

Big Gun From Oregon: Longboard Larry's 56 Cruiser

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As a result of our efforts to bring you reviews of outstanding boards built by craftsmen that love to ride what they build for you, we've encountered some longboards that really stand out as unique statements of their builder's vision. "LongBoard Larry" Peterson is certainly one of the visionaries of design and style in the longboarding world, so we were psyched to find a five and a-half foot-long box on our doorstep with Larry's 56" Cruiser deck inside. The LBL Cruiser received the full treatment from the Longboard Consortium, so check it out:

Big Gun from Oregon: Longboard Larry's 56" Cruiser

The 56" board design we rode for this review is Larry's original "Cruiser" design, and maybe his favorite to ride. Arising out of his desire to build a skate deck to evoke the ride on his surfboard, he's created a uniquely concaved, cambered & kicktailed marvel, cleanly formed out of Baltic Birch. Designed for nose-riding, carving and general fun, the deck is made for each customer with custom laminated cloth graphics on the nose, a set of power-fade racing stripes underneath, a "secret sauce" clear grip system, and a number of plies suited to the weight of the rider. Coming out of the box, this deck is beautiful, bright and includes an ingeniously placed, low profile, rubberized "nose bone" to protect the front of the board. Topping it all off, Larry includes a note for all customers with setup tips that we found to be spot-on for the intended effect. This guy knows how he wants this board to ride, and has boiled it down to simple guidelines for his customers.

Setting up the Cruiser. Following Larry's suggestions, we built his board up with RII 180s, wedge risers and "soft wheels". The width of this deck mandates the 7" truck hangers and the camber and curvature of the deck require wedged risers to set the trucks "flat". We used Larry's suggestion for both wedges with the "thin side forward", to maintain a front-steering feel while in a centered stance, and later also flipped the rear hanger on the RII's for just a little additional stability as speeds increased. The man sells his completes with Krypto Classic 70's, so we slapped a set of the 78a versions on there, and also a set of the 75a Moska V-12's from Brazil. The intent is for a plush-riding, securely carving board, and these setups do the job.

Getting down to the fun part. We carved, cruised, commuted, charged through slalom cones (okay, we sprayed cones all over the street, but never mind that detail), hit parking garages for outlaw sessions and managed to get one local cop to sample the LBL 56 when apprehended in a not-yet-open city park with long pathways we weren't able to resist. We agree with the police: this is a fun skateboard to ride!

As an alley carver and street cruiser, the LBL 56" rides great! The width and camber of the board make for a stable foot bed and an absorptive ride. Cracks and even mild step-ups in the rider's path can be easily accommodated by compressing and unweighting the board. Do you have broken asphalt or chunked-out sidewalks? More than one of our riders commented on how fun it was to "pop" the board's camber to make the wheels hop up and over gaps that might otherwise encourage the introduction of teeth to street. One of the ladies reported her favorite aspect of riding the LBL to be the dynamic feel the Cruiser imparts when dropping onto the street by rolling off curbs and cuts.

LONGBOARD LARRY'S "56" CRUISER

MSRP: \$225.00 complete, deck only: \$140.00

Contact: Longboardlarry.net

Length: 56" Width at Widest Point: 10.75" at F. Axle: 8.75" at R. Axle: 7.625"

Concave: F. Axle: .250" at Middle/Front: 0.300" at R. Axle: .050"

Camber: .650" @ 16" back from front axle. Kicktail: 11" with 1.25" riser

Wheelbase: 40.625", axle to axle with RII's.

Construction: 10-ply Birch, cloth appliqué, clear-grip and painted stripes.

Static Flex (rated by LBL for 185lb): at 120lb: .750" at 220lb: 1.625"

Wheel Wells: No Cutouts: No Wheel bite: No

Trucks: Randal RII 180, with Bones "red" bushings and with Khiri "yellow" conical insert bushings; rear hanger flipped.

Wheels: tested with Kryptonics Classics 70mm, 78a durometer and Moska V-12, 70mm, 75a durometer.

Bearings: tested with Bones "Reds" and Biltin 5's.

Hardware: wedged risers, thin side "forward" f/r.

Grip: clear grip system

As a street and parking garage carver, the LBL 56 fares very well and just may fool other riders that focus on the appearance of bright hibiscus flowers on the nose. The concave is biased toward the front of the deck and is perfect to nestle the rider's leading foot into. There's room for size 12 shoes in the sweet spot, right over the LongBoard Larry logo, and its deepest right over the spot where the camber peaks, too. This board is designed to flex into its camber, and sharpens its turning ability as it does so. We loved drop-pumping and flexing it around tight corners; the garage runners were impressed with the agility of this deck, considering the overall length of the rig. The combination of flex and concave front-center mask the true width of this board from the rider that's on the tight & low with it. The swooping kicktail makes for a nice footrest in a drop-knee stance, and we put that to the test over and over again.

The "smaller than it looks" feel our riders reported from the garage sessions carried through to longer, upright carving sessions, particularly for our riders within the intended weight spec by the builder. Some returned the board to us with grins of surprise at the agility of this deck and interesting reasons why they should keep it for "just a little longer". We attribute this not only to the fact that "perfect flex" steepens the steering angle of the trucks for riders, but also that the broad, rounded nose and overall length of the deck distract the eye from a very reasonable wheelbase that's been tucked under all that. Larry wants you to "hang ten" off that big nose, by the way, and he's set up the overhang perfectly for balancing the board if you go for it.

A few limitations. Beyond hanging ten toes off the front and some crowd-pleasing nose wheelies, we didn't find this board to be well suited for "longboard freestyle" maneuvers. There's plenty of room for cross-stepping and switch stance moves, but the same camber and flex that make for a plush ride can generate bounce and movement that even our most ardent fans of the deck found to be intimidating. The same goes for tic-tacs: application of sufficient weight on the kicktail will unweight and arch the deck, making it difficult to raise and place the wheels effectively. The heavier the rider, the more these effects become apparent on the big Cruiser, but this is not a board you should be tail-tapping with!

Although outstanding for cross-town transport, the Cruiser may not really fill the utility needs of commuters and probably isn't intended to. This board is long enough that by the time the riders moved back from the sweet spot between the trucks to reach for the kicktail, it was usually too late to pop a kick turn or jump up a curb, anyway. The wheelbase of this monster is also a little too much for a campus-cruiser/commuter. You won't be tucking this one in a locker, under a desk or even in the trunk of many small cars.

A big gun with a narrow tail. Back in a central stance, with the leading foot right over the LongBoard Larry logo, we had an absolute blast charging steep hills with the "Cruiser". "With the deck just bouncing from heel to toe, it was some of the closest carving I've had to cutting fresh powder!" one snowboarding-crossover told us. For middleweight riders, the flex and powerful return generated by the concave edges on the cambered section allowed smooth, effective carves and pumps. As the speeds increase, there's plenty of room on the LBL 56 to set into a low stance or to lunge into standing G-force carves. Move forward on the board, up into the pocket of the concavity, and it hunkers down for a stable, controlled ride. Step back, toward the rear trucks or onto the tail, and it loosens up; very much like Larry Peterson's surfboard on small waves.

More than what's advertised. Is this board really just a "cruiser"? No way! Larry's name for this deck is quite the understatement when it gets down to how fast and fun this deck is to ride when dialed-in as its designer intended. It's a gorgeous piece of craftsmanship, with graphics and style that mask the truly engineered approach LongBoard Larry has taken to designing the ride you'll receive from this deck. If you want a broad-nosed longboard with the chops to get down for some serious skating, or rolling artwork for a surf-style cruise, this is a deck to consider.

The ordering process includes the opportunity to discuss laminated cloth graphics and the amount of flex you'd like for your personal board. LongBoard Larry will add plies to suit your desires if you're over 200lb, and work with you to build precisely what you want out of the "Cruiser" — all before he packs it in a box with so many Styrofoam popcorn pieces stuffed in there that you will need a large hefty bag to contain the flood that results when you pull the deck out.

We now know why several Silverfish Longboarding members have been fanatical about their LongBoard Larry Cruisers, and you do, too.

