, and function.”

MEN’S AT BOOTS EDITORS CHOICE

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|EC Boots| title=|Black Diamond Factor Mens AT Boot|}images/stories/editors_choice_2009/Factor_Black_Diamond_Boot.jpg{/rokzoom}

Black Diamond

Factor

MSRP: $730 [$40 for AT soles]

Specs: 9lbs. 2 oz.; Sizes 24-30.5;

www.bdel.com

Not since Ghostbusters has the color combo of lime puke and moss been this alluring. The Factor stole the show this year as a hard-driving AT gun designed for aggressive skiers with alpine aspirations. Picture an alpine boot: Four buckles atop an overlap cuff, no tongue, and progressive forward lean. Now picture the same boot with a deft walk mode. “We’ve found the missing Factor!” charged one tester. The overlap design gives the Factor a stiff, consistent flex—laterally and longitudinally—that steers any ski.

“It’s the ultimate in and out of bounds boot,” declared one of our more aggressive testers. “Great front country boot with a nice flex and incredible walk mode,” gushed another. Testers found the exclusive BD Boa liner closure system—ala snowboard boot—provides intimate power transfer from shin to tongue, with better uphill ergonomics and reduced shin rash. “Super plush,” said one tester. But testers did have trouble pulling the liner from the shell, making it difficult to switch

footbeds or dry boots after long days. The Factor also features easily-swappable ISO DIN and Dynafit compatible lugged AT soles (sold separately) swappable with.

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|EC Boots| title=|Garmont Radium Mens AT Boot|}images/stories/editors_choice_2009/Radium_Garmont_Boot.jpg{/rokzoom}

Garmont

Radium

MSRP: $760

Specs: 7lbs. 7oz.; sizes 25-30.5;

www.garmontusa.com

Garmont's new Radium is a giant leap forward in boot design from the already popular Megaride. Made with a progressive bi-injection Pebax upper cuff, four-buckles, and a new overlap shell construction, the Radium hugs the instep for a more responsive boot overall. A new G-fit Rapid liner features the "T-bar" plastic tongue reinforcement, which augments leverage and shin protection. "Good ratio between flex/weight and lateral stiffness," mentioned one tester. "The soles are super nimble, too" said our token Jacksonite, "just walking around in them, they make you want to scramble over rocks."

Testers did feel the walk mode was a bit stiff, and a little tricky to operate with gloves, but being relatively lightweight, with Dynafit-compatibility, the new overlap Radium is solid as an all-around backcountry boot, and can easily give the Scarpa Spirit 4 a run for its money. The Radium is also available with women-specific liners and shell sizes.

WOMEN'S EDITORS CHOICE AT BOOT

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|EC Boots| title=|Scarpa Diva Women's AT Boot|}images/stories/editors_choice_2009/Diva_Scarpa.jpg{/rokzoom}

Scarpa

Diva

MSRP: $679

Specs: 6lbs. 7oz.; sizes 22.5-27;

www.scarpa.net

The Diva won't improve your singing voice, but might have you screaming with delight. For the second year, the Diva's four-buckles and Dynafit compatibility made it a favorite among testers. "I put them on and loved them—with few

adjustments," said one of our female testers. "I could rip large-radius turns with confidence." The Diva features a women-specific Intuition Precision Lady liner that comes pre-molded to a medium-size women's fit (narrower heel, lower volume) with a calf scallop (to accommodate lower calf muscle) on the back of the liner to give women a comfortable and powerful AT gun.

The specifically placed heel retention buckle holds the ankle securely into the back pocket. "Closest to an alpine style fit of all the boots tested," said one die-hard alpine gal. "It felt like a custom boot right out of the box." The Diva also comes with two tongues: one downhill, and one hinged touring.

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