

REVIEW



CUSTOM COOL

Boost performance and play in perfect comfort by investing in innovative made-to-order gear

At the pinnacle of sport, elite athletes often do battle in equipment built to their individual physiques and needs. From Lance's one-of-a-kind Giro time-trial helmet down to the massive sneakers worn by Shaq, customized gear can be an essential component of enduring athletic success. Cyclists, who flex their knees about 100 times a minute, provide a classic example. If a bike's fit is even a millimeter off, little pains can be forged, over thousands of miles, into debilitating misalignments. But fit is only one half of the made-to-order game. The graphics on pro Shaun White's snowboard represent the appeal of unbridled creativity and personal expression. Whether you're after a one-off design for your new shoes or a pair of jeans, technological advances have made mass customization easier than ever. "Even big manufacturers like Nike are offering products that allow for personalized expression," says 31-year-old New York designer Josh Rubin, whose Web site, www.coolhunting.com, has become a style arbiter for fashionistas and urban hipsters. To see how the process works in terms of fit and performance, we grabbed a tape measure and ordered up a custom road bike, audiophile earbuds (above), and a marathon-ready set of shoe insoles, among other items, and put them to the test. On the style front, we unleashed our imaginations and designed our very own pair of boots. After we were done, the sweet stuff on these pages made us feel, well, pretty special.

—JOHN BRADLEY