

Outside

SUMMER 2008

BUYER'S GUIDE



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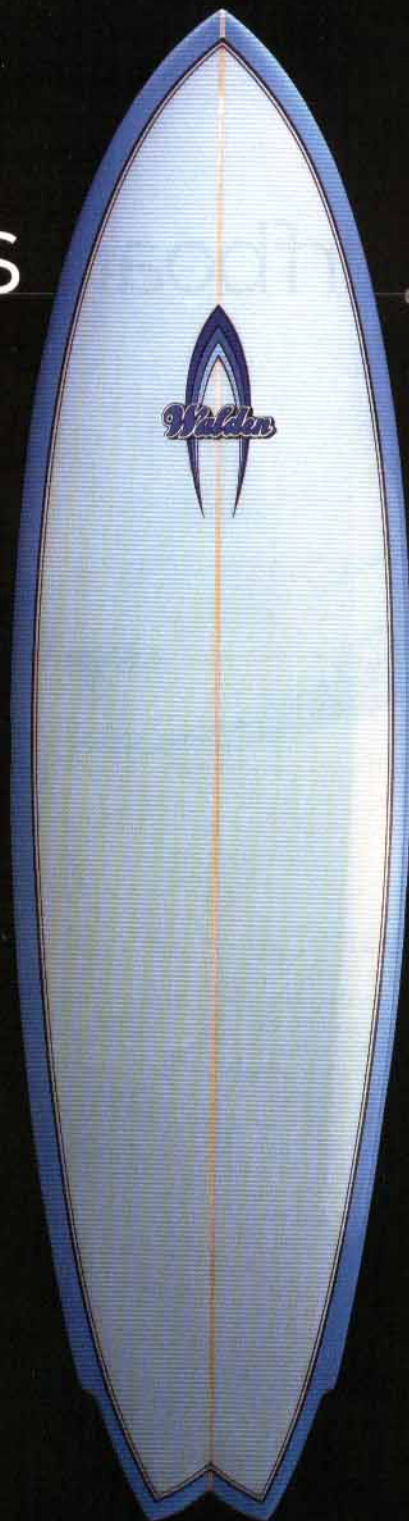
SPECIAL Women's Section!
(See Back Cover)

Surfboards

Shred-Ready

Foam shortage? What foam shortage? The custom-board industry is stronger and more diverse now than it ever was under the monopolistic control of now defunct Clark Foam. But of the dozens of short- and longboards we tested this year, the stick everybody tried to hog was the Walden Retro Wing Swallow. Big, small, mushy, hollow—the Walden carved every wave we caught.

BY MARK ANDERS



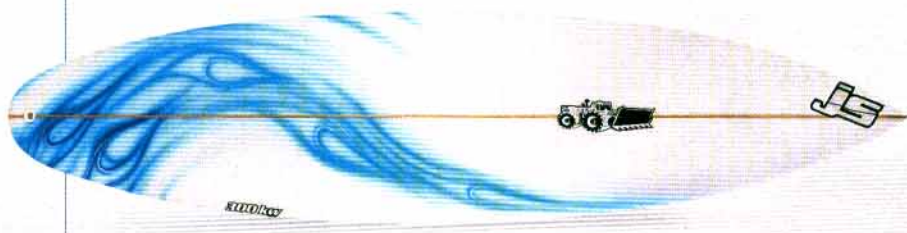
Walden Retro Wing Swallow (5'8"–6'10") \$650 waldensurfboards.com

1. Equipped with five fin boxes, the Walden works as a thruster or quad. Our 6'4" test model carved up small waves best as a quad. And when the surf jumped up, we popped out the back two fins and added one in the center for a thruster setup that was fast but steady on steep drops and bottom turns. The board is versatile enough for any wave.

2. The board's outline evolved from shaper Steve Walden's 1970s Dyno Eagle twin-fin fish. At 2.75 inches thick, the Walden has plenty of flotation to help you paddle into big waves early and milk waist-high junk you could normally ride only with a longboard. And with its double-concave hull, it even blew through hollow sections of ten-foot surf in the Maldives.

3. This board also proved extremely maneuverable, especially when ridden as a quad—that's two graduated fins on each side. Whether we were carving up small waves, cranking a big turn off the top, or just trying to switch directions to stay with a mushy wave, the Walden responded quickly and correctly, just like a good board should.

05 Surfboards



◀ JS Industries 300KW \$570

USER-FRIENDLY RIPPER

Top pros like Bruce Irons, Joel Parkinson, and Luke Egan all ride Aussie shaper Jason Stevenson's designs; the 6'5" 300KW thruster we tested is identical to the one Egan surfs on in competitions. The bottom features a speedy, single-concave shape that transitions into a double-concave section near the tail. Normally we start with small waves when feeling out new boards, but on our first test session the break was overhead, hollow, and crowded. The 300KW was up to the task. It felt solid, fast, and easy to ride. The only drawback to such a finely tuned, lightly glassed board is that it lacks durability. 6'1"–7"; jsindustries.com

▶ Surftech Joel

Tudor Diamond Egg \$790

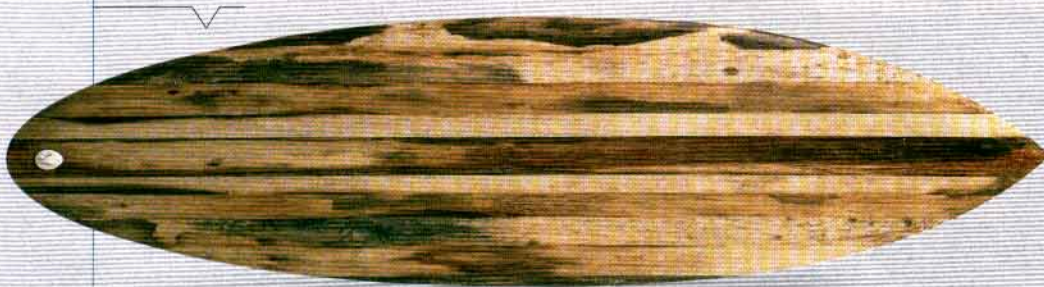
NEW-SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

In the span of two days at San Diego's Mission Beach, we put this 1970s-style Tudor singlefin through both thigh-high sets and overhead walls. The 2.5-inch-thick foam kept us moving on the small stuff and got us into big waves earlier than on a shortboard. One tester noted, "It's fast off the bottom and easy to cut back and stay with the wave." (That same tester liked it so much he took it deep into Baja, Mexico; we didn't see him again for a month.) The flat rocker makes it tougher for beginners to handle steep drops, but because it's made from lighter and more ding-resistant Tufflite, there's no reason they shouldn't try. 6'9"; surftech.com



NATURAL FIBERS

Unlike redwood "logs" of the past, modern woodies can be nearly as light and nimble as glass boards.



ECO-STAR

◀ Linden Agave

Singlefin \$2,500–\$5,000

GOOD WOOD

We've heard all the chatter about eco-friendly foam boards, but we've yet to test one that's proven truly durable. For now, the only sustainability-minded board we love is veteran shaper Gary Linden's custom-built 6'4" wooden singlefin. It's crafted from dead agave foraged from the SoCal desert, which Linden then spends 60 hours hand-building. On the water, the wood made for a smooth ride, taming afternoon chop. The disco-era design made easy work of fast, head-high walls but was fun on small waves, too. Dings are tough to repair, but, on the bright side, the board is worth hanging over the mantel. Custom sizing; lindensurfboards.com



◀ Global Surf Industries McTavish Fireball \$845

CLASSIC LONGBOARD

Bob McTavish shaped the original Fireball in 1994. Since then, his 9'1" performance longboard has become a hard-to-find classic—until late 2007, when Global Surf Industries started mass-producing it. Our GSI model rode well in a variety of conditions, from crisp East Coast beach rollers to a point break off mainland Mexico. Its relatively flat hull catches waves easily, and it's also lively once you're up. The Fireball comes with a 2+1 tri-fin setup, but our testers preferred it as a looser singlefin. And while it's a bit heavier than we like, all that additional mass (and a double-concave tail) lent it much speed. 9'1", 9'3", 9'6"; surfindustries.com

▶ Wave Riding Vehicles Fun Fish \$545

GIGGLES FOR ALL

Funboards are often overlooked because they don't have the sexy lines of a shortboard. But for most casual surfers, this WRV Fun Fish is just right—and the 7'6" model we tested is the most user-friendly board here. Its flat bottom made for easy paddling and acceleration, allowing us to catch waves we'd normally snag only on a longboard. On bigger waves, the thruster-fin setup carved steep sections, and there's plenty of flotation (2.5 inches) and width—enough that our more experienced testers were able to walk up the board. But it has its limits: Once the waves started getting overhead, we wanted something with more mojo. 6'6"—8'6"; waveridingvehicles.com



PADDLE Werner's carbon-fiber Spanker is the best stand-up stick we've ever tested. \$300; wernerpaddles.com



▲ Boardworks C4 Waterman SUP \$1,720

GET UP, STAND UP

Last year saw stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) move from the wacky fringe to the pages of *Us Weekly*, as seemingly every celebrity picked it up. With the fad still on full burn, shapers are racing into the SUP market, which is what makes the C4 special. It was designed by Hawaii's SUP vets Brian Keaulana, Dave Parmenter, and Todd Bradley. The Waterman is huge but, thanks to a weight-saving EPS core, weighs just 29 pounds and is easily carried solo to the water. Plus, at nearly five inches thick and 29 inches wide, it's stable enough for beginners to use as a tandem "date" board. 11'6"; boardworkssurf.com, c4waterman.com