

Habitat Skateboards P2 deck review

Gimmicks and fancy “technology” to improve skateboard decks have been around for as long as skateboarding itself. Features hailed to improve and revolutionize performance – like different kinds of glue, materials, inlays and processes – have all come and gone over the years. However, 7 sheets of maple ply has repeatedly proven to be the golden way, having remained the weapon of choice over the decades that skateboarding has existed.

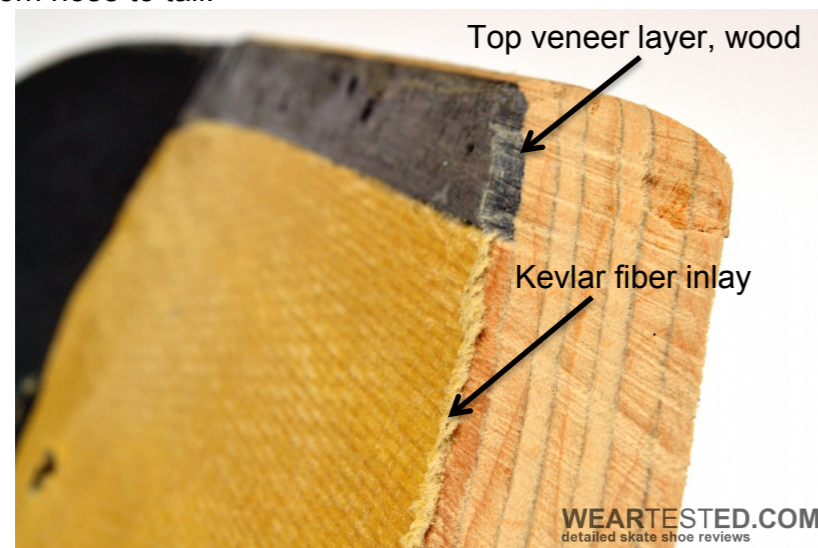
However, since arriving on the scene a few years ago, so-called P2 decks have been picked up by more and more established brands, including Flip, Zero, Creature, Skate Mental and Habitat. The fact that the technology of a third-party supplier has been used by such a range of brands and wood shops over such a relatively short timeframe is already a sign that it’s unlikely to be a one-hit wonder. To see whether or not the “spring-loaded pop” and the other positive attributes of P2 Decks really make a difference, a deck from Habitat’s “Manimal” series was put to the test. The findings can be read in the following lines.

Due to higher material and manufacturing costs, P2 decks retail at approximately 5 to 10 dollars higher than regular decks.



Idea

The idea is simple if not entirely new: The top sheet of maple veneer features an oval-shaped Kevlar fiber inlay that spreads from nose to tail.



The remaining 6 veneer layers are said to be slightly thinner, but the overall construction is still a 7-ply deck. Apart from being supposedly lighter and thinner than other decks, other positive aspects of the construction are the improved distribution of stress along the deck and a faster and higher rebound, according to the manufacturer. The latter is said to increase what skateboarders colloquially call “pop”.

What is Kevlar?

“Kevlar” is a tradename – the fibers are actually called Aramide, which are equipped with very unique mechanical properties. These properties mean they are most commonly used in the likes of bullet-proof vests, for example. In the case of P2 decks, the Aramide fibers are used in a so-called “compound material”, which consists of a woven fiber mat and an epoxy resin matrix. The combined properties of these two materials results in a stiff but flexible layer.

Impression

The increased stiffness of the deck was noticeable right from the start. When standing on the assembled board, it flexes a lot less than a classic deck. This is also noticeable when doing tricks: landings feel less cushioned and the impact on the body is slightly higher. Another first impression was the increased pop due to the extra stiffness. The deck feels very “crisp” and it doesn’t take as much effort to pop high tricks. This does take some time to get used to. The faster, more explosive pop initially makes it more difficult to control the board and tricks can feel off at first.



A long-term advantage of the P2 construction is that the deck stays stiff for longer and the usual deterioration in this area caused by bad landings on the nose and tail is reduced. With

a regular 7-ply deck, just one bad landing, which is not centered around the bolts, can cause internal damage to the wood veneers that majorly decreases its stiffness. The tested Habitat P2 didn’t seem to have such problems. The tendency to chip at the edges, however, can’t be decreased by the Kevlar inlay and happen to a P2 as with any other deck. Judging from its behavior during low-impact skating, the new deck technology should also be able to prevent breakage to a certain degree.

Summary

P2 Decks provide more pop than other decks and last longer in terms of stiffness. They are more durable than regular 7-ply decks, and almost certainly less likely to break, so justify the higher price. However, the resistance to chipping and external wear is not improved by the Kevlar fibres.

Sources:

- www.p2skateboards.com
- www.habitatskateboards.com (1st picture)
- Principles of Polymer Engineering by N. G. McCrum, C. P. Buckley and C. B. Bucknall (Nov 27, 1997)

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