



Techno- File Burton E.S.T.

New Board-Binding Interface Takes Things Down a Notch

The way we attach ourselves to our snowboards has long been the subject of controversy and constant innovation. Nose ropes begat rubber straps begat rudimentary strap bindings. Basic strap set-ups begat high-backs, low-backs, hard-plates, step-ins, hybrids, and baseless.

But historically, almost every big move in bindings seems to have died on the vine within a season or two. New binding technologies get industry insiders all excited only to have inconvenience, litigation, or unforeseen design problems kill innovations before they're out of the guinea pig stage.

Knowing all of this, one of the latest offerings from the R&D madmen out in Burlington is "E.S.T.," a board-binding interface that is both truly new and knows where it came from. Many people who have had sneak-peaks are referring to this futuristic set-up as a kind of "new baseless"—a refinement on a style of binding that had a brief limelight period in the early '90s. But E.S.T., short for Extra Sensory Technology, is much more than that.

Pro Jeremy Jones offers E.S.T. on his Burton model and calls it: "A polished and evolved product of a beautiful idea that didn't work the first time around." And, he adds, "This one is sticking!"

The E.S.T. system is just that, a *system*. The handful of boards in Burton's line-up boasting the new technology work with select bindings as a one-two punch (see box). The main thrust behind this new tech is to get the rider closer to the top of the board and eliminate "dead spots" in flex pattern caused by the rigid baseplates used in traditional bindings. Think about how a Formula 1 driver will wear thin racing slippers to get more finesse out of his pedals and you're getting the idea. This is accomplished by having the bindings attach to the board's central track with custom hardware (see photo) and having the engagement points on the outside of the binding rather than underfoot.

The result?
"You can feel your board flex under your feet," says Jones. "There is a better connection...rather than a thick plate between you and your stick." Jones went on to cite versatility and easy customization as added benefits: "The cushion option in the footbed is what makes it extra ill for street. Some kids are running it with no pad at all for complete board feel. I personally like the cush you get for flatter landings and coming off rails—it pounds you and this system helps a lot."

Burton's Todd King, business unit director for boards, explains the key advantage this way: "A true flexing board sticks to a turn and allows you to create power in a linear thrust so you can ollie higher or power through a turn, essentially loading up the board to release it." FSM's unbiased testers concurred (see Issue 3.2 for complete results).

It's no surprise that E.S.T. is marketed with nods to "skateboard feel" and primarily to freestyle riders, but several shredders have commented on how well the system works in powder with its surfy, natural feel. FSM suspected that "no baseplate" might mean "no power" on hardpack but none of our testers had anything of this kind to report. Turns out they have ice in Vermont, too...

Setting up an E.S.T. deck for the first time can be intimidating—"Two screws per binding?!"—but it's dead easy once you spend 10 minutes with it. (We did find the angle indicator too loose to be accurate, though.) FSM's Brad Farmer, an early proponent, likes how the bolts on the outside allow you to make changes on the fly: "You can go from a park stance to a powder stance without taking your feet out of the bindings," he says. "I spent an entire day riding the new X8 board and I found it to be one of the most natural, comfortable, and responsive setups I've ridden." —Colin Whyte



If you want to try out the new E.S.T., check burton.com/events/demotour.aspx for demo days in your area. And get ready to butter like you invented it!

FOR 2008 E.S.T. IS OFFERED ON THE FOLLOWING BURTON BOARDS*

- » Jeremy Jones: 151cm, 156cm, 159cm
- » X8: 151cm, 155cm, 157cm, 160cm
- » UnInc: 152cm, 154cm, 156cm, 158cm, 160cm**
- » Stria (women's): 146cm, 149cm, 153cm

*Rumors of a Series 13 Malolo X were unconfirmed at press time but I'm trying to get my hands on one anyway.

**Yes, the ones with the baby animal graphics.

[With retro-compatible discs (incl.) try the board w/ any existing Burton binding.]