

Interview With Don Tashman of Loaded Carving Systems

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Submitted by Josh Foster Loaded skateboards has been under the radar for quite a while, but this is about to change. Slowly this visionary company is growing and the word is definitely spreading, these boards are sick! There is no other company that produces such solid carving surf and snow style skates in the market today. We were lucky enough to spend 20 minutes with these guys and talk about what they do and why they do it.

Josh Foster: How did loaded get started, the beginning of it all?

Don Tashman: That's a good question. Loaded started in 2000 when I moved back to California from New York. I had been building boards for 5 years out of old skate decks, snowboards, planks of wood—pretty much anything I could get my hands on. I was familiar with most major trucks and wheels. When I moved to LA, I was primarily riding fibreflex, fibretec, and Indiana boards—which were strong influences on my design thinking. The overwhelming influence was snowboarding. I was looking to build boards that would allow me to ride bigger hills with more control and I realized that construction would have a pronounced effect. Basically, I was designing around my personal needs and wants. The opportunities seemed wide open—so little had been done. I think this is still true, there are many more directions to go in, many more broad ideas to explore. While I knew what type of board I wanted to build, it took 2 years of working with a bunch of snow and skate manufacturers to figure out how to build these boards. Big pain in the a**. Nobody could figure it out and many people said it couldn't be done.

JF: But it seems to have worked?

DT: Yah. The boards have come a long way. The finishing is a lot better. It's still a work in progress and it continues to get better.

JF: So you mentioned your influences, were there any other factors that influences the styling of these boards?

DT: Different styles of riding have affected all the different boards we have. The vanguard has heavy snowboard ties. The fish and hammerhead are both influenced by surfing; the hammerhead being comparable to a fish surfboard, while our loaded fish is inspired by shortboard surfing. Along with board riding influences, I've also been inspired by more conceptual factors. In particular, designing decks around trucks and wheels, as well as the concepts of longitudinal and torsional flex. My primary interest is in functionally driven design.

JF: I have heard that you design your boards backwards, starting with the desired components and then creating the perfect platform on which to place them?

DT: For me it's function primary, graphics and aesthetics secondary. I try to take a holistic view on board design. It's a really creative period in component design, and we are always searching for components that mesh well with our technology, and have the potential to provide unique and high level rides.

JF: Describe the building process for us.

DT: Well, it is highly influenced by snowboard construction. We take vertically laminated cores and sandwich the wood with fiberglass coats and epoxy, which creates a torsion box. This gives our boards long lasting flex and spring, and great torsional rebound for precise control. After applying skate contours, namely concave and camber, the board comes alive, ready to rip!

JF: What does the future hold for these boards? What kind of developments can we look forward to?

DT: We are focusing on reducing any toxicity and increasing environmental friendliness, including better, safer resins and cleaner glues in the woods we are using. We're focusing on refining our current lineup, using new, stronger materials to make 'em even better. And new boards! Dropthrus, prototype snowboards, and the new construction materials, of course. Other new products in the works are our own loaded bearing and wheels, and some quality slide gloves. Basically, we want to offer serious products that will allow the level of riding to increase dramatically.

JF: Back to Loaded as a company. Where do you see yourself and this company in the next few years?

DT: I see us moving to the flatlands of Houston, Texas, and getting huge potbellies, smoking cigars, and trading boards for oil. We will rule the world! Nah, just kidding. Actually we are moving all our production overseas to China, making plastic boards that don't turn, and selling them at toys r us. Seriously, I just hope we are in the same position we are in now, building boards we're stoked on, skating as much as possible, passing on the love for skating, and one day having a warehouse . . . with a skate park in it.

JF: What kind of a skate scene do you have out here in LA?

DT: Haha, next question. We work way too much! But we have a lot of people riding the sh** out of our boards though. And its growing exponentially. Every time I skate Venice, every other board I see is a Loaded. We're still very grassroots, but we're on our way up.

JF: What do you have in the way of a team of riders?

DT: The main local crew consists of you, josh foster, ricky onsgard, darren ratcliffe, ben woods, jesse aguayo, jason pavilanis, and zak davis. There are many more who are a part of the family, but the list is getting longer as we're getting older. All our team riders do a lot more than just skate though, they help us test products, convey the beauty of the ride, pass on the stoke, and promote the experience of riding a long skate. Everyone's unique, they all bring something different to the table, personality- and skating-wise. And, of course, they all flow.

JF: Last question and most important to me, where do you see longboarding going? Is it going to fizzle out, become mainstream, or, what I'm hoping for, stay off the radar and continue to be a strictly underground following?

DT: I think it is going to grow, but where is it going to go? What I would like to see happen is the stoke and the vibe continue to grow and be positive, and the skaters continue to push each other in a non-competitive way, just seeing who can pull the sickest sh**. I wanna see the level of growth continue as it is and I think it will. We just gotta keep pushing.

JF: Skate every day, right?

DT: yah, I think that will help.

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