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THE SKIER'S MAGAZINE

powder



TOP 15 SKIERS

READER POLL 2009

THE WORLD'S BEST AS CHOSEN BY YOU

Tanner Hall, second place in the 2009 poll, lights up the Park City halfpipe. PHOTO: ERIK SEO/PBP

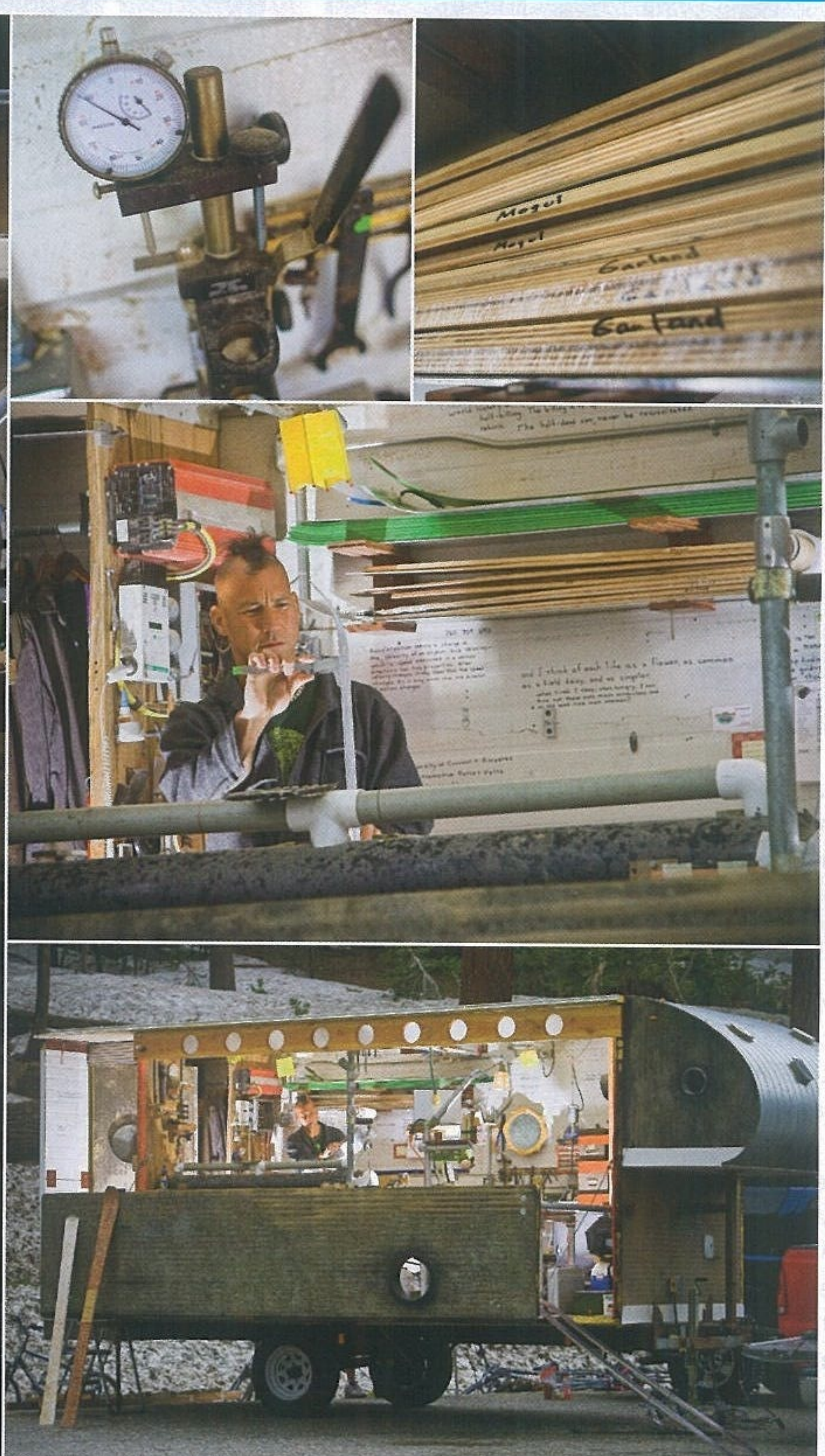
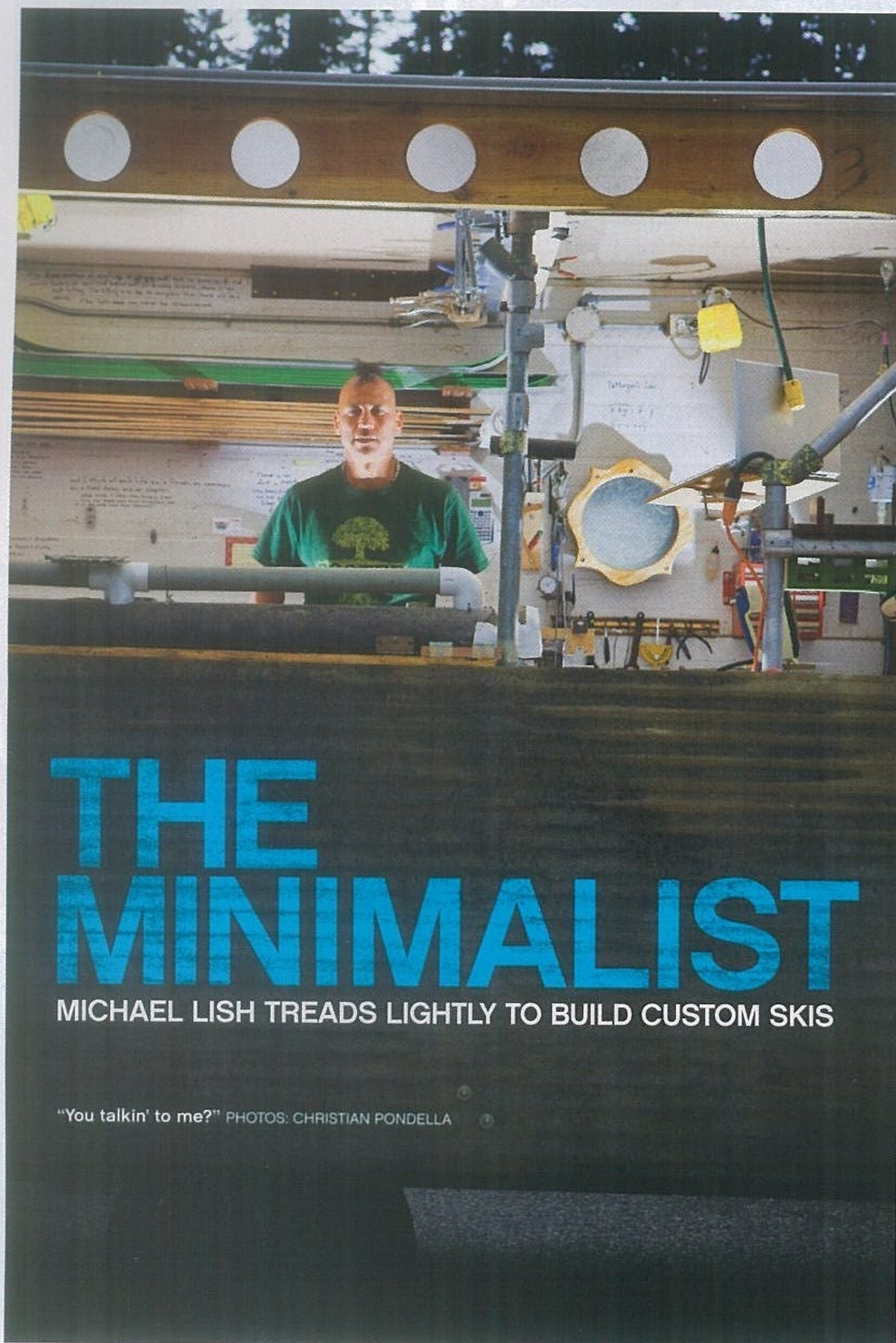


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The silver trailer and red truck appear unremarkable in the Chair 2 parking lot at Mammoth. The same can't be said of its owner, Michael Lish, who sports an unkempt Mohawk. After settling his rig into its appropriate space, Lish climbs into the back of the small trailer and quickly extends an entire wall outward, doubling the trailer's width. The modification transforms the space into the worldwide headquarters and factory for 333skis, Lish's custom ski operation on wheels.

The 44-year-old started 333skis at the beginning of the 2008-09 season, one of several custom ski ops that have sprung up in the last few years. A veritable MacGyver, Lish constructed the entire project from the ground up—trailer, press and all—using recycled and abandoned materials. All ski manufacturing is powered by a single Honda EU2000 inverter generator that he keeps inside the trailer. This summer he added a 200-watt solar panel to the roof to defray his fuel consumption. He can build three sets of skis at a time and each set uses just 10 ounces of petrol. "I had to develop my own manufacturing process to fit inside my trailer," he says. "Ski press technology used in mass-market factories just wouldn't work."

While Lish's operation is short on some of the high-tech equipment used by other custom ski manufacturers, the goal is the same: occupy a niche market where the customer gets to control everything from flex and weight to dimensions and graphics. While at Mammoth, a skier can walk up to Lish's trailer in the morning, put down an order, and have a fresh pair of boards in just a few hours.

"It was exciting to have my words come to life, to decide what kind of ski I wanted and how I wanted them to ski," says Andrew Bourne, a 333skis buyer from Mammoth who chose a 102mm-waisted powder ski. "Honestly, they ski better than I thought they would."

But while most custom skis run over \$1,000, Lish charges just \$333, which he says provides for all labor, materials, and a decent living. "I've broken down all the costs," says Lish, who lives off the grid in the desert south of Mammoth. "P-Tex 2000 bases, the Finland birch cores, my labor and equipment. Others can charge more for their skis if they want, but I make a good wage for a great product."