

17. St. Croix

Since St. Croix opened its Fresnillo, Mexico, manufacturing facility, the



company has been subtly, yet surely, redefining the standards for making low-pricepoint rods that cast like counterparts costing much more. The latest proof is the Rio Santo Rod, which just started shipping. We fished a 9'-5#, which is priced at \$120 in the four-piece model. Rio Santo means "Holy River." \$120 means "holy cow." It's a medium-to fast-action stick, and 95% of serious fly anglers couldn't tell the difference in a double-blind cast test.

18. Gateway Hooks Loop 'N Lock

We aren't easily enamored by the latest gimmick or gizmo... but the new Loop



'N Lock hook from Gateway makes perfect sense. Simply form a

double sliding loop knot... slide it on the hook from the side, and fasten tight. To switch flies, loosen the loop and pop the fly off. We had a chance to check them out, and no, we did not punt any fish as a result of knot failure (we punted fish the old-fashioned way, through angler error). You'll want to incorporate this option into your tying resources. Various styles and sizes (dry, nymph, etc.) will be available in early July.

19. Streamworks

As far as accessory items like pliers, lamps, and so forth Streamworks' quality level for pricepoint is tough to beat. Check out the company's new waterproof magnetic fly box, and articulatable hat light. Romano tried the light,



clipped it on his hat, and had a perfectly functional headlamp for

10 bucks. This product also has "curb appeal." Placed in the right spot in the shop, they can sell quickly.

20. Rio Trout LT Line

Rio Products just launched its new Trout LT line series (retail is \$70), and



we had a chance to test fish it on some early season, clearwater trout. The performance advantages of this taper are straightforward—a nice, solid-loading

line, sans the hard smackdown. That obviously applies to places like lakes and spring creeks, but the functionality of the line by way of roll casts and accuracy in the 20-40 foot range makes this a contender for being many anglers' "all-around" fly line.

21. Smith Glasses

Make a point to look through the



"Ignitor" lens shade in Smith's Techlite

glass. It's definitely the hot color option for many guides, from steelhead rivers in

Oregon to the flats in the Keys, and our personal favorite. As far as new styles go, Smith just introduced the "Forum," which balances style with fishing function (they're light to the point that you barely notice them on your face). Lenses are carbonic TLT, and retail is \$120.

22. NRS GigBob

Is it a raft? A kickboat? A float tube? Well, really a little bit of everything.



With all elements latched together, it is a raft. Detach the parts,

and you have a sturdy float tube. The GigBob has been out for a while now, but after spending some quality time behind the oars, we're growing rather fond of it. It's priced at around \$1500, but capable of handling a lot of gear and a lot of water (rivers with moderate rapids and lakes) for the individual angler who isn't quite ready or interested in a raft or a drift boat.

23. Patagonia Nano Puff Hoody

Our first impression of the new Nano-Puff Hoody from Patagonia was that it is really, really lightweight (14 oz.). It doesn't take up much room in a day pack or the back of a fishing vest. That said, its Primaloft insulation is surprisingly warm. Ripstop fabrics are wind-

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