

Board Builders' Series: Building the Custom Hammerhead

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The first round of the 2007 Silverfish Board Builders' Series was themed, "Short Boards and More". If you haven't seen the results of that challenge, you owe it to yourself to get into the forums and check it out! The Champion of the first round is the man that got the most votes from his peers, and it was David Campbell that earned top honors and some Bennett Truks for his incredible, 30.5" Hammerhead park board. We asked David to give us more details about this project and to spread a little more of the stoke this board projects: With all the different decks available commercially, everyone has different things they like about each one. Some have the perfect concave, some have the perfect nose and some have the perfect tail. If you can imagine what you would like in a board and have a few basic woodworking skills and a lot of patience, you can build your dream board. I think it's something every skater should try at some point.

When I got back into skating two years ago, I found I didn't like the modern Popsicle shapes and the re-issues that were available at the time all had steeper tails and kick nose pressed into them. I set out on the Internet to find uncut blanks, as I used to cut my own decks out of blanks from Naked boards back in the eighties. I first found Silverfish, then Roarokit, and I've been pressing decks ever since, getting a little better each time. This is my best board to date; I hope anyone reading this will be inspired to build their own as well.

Hardrock Maple from Canada.

I purchased my maple veneer from Roarokit.com. I have ordered from another vendor before, but the quality of the wood and the customer service from Roarokit is far superior. The veneer used for the bottom of the deck was bought from vendors on eBay. There is a ton of great wood veneer on there for very affordable prices. For this project I used African Rosewood, Cocobolo and Zebrawood. Rosewood, Cocobolo & Zebrawood.

My mold is made from both foam and wood. The first deck I pressed was done with a foam mold mounted to a piece of 3/8 plywood. I decided I like the center part of the deck flat with concave out to the sides rather than even concave, and I also like my tail to have a sharper point where it bends. The all foam mold squished and made these bends impossible so I made the tail section of the mold with wood and the sides with foam.

I took six sheets of maple veneer and cut them to 10"x32" to begin with. Two of the cross-grain layers were cut on a slight diagonal, with the idea that having grain run in more than two directions might add some stiffness. Angled orientation of mold and veneer. In illustration 3(image 03), you can see the mold placed over the veneer at an angle. I simply traced it to get the points to cut. I first pressed the two diagonal layers together with long grain layers on each side. I was making more than one board, so I pulled that out and pressed another, letting the first blank dry a couple of days. Then I put it back in the bag with two more layers and let it cure under pressure for two days. When it was finished I sanded all the glue off and then I had an uncut blank. It had several days to dry while I worked on the finish layer.

The "blank". For the bottom design, I decided to go with the kamikaze flag. It's a pretty traditional design for skateboards and I thought the grain in the Zebrawood would work well with it. I wanted to do something in the ray of a rising sun over mountains and a pagoda scene, but this is only my second attempt at marquetry and I didn't have the right veneers for that anyhow. To create the design I first covered one side of each sheet of veneer with masking tape. The tape helps hold the wood together as it is somewhat brittle, and is easy to draw a pattern on. I drew a circle for the sun and used a straight edge to make the lines protruding out from it. This was cut out with an X-acto knife, and the pieces of Zebrawood were cut to fit in the areas between the sun rays. All of this was then laid out on a flat table and masking tape was applied to the top to hold it together. I then drew the flames on the Cocobolo sheet and cut it out, then traced it onto the rising sun piece and again cut a pattern out from that. It takes a lot of patience to cut as the wood is fragile and I went through a lot of X-acto blades. After everything was cut and pieced together I used masking tape to hold it together, at this point there was 3-4 layers of tape on the wood. I glued this piece to a sheet of long grain maple and then placed it in the vacuum bag with a piece of plywood to keep everything flat and let it cure for a couple days. When it came out of the bag, I removed the tape and scraped away all the little pieces of tape and glue. I let it dry overnight and the next day I sanded it with an orbital sander. I then took this piece and glued it to the top of the blank, and inserted the blank and mold back into the bag for the last time. After curing I removed the blank and let it dry over a weekend.

The next step was to come up with the shape I wanted. My favorite board was the old SMA Natas, but I wanted to do something different than the pointed nose. I never cared much for the Hammerhead shape, but since it was the Rising Sun graphic I thought about it, and the more I thought about the more I liked the idea as having a wider front edge puts more wood under my front foot. So I created a pattern by tracing my Natas tail and free handing a Hosoi-style nose. I made the nose wider than that on the old Hosoi as I was going for more wood under my front toes. I folded the pattern lengthwise and cut it with scissors. It was folded as I freehanded the shape and wanted both sides to have symmetry. I also printed out the bolt hole template found here on Silverfish and taped one where each truck was to go. Tracing the design onto the deck.

This pattern was taped to my blank and traced. After removing it I cut the board out with a jig saw. I then re-attached the pattern and drilled my truck mounting holes. The next step was to round off the edges with a router. After that I cut wheel wells by clamping a belt sander to a bench and sanding them out where the wheels hit. I was really lucky I didn't f-up that one! I wanted to add an extra touch also, and since it was a Rising Sun and I've been itching to use my wood burner I

thought it would be cool if I could burn the words "David Campbell Skateboards" into the bottom in Japanese. I don't know Japanese so I contacted a Japanese photographer I know through a professional organization and he emailed me the characters. I had to install Japanese language on my computer to get it to show, but it worked. I printed the text on a sheet of paper, then transferred it to the bottom of the deck with carbon transfer paper and simply burned the design into the wood over that. Can you smell the hardwood smoke? After that, I coated the board with Minwax Sanding Sealer and buffed it with steel wool for a couple of coats. Next was high-gloss polyurethane, I applied 3 coats then sanded the board down, applied another coats and wet-sanded with fine-grain paper and then a final coat. When the deck was pressed, I didn't put kick into the nose. I used a foam wedge from Sk8kings to create a nose instead. The reason for this is I wanted the concave to run all the way to the end, when you press kick in the front the concave stops where the board bends up. The wedge gives me a point I can feel with my front foot when I need it. I don't do shove-its and ride the nose like modern street skaters so this works great for me.

The setup has changed since the last photo was taken. I replaced the Abec-11 wheels with 97a Rat-Bones re-issue wheels and I added black Powell Thin-Ribs rails. I'm still using my Tracker Six Tracks which are 23 years old; I have a regular 3/8 flat riser in back and a combination of a 1/8" riser and Khiron rail wedge on the front. I replaced the kingpins with Tracker inverted kingpins and presently my bushings are a green stim in back, yellow in front and red Khiron tops. By the time this text is online there will be a set of Rockin Ron's ceramics in the wheels also. I have been skating Indy 215s for the past year or so, I went with the old trackers as this board is 9" wide and I'm used to 9 3/4". In closing I just want to say that anyone even thinking about building boards should try it. Roarokit.com has everything you need, it's much easier than to do than you might expect. All the advice you need is right here on Silverfish, and you can get plenty of help directly from the builders here, they gave me tons of advice. PM me if you have any questions! Did it work? Are you amazed at Dave's board, and stoked on the idea of making a deck of your own? We hope so, and he wasn't kidding: get into the Board Building Forum and use the library of resources and your fellow 'Fishheads to get dialed-in for your own projects. The '07 Board Building Series is already on to Round 2: "Top Mount Speedboards". Check the forum for details. Oh, and when you're done: Go Skate!