

Lakai Howard review

Lakai's past few years in the industry haven't been as pretty sweet as they would have deserved after „Fully Flared“. Some major team riders rode off to more lucrative sponsors, while the switch from Podium Dist. to Girl took the company some time and effort for adjustment. And there is, of course, the perpetual David vs. Goliath fight against the big players in the industry for a piece off the skateboard footwear cake. Nevertheless, Lakai kept on fighting and stands as a prime example for skater-owned brands and with persistence comes triumph.

Scott Johnson's great design work and Lakai's amazing „home-grown“ team structure - three out of the five celebrated „Trunk Boyz“ are representing the Flare - are reasons enough to justify Lakai's rise. Qualitywise, the switch from production in China to South Korea showed an increase in craftsmanship and durability, which shines humbly when skating the new models. Among these 2013 releases is the Lakai Howard, which we had the pleasure of shredding up for you.

The Lakai Howard fits true to size.

Durability

The Howard uses a well-proven design principle: maximal durability by minimizing the amount of stitching and incorporating a one-piece toecap.



The toecap itself turns out to take up nearly one third of the shoe. This leads to an even distribution of griptape contact, which prevents any isolated weak points from popping up. Another constructive element of the Lakai Howard is the harder rubber

lining (in this case blue) around the top of the sole. While the soft, white sole provides great flick, this smart detail provides improved longevity by protecting underlying layers and increases the overall lifespan of the shoe. The Lakai Flare logo has been glued on, which prevents any possible peeling from ripped stitches. The shoelaces are well protected from ripping because of the conscious placement of the eyelets above the critical area for tearing. However, the canvas itself around this area was worn out quickly.



Furthermore, the sole with its deep grooves is a big advantage of the Howard. It showed only minimal wear during our 10h test. Based on previous wear tests, this indicates that it should hold up for almost the whole lifespan of the shoe.

Cushioning

The sole of the Howard is made up of a thin layer of EVA-foam in the midsole, matched with a thin removable insole.



Light impacts are cushioned well and the boardfeel isn't compromised since the frontal part of the sole is thinned out as much as possible. However, when it comes down to heavier impacts and bails,

disadvantages of their cushioning strategy is evident and can be felt easily. This is a frequently seen case of incorporating maximal boardfeel over cushioning.

Shape

The Howard fits snug to the foot and features a low silhouette that makes it perfect for people with slimmer feet.



The padding in the tongue and shaft area is noticeable but rather thin, which leads to direct contact between foot and shoe. The toecap is nice and pointy, which allows good control while doing flip tricks.

Boardfeel and grip

Lakai's XLK construction confirms that a vulcanized sole isn't needed to provide excellent grip and boardfeel.



The Howard's frontal part of the shoes provides terrific boardfeel by keeping the sole as thin as possible, whilst the deep herringbone-pattern provides great grip. The freedom of flexibility maximizes the grip by allowing the shoe to adapt well to the concave of the board.

Comfort and Stability

The Lakai Howard can basically be skated right out of the box; it features minimal wear-in time. It feels quite soft but stable and fits the foot right away. The

breathability is only average, even though there are perforations in the tongue and metal lace loops on the inner sidewall, which show that breathability was at least attempted. The elastic bands that center the tongue are a little distracting at first, but soon disregarded as wear-in time accumulates. The overall craftsmanship is on point and there's only minimal stitching within the shoe. The heel reinforcement is stiff and provides great stability, but since it is rather small it cannot provide perfect support against high impact landings. The stability is average for a cupsole model, but that's not necessarily a disadvantage since this leads to more freedom of movement, which many skaters prefer.

Summary

The Lakai Howard is a modern cupsole model with a thin sole-construction, which leads to a great balance between cushioning, grip and boardfeel. Apart from the average stability, this shoe meets and excels in durability.

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