

Clean Look Cruising: The Kahuna "Duke"

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One of the coolest experiences of my ASR insurrections was with the owner of Kahuna Skateboards, Steve. After talking to me for a short while, he took me out to his car and handed me one of the first Duke models ever made, his personal daily rider. After much cruising, and some minor changes to the setup, we bring to you a review of the very same deck. The Kahuna "Duke";

Length: 57";
 Width: 6"; R Wheel Well 7"; Front Wheel Well 10 1/2"; Thickest
 Thickness: 1/2";
 WB: 44";
 Height: 4";
 Trucks: Exkate
 Wheels: Krypto Reds, Pink Powerballs, Flashbacks, Gumballs
 Bearings: Biltins, Bones Reds
 No Grip
 Kahuna Creations

Appearance: It's a beautiful, hardwood deck. When I take down to the beach along Newport Ave. in Ocean Beach, it generates comments from passersby. Very few decks have received as many looks and comments from strangers as this deck with its Mahogany, Maple and Tananoa sections. It's a thing of organic bliss. The branded logo, seared into the wooden deck, offsets the subtleties of the wood, giving it a very natural yet aptly aggressive look. The branding is well worth commenting on, as I haven't seen it used in many other decks but it really pops on the wood and adds a level of character I haven't seen anywhere else. Another thing to make note of is the absolute lack of grip. Steve, in his own words, said the absence of any grip was not an issue as the deck's main function was as a cruiser and mild carver. The clean top and the fully naked wood really does look good. Without commenting on functionality, the raw image of the deck really fits the look and attitude of a cruiser/carver.

The Ride: This is a serious cruiser, not in an aggressive sense or in a languid Sunday sense, but in a hard core, hit the beach, enjoy the scenery and take your time doing it sense. It's got Exkates in a harder duro still supplying a surfy feel but not going to a rail to hard. You have a massive plank of a deck with supple exotic woods looking back and you and a clear, clean and grip-free top coat.

What do you do on a deck like this? You cruise, and that's just what it's intended for. Now, you can hit hills, grab a rail and feel some speed, but with the slick coat it's best to just hit the mellows and push along, feeling the Duke just roll. With a slick top coat, you have two very heinous enemies: sand and water. You do not want to get wet and ride this deck! You're better off barefoot in that case: I almost had my foot dismount on a solid heelside blast. That's what I get for using it for something more than its intended use.

"No grip" also has a serious advantage: boardwalking and barefoot riding become another deal when there is no grip. Effortless spinners and shuffle to a hang-ten with nothing but clean deck underneath you. As good as a gripped deck feels under foot, there really is an organic feeling occurring when you rock a clean-topped deck barefoot. The clean transition between wood to flesh is exhilarating!

The initial setup we received had Krypto wheels and, I think, Lucky Bearings. I could be wrong about the bearings, but I quickly changed them out and tested the deck with Flashbacks. I enjoyed the Flashies but I eventually changed them out to rock some Pink Powerballs and Biltins. I think it's a perfect match now, but I have seen two of our heavier riders go down like a butter statue of Tank Abbott in a ceramics kiln when they got some naaasty wheelbite! Of course, with me standing on the sidelines saying "gee that has never happened to me"! Maybe it's schadenfreude, but I have never gotten wheelbite on the setup and have left it as-is.

The Duke gives the rider room to move with a wheel base about as long as many typical longboards themselves. It's got plenty of space to wander around and try your feet at some boardwalking or drop-knee maneuvers. With the deck as a specified cruiser, it's yours to decide what you want to do with it and, honestly, as much as I pushed and prodded the deck, it always felt the most at home just cruising around the pathways of Mission and Pacific Beach.

Conclusion: The downsides and upsides to this deck are obvious: on the upside, it is a beautiful, well-crafted deck with no grip tape to mar the beauty of the wood. On the downside, it is a beautiful, well-crafted deck with no grip tape and serious heft. Steve was very adamant as to the intended use of the Duke, telling us to just drop a knee and enjoy the

ride. If you're looking for a unique deck with alot of wood character and are intending it as a cruiser, Kahuna is well worth a look. Recently, we got a chance to see some of the new Kahuna decks and they've taken to using grip on some of their models. So, if you like the look but want some grip to hold you fast, they've got you covered.