

OUTLIERS

HOW DO YOU DESIGN TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE GEAR? YOU DETERMINE THE GOAL—TO GO FASTER, TO GO FARTHER, OR SIMPLY TO GET THERE IN STYLE—AND THEN YOU DON'T STOP INNOVATING UNTIL YOU BLOW THE COMPETITION AWAY. BY AARON GULLEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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design + technology special

It's a surfboard—with an engine. Just fire up the lithium-ion-powered twin-propulsion motor from the wireless wristband and WaveJet's Personal Water Propulsion Pod (available in three speeds on certain Walden surf- and paddleboards) will push you along at up to nine knots, about five times faster than your arms can carry you. You'll get from shore to break more easily (or, if you're paddleboarding, cruise along more quickly). No promises on how fellow surfers will receive your plug-in movie. \$4,500 as shown; wavejet.com

Photograph by

inspired by... air

Two-pound tents. Barely-there minimalist running shoes. Carbon-fiber mountain bikes that weigh less than your road ride. Poundage continues to plummet because consumer demand is insatiable. We want to climb mountains faster, backpack deeper, set a new personal record. And we don't want our gear to slow us down. "We're coming off a period of clutter where more was better, and now the pendulum is swinging in the other direction," says Gregg Duffy, senior director for performance footwear at Timberland. "And things are just going to continue to get simpler and lighter, because we haven't yet reached the point where trimming is compromising performance."



design + technology special

Knocking a few seconds off your time is an elusive, right? Sparse wheel spoke position. That's why speed freaks are salivating over Look's new flagship race bike, the 695. The company's engineers outfitted the carbon-fiber frame with a slew of adjustable components so you can quickly tweak everything, from the position of the stem to the length of the cranks to the gearing. Frame only, \$5,500; as built, \$12,000; lookcycle.com

There are no pockets or waistband. The zipper is half-length instead of full. Even the nylon-Lycra cuffs are extra thin to save a few grams. At all add up to... practically nothing. Patagonia's six-ounce 800-fill Ultralight down shirt packs to the size of an orange. \$250; patagonia.com

Timberland was hell-bent on shaving ounces off the LiteTree Mid, so it deconstructed the shoe instead of bonding the waterproof-breathable membrane to an outer fabric (like everyone else does), they beveled it up and let it double as the shoe's exterior. The result: a midfoot hiker that weighs less than many running shoes. \$155; timberland.com

Finally, a casual clipless bike shoe that doesn't make you look sporty, dorky, or both. DZ's Concubine, with its stripped-down grey perforated leather uppers and seatbelt-inspired straps, is refreshingly low-key. Unless they hear the click of your recessed cleats, no one will ever guess how hard you were just hammering. \$100; dzshoes.com



Do you have a soft shell for every season? A goggle lens for every lighting condition? Then you'll love Quirky's Switch modular pocket knife. Three different axle assemblies allow you to customize the tool from two attachments to 18, so you're carrying exactly what you need—and nothing else. \$80; quirky.com

The 500-denier recycled-polyester shell of the Nau Mettl Commuter is burly and practically waterproof, but you'd never guess it from the sophisticated heringbone finish. That's why it's so cool. It's as classy as your boss's briefcase but every bit as tough as your old workhorse messenger bag. \$225; nau.com



Apple made minimalism cool, but when it comes to the latest gear, streamlined design is more than just a look. "We consider our apparel to be tools," says Arc'teryx designer Controy Nachtigall. "So we strip it down to be as light and durable and simple as possible." All those dangly clips, straps that flap in the wind, and extra seams and swaths of fabric—you can do without them. "It's about engineering exactly what you need," Nachtigall explains. "And in the end, it looks stunning as well."

inspired by...

simplicity

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technology
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Don't be fooled by Arc'teryx's Veillance Partition coat. Yes, it's a beautifully tailored trench. But because it's cut from Gore's best stuff and features inconspicuous bells and whistles, like a stow-away hood and hidden webbing cuff adjusters, it's got game, too—and will keep you bone-dry on your rainy bike commute. \$1,995; arcteryx.com



inspired by...
terrain

The more outlandish an avant-garde building or haute couture dress looks, the bigger the buzz it creates. But the designers of outdoor gear generally follow a different set of rules: If they create something that looks truly radical, it's usually because it's intended to be used in a truly radical context. "Every swatch of fabric, pole placement, fold, and seam on our tents is there for a reason," says Cam Brensinger, the industrial designer who founded sleeping-pad and tent manufacturer NEMO Equipment. "That people like the way these forms look is just a bonus."

Designed at the behest of Intrepid Logistics and Expeditions, a company that offers support and tours on that continent, the four-person NEMO Helios 180 was purpose-built to withstand the harsh UV rays and high winds that strafe the polar regions. When pitched properly (whereas do you need points), the Isoport's eight-pole accordion design is sturdy enough to withstand 100-mph gusts. \$3,400; nemoequipment.com

No, they're not for firming up your butt. The Hoka One One Mafate was developed by ultrarunners who were fed up with the lack of control and comfort offered by minimalist running shoes. And while these roared rat boys have a 50 percent bigger imprint and almost three times as much cushioning, they weigh about the same (12 ounces) as traditional kicks. \$169; hokaoneone.com



Think of the Surly Pugsley as the mountain-bike equivalent of fat sals. Run at ultralow pressure (6-9 psi), its superfat four-inch-wide tires allow you to maintain traction and float through otherwise undesirable terrain like sand, mud, ice, and especially snow. Even more impressive is that, thanks to savvy engineering, it still rides like a bike and not a monster truck. \$1,500; surlybikes.com





In these days of cameras the size of credit cards and smartphones that shoot 16-megapixel images, the Lomo-raphy Fisheye No. 2 is a flash and a surprising number of settings. It's no one-gimmick pony. \$90; lomography.com

Even as technology continues to subsume our existence, gear manufacturers are looking to the past. "There is definitely a trend toward heritage products," says Erin Forest of Stanley, maker of Thermos-like vacuum bottles for almost a century. "Especially in tough times, people go back to what they know. Products that recall another period of life can be a bridge to the past and to better times, so they create an emotional connection." That doesn't mean we're OK with sacrificing performance—but there's no need to. All the modern interpretations here utilize lightweight materials and updated constructions, giving you get the best of both worlds.

design + technology



Stanley's Nineteen13 line is an homage to its heritage—the company invented the steel vacuum bottle that year. Call us sentimental, but we were most loyal to the Lunchbox. The stainless-steel exterior is as indestructible as ever, but the inside is made of BPA-free recycled polypropylene. \$25; shopstanley-gm.com



Merrell's original Wilderness boot was legendary for its tough-as-seal-hide leather and bombproof construction. It also weighed a ton and took forever to break in. To celebrate the boot's 30th anniversary, the company took another crack at it. The result, the Merrell Wilderness Canyon, weighs 25 percent less and, thanks to modern materials, feels great right out of the box. \$200; merrell.com

Let's be honest: plotting waistbelts and space-age suspension systems are overkill when what you really want is a stylish rucksack for mellow hikes or cruising around town. The only nod to the present in Kelly's Cordura and leather-accented Mockingbird? A polyester internal divider. \$125; kelly.com

inspired by... history

inspired by... synchronicity

We've been using gadgets to track and analyze our sports experiences for years. "Today's athletes want to capture a broad scope of information about the activities they do," says Michael Hailey of Nike's Digital Sport unit. "What's interesting is that they are also social beings who interact through exercise." And thanks to new technologies, it's never been easier. In many cases, the push of a button is all it takes to measure your power output, and like-minded athletes in your area, or (careful) here share every last detail about your workout.



No more messing with multiple wires and sensors. The Look Kéo Power is the first system that measures wattage through your feet. Because the monitors live in the handle, all you have to do is screw in the pedals and your output is automatically sent to the bundled Polar head unit (above), not only does it simplify power training, but it makes gathering data across multiple bikes as easy as a twist of the pedal wrench. \$2,500; lookcycle.com

Nike's user-friendly online community, nikeplus.com, currently helps nearly four million people track their workouts, meet fellow runners, and get coaching advice. And it just got easier to use with the Nike+ SportWatch GPS, which gathers all the data you need—including time, distance, heart rate, calories, and pace—syncs seamlessly with the website, and even e-mails you reminders to go running when you're slacking off. \$199; nike.com



design + technology special

Introducing the boom box for the modern age. It might look like an oversize Lego, but the Jawbone Jambox speaker connects wirelessly via Bluetooth to your iPhone or other MP3 player and pumps out tunes with enough gusto to fill a room. And thanks to a built-in mic, it can pull double duty as your mobile conference-call center. \$199; jawbone.com

The first time you put on Nalini's Cotone base layer, you'll slap your head and say, "Why didn't someone think of this sooner?" Forgoing the clammy, constricting heart-rate belt, this stretchy shirt has a simple fitting in the back that lets you track your heart rate by snapping on any Polar monitor (not shown). When you're done working out, unsnap the monitor and toss the layer in the laundry. \$99; altabici.com



SKATEBOARDS
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technology
special

Reclaimed wood has long been the material of choice for environmentally conscious home and furniture builders. More recently, boutique shapers have begun making surf- and skateboards from salvaged booty. Glide's 33-inch longboard, the Mail (as in Mailbag), is milled out of reclaimed maple floorboards from vintage basketball courts. \$275; glide skateboards.com

Trash or beans—take your pick. Depending on the color, the frames of Revo's Backbay sunglasses are produced from either leftover plastic scraps (black) or castor oil from the fast-growing and environmentally friendly castor bean (brown), though you wouldn't know it from their sleek cyborg styling. Like all of the company's shades, the lenses are polarized to reduce glare and heighten contrast, especially on water. \$205; revo.com

It's not easy to create high-loft insulation from merino wool. Unlike man-made fibers, which can stand up to vigorous brushing, wool fibers are more delicate. But that's what makes Icebreaker's Reafleece Sierra Hood so great: It's every bit as warm and soft as a traditional goose-

fleece jacket, but it's 100 percent sheep—and zero percent petroleum. \$200; icebreaker.com

inspired by... sustainability

Forget the solar-powered MP3 backpack and the camp

stove that operates on pellets, you hand-roll from Fido's morning constitutional—the best green solutions are the simple ones. “When you talk about sustainability, the question is what existing resources you can leverage,” says Rocela Müller, program manager at Revo. The sunglasses manufacturer found the answer in the circular bin at its sister company, Oakley: leftover plastic. “The cost of reusing the scraps from the injection-molding process is less than an original run of the material, but the finished product isn't compromised at all.” Money saved, plus fewer resources used, and the result is a beautiful, high-performance product. That's an eco-minded equation that just makes sense.

It just might be the most elegant way to get your fix. No power source or science-fair-like gimmicks involved. Simply lever down the winglike arms of the Presso and the hot water is pressured through the filter to produce a rich, golden, crema-topped shot of espresso. \$150; presso.us