



gear

clear winner

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He shapes all manner of custom surfboards, each with a performance orientation in mind. Steve Del Rosso of Clearwater Surfboards cut the power to his planer for just a little while recently to shed some light on the focus of his designs.

Not too long ago, Steve opened a retail shop at 46 Currumbin Creek Road. Part of the reason was to have some stock boards on display, the main one however was to enable him to dial into his designs even more. Steve picks up the conversation.

“Separating the two gave me a better head space for shaping. I was finding the constant interruption with crew dropping by the shaping bay was throwing my rhythm. I can get into the flow of things better now, which is reflected in my shapes.

“The shop enables people to come in and have a look and we still of course take custom orders there. I reckon 95% of my boards are still custom orders.”

Looking around the factory I could see a variety of different surfboards and was keen to find out what Steve enjoyed shaping.





“So many crew are riding different craft today. I am literally shaping everything from twin fins to singles and a lot of longboards, more than ever before. A lot of high performance shortboards as well.

“I enjoy shaping all of it. I am particularly finding inspiration in the feedback from customers. That’s the biggest thing, that feedback and the feedback from our team riders as well.”

Steve’s team of riders had always enjoyed a fair deal of success. Aside from the shapes under their feet, I asked what else played a part in their winning ways.

“The teams tighter now. I cut back on the number of riders but funnily enough, we are getting better results. It’s more about their attitude. That’s where the results come from. If their attitude is great, they often get great results. I just want a team of good, positive, happy people. It keeps the vibe going around doesn’t it?”

Clint Guest is still Clearwater’s main team rider. Presently on the WSL World Longboard Tour, he is placed 9th and has a number of Australian Longboard/ Logger titles under his belt. Clint has been pivotal for Steve in developing his range of longboards.

“These days you’ve got logging to stylish longboarding to performance longboarding, it’s awesome. There is a whole heap of variety there.

“Clint (Guest) is riding my performance log in comps. You still get the best of both world’s. You’ve still got the trim and glide, but you can still do the turns and have that looseness.”

I questioned Steve as to how his log designs differed from say old school logs.

“I have a model that is more old school with a piggish outline but find those boards are very restrictive. And you have to be a really good surfer to ride those boards. You also have to have perfect waves to ride them on. I respect those guys from the 60s who rode those boards. I have a big collection of old mals and to ride those boards, holy dolly it takes a lot of skill. I take my hat off to Midget and all the surfers from that era.

“But I don’t want to copy those kinds of boards like a lot of crew do. I want to do it a bit more modern so the boards are more forgivable and surf suckier waves and turn a lot easier. Those boards may have turned easy but you needed the right technique to do so.”

Steve’s designed his high-performance logs so folks can mix it up a bit.

“You can surf beach breaks on mine. You can get around those sections and that stuff. They are not just made to surf point breaks. Clint’s won two Australian Logger titles on them so it’s sort of nice because I’m not known as a log shaper.”

Looking around the bay I noted a midlength in progress and asked about the reason he had introduced flyers to the design.

“Flyers loosen the boards up. They create more of a pivot point. It breaks up the rail line so the board turns a lot tighter. This one is 7 foot but the flyers make it feel 2 to 3 inches shorter. You still have the paddle power but can bury a rail and hook it around.

“I’m always trying to keep them performing. That’s the key. I am still always thinking about making them turn easier and even if someone wants to do a re-entry on them. A lot of boards out there are restricting that sort of stuff. They are easy to surf but restrict you if you want to progress and do more on a wave.”

Steve likes to introduce a chine rail into a number of his designs as well.

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“I find chines really forgiving, really disperses the water better. It allows you to get off rail so you’re not catching – bury and release you know. Most of my logs feature a chine rail as well. I also do it on my mid-lengths and wide nose fishes. I feel anything wide needs a chine because all that area creates catch and I find the chine just alleviates it.”

I noted Steve mentioned he was making a lot of twin-fin fishes and asked what he thought of quads (4 fin fishes).

“Twins are faster, better and more manouverable. You know, you can go vertical on a twin whereas quads are very restrictive. But I will say one thing, if you’ve got a very wide tail board, quads are a necessary thing. You need the quads because you can’t bury the wide tails easy. They’re great for that mushy, gutless surf because it keeps you above the water going fast. When you go to do a turn, the quad on a wide tail allows you to bring the board around and not fight it as much as say a thruster. Quads in a wide tail board are a necessary evil.”



photo left clint guest

photo right steve chairing clint after another aussie title

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“Anything though with a nice clean outline doesn’t really need it (a quad fin setup). You’re better off with a twin, single or thruster in my opinion.”

There is no denying the twin fin craze has continued to gain momentum.

“Should never have left the earth I reckon. I remember as a grommet some of my best small wave boards were a twin. They’re fast, free, they’re loose and you can go wherever you want. Then in the Kelly Slater era the boards went to high performance, they were just ridiculous. You were fighting boards back then.”

Steve went on to explain he shapes the tails to his twin fins according to the waves they’re ridden on.

“On weaker waves I will tend to leave the tails quite wide. However, I am finding the ones that are pulled in a bit allow you to bury, pivot and turn a lot easier. I am generally keeping my fishes wide in the nose, in terms of the outline from the centre forward so you still have the paddle power benefits. But by bringing in the tail a little tighter, with those twins you can really do turns like a thruster if you want to, again that performance aspect.”

I enquired whether Steve had designed any fishes with the sidecut tails reminiscent of the Winterstick snowboard designs.

“They’re awesome. I have only done a few. It is allowing the board to carve so it is giving you the best of both worlds. When you are on rail they just

carve smoother but it does take out a little pivot as well. Personally, I would rather a flyer as it gives you the same benefit but enables the board to be more free.”

The bottom contours of Steve’s fishes and high performance shortboards tend to be single to double (concave) or just single. The longboards vary but more often than not feature a nose concave and a single running into a double concave through to the tail.

“It makes the rail to rail transition a lot easier. It plays a critical part in wider boards. That’s where the double always plays a part but with a single (concave) under the front foot so they have that get up and go.

“I will have a little subtle bit of vee between the fins in the wider boards as well so it allows a bit of release when you are in the last bit of a turn.

“I am getting the inspiration from the old boards but putting a modern performance spin on it so you can throw them around.”

If you have enjoyed my chat with Steve Del Rosso of Clearwater Surfboards, there is a heap more to it. Simply tune into our Smorgasboarder Podcast for the full interview.

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