

So Fresh And So Clean

This Year's Batch Of SIA Rookies Are New To The Show But Not The Scene

By Michael Sudmeier

For specialty retailers, new brands often serve as the breadcrumbs that lead customers inside their doors. Customers expect retailers to not only provide a reliable arsenal of brands, but also to act as curators who showcase up-and-coming companies. To find these companies, retailers could travel across the globe, scour summer camps, pore over magazines, and poke around the Internet. Or they could take a stroll through the Snow Show. This year's show offers an impressive collection of new exhibitors, ranging from start-ups run by a few friends, to publicly traded corporations making their debut in the shred industry. From boots to base layers, SIA's new exhibitors are cooking up fresh goods. But don't let their SIA status confuse them as rookies. These brands offer substantial experience in addition to solid collections.

HOWL

Last year, Darrell Mathes and Nima Jalali quietly debuted their new glove company, Howl. During its soft launch, the brand landed in 50 key accounts and 22 countries. Howl's initial success can largely be attributed to its founders' experience as pro shreds and Jalali's work as a co-founder of both Ashbury and Videogress. Yet, it is also rooted in offering products that resonate with riders. "We want to build a consistent line of timeless gloves," Mathes offers. "Our company revolves around the team that we have put together, and we create our product for them. We want to be the brand that recognizes the difference in each snowboarder, highlight that, and bring it to a bigger audience." With riders like LNP, Jed Anderson, Desiree Melancon, and Jake Kuzyk, Howl seems well equipped to recognize these differences and tap into the creativity of its riders.

PICTURE ORGANIC

For Picture, SIA provides a means to introduce the brand's outerwear and streetwear to a new market. The French company focuses on organic and recycled materials, as well as construction techniques with reduced environmental impacts. Since its debut in 2008, Picture has gained a substantial following throughout Europe and has more than doubled sales every year. According to Picture Co-founder Julien Durant, "SIA is our first chance to share Picture with the US market. Our goal is to show everybody that Picture is doing something different—something new and worth supporting. Picture offers not just fresh designs and technical products,



Buying for next season takes a mix of experience, insight, study, and luck—kind of like hitting booters similar to this one Jake Kuzyk is eyeing in the Whistler backcountry.

"Customers expect retailers to not only provide a reliable arsenal of brands, but also to act as curators who showcase up-and-coming companies."

but also a strong commitment to the environment." Denver-based Sales Guys will handle the brand's North American sales and distribution.

ADIDAS SNOWBOARDING

At SIA, adidas will formally debut its snowboard collection. This season served as a soft release for the brand's snow line, which was based around Jake Blauvelt's signature après boot. Next year's line, however, will include snowboard boots, outerwear, and base layers. In addition to Blauvelt, the brand's team includes heavy hitters like Kazu Kokubo, Eric Jackson, Helen Schettini, Forest Bailey, and Keegan Valaika. According to Global

Brand Marketing Manager Jess Weinstein, SIA provides retailers with "an opportunity to get in with our brand on the ground floor. With the momentum we have in skate and the interest that it has generated in the snow community, we hope to create strong partnerships with the select group of retailers we work with in our first season."

2XU

With a strong foundation in the endurance sports community, 2XU is focusing on educating retailers about its performance base layers. Since its inception seven years ago, the Australian-based company has

been refining its compression apparel through research partnerships with The Australian Institute of Sport and The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. The brand is also making a strong commitment to snowsports. Recently, 2XU initiated eight-year partnerships with the US Ski Team, US Snowboarding, and US Freeskiing. "The beauty of 2XU compression is that it is applicable to every discipline of sport," offers snowboard industry veteran and 2XU Director of Brand and Sports Marketing Johnny West. "Performance compression is one of the top emerging categories across all channels and can offer our retail partners a year-round revenue stream, not just a seasonal bump in business."

BLACKSTRAP

From its headquarters in Bend, Oregon, BlackStrap has quietly pioneered new technology for its products. SIA provides an opportunity for the company to share its headwear and patented facemasks, which often blend polyester, cashmere, and nylon. By crafting its products in the United States, BlackStrap is able to collaborate with retailers and resorts to provide custom goods that bear their branding. "I see many customers looking for exactly what we provide: the highest standards in comfort, function, and quality at a price point that lets the customer leave with some extra coin to spend elsewhere," Media and Brand Manager Jim Sanco states. Sales Guys will be aiding BlackStrap with its sales and distribution. As Sales Guys Founder Marty Carrigan states, "BlackStrap offers something fresh that will sell through and help retailers build loyalty among their customers."

SAGA OUTERWEAR

SIA also provides Saga with an opportunity to connect with a new audience. Since 2005, the brand has concentrated on crafting premium outerwear and interacting directly with its customers. "In the past, we have focused on a 100-percent direct-sales model," Co-founder Sean Harkins explains. "This season is the first year that Saga can be found in retail locations around the globe. By attending SIA, we are hoping to expand the brand even deeper into brick-and-mortar [locations]." To do this, Saga hopes to leverage the strong following it has developed among snowboarders and freeskiers. According to Harkins, "We look forward to showcasing not only our newest products, but also the brand itself."

PHOTO: DARRELL MATHES/HOWL