

“One day with...” -The idea-

As most of you will know, it takes around 3 sessions to decide whether or not you like a skate shoe.

Based on that observation, I came up with the idea of a shorter review format that focuses on just the first 5 hours of skating in a new shoe. It was originally introduced on the Slap Magazine homepage as part of the “Slap Shoe Blog” and from now on will also be a part of weartested.de.

These shorter reviews – about the first few hours, where almost all qualities and malfunctions of a shoe appear or at least can be foreseen – will be more compressed and on point, but still as objective as possible.

“One day with... the Gravis IVsk8 Viking high”

Sizing

Slightly smaller than usual. I wear US9 in Adidas and Lakai and a US9.5 Gravis Viking high vulc fitted perfectly.

Durability

A small weakness of the Viking design is that the laces rip pretty fast. Although the lacing is placed more towards the inner sidewall and away from the outer sidewall, where the abrasion takes place, the laces sustained a lot of damage during the 5-hour test.

One of the most important features of this black and white colorway of the Gravis Viking high is the use of the so-called “tectuf material” on the toebox and the eyestay. Tectuf is a compound material that consists of leather with a special finish, a very thin layer of plastic and, in this case, a woven canvas-like structure. The Supra Tuf is similar to the material Gravis uses, but it has a different surface structure. Both leathers are made by the same company (www.tectuff.com).

It is so durable that almost no abrasion took place during the test. However, the real innovation is that its grip is pretty good. There's a difference between suede and tectuf, but the switch from a suede toebox to a tectuf toebox is quite easy.

One major weakness of this particular Viking high vulc colorway, though, is that the complete sidewall is not made out of tectuf leather. The sidepanel consists of woven canvas material that wears out quickly, as you can see in the pictures. This panel is in the first third of the shoe, where it comes into contact with the griptape while doing regular ollies or heelflip-based tricks. The use of canvas in this region could be seen as a design fault, but it can be easily corrected by putting super glue on the affected areas. A reasonable improvement by Gravis would be to expand the tectuf material to the sidewall panel as well, at least on the side of the shoe facing towards the griptape.



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Breathability

Since the test period took place during winter, the breathability is mostly judged by the materials used. Although the Viking features ventilation holes in the front of the toe box and canvas material on the sidewall, the breathability is just average. The air exchange between inside and outside isn't too good. Only the tongue, which is canvas as well, seems to be relatively breathable. It is not as good as mesh, but it is so thin that the moist air doesn't have to pass through many layers.

Grip

The vulcanised sole of the 2010 Viking high features a classic herringbone pattern that is more subtle than most others. This means that the contact surface between board and sole is bigger due to the smaller amount of grooves in the rubber, which adds grip. However, since the rubber seems to be softer and the thinner, lines get worn out faster. As a result the durability of the sole pattern is just average. After the test, you could already see areas with a reduced deepness in the pattern due to abrasion. All in all, the sole features an excellent grip and enough abrasion resistance that the pattern should last for the whole lifespan of the shoe, except for some minor worn-out areas.



Shape

The toebox of the Gravis Viking high vulc tapers towards the peak and turns out to be more arrow shaped than you might expect. As always, have a look at the pictures to get the best impression of the shape.



Boardfeeling

The Viking high features a balanced boardfeel with the direct contact to the board that is typical for vulcanised shoes. The sole feels very thin in the forefoot area, while the heel area is thicker and more cushioned. There is a difference in height between the front and back of the sole, which is a good way to give the shoe a good boardfeeling in the front, where it is mostly necessary, while offering comfort and cushioning in the heel area, where heel bruises and similar injuries could otherwise take place.

Comfort/Cushion

One of the strengths of the Viking high is the comfortable interior. All threads are either stitched with a stitch and turn method, so you don't even see them, or are very flat. There is only minor material overlapping so there aren't any "hotspots" in the shoe where blisters could develop. The cut-out in the area of the achilles tendon eliminates the problem that you can't fully extend your foot to the front, which is often the case with other high top models. The shoe generally fits tight to the foot and the soft bootleg doesn't get in the way while bending the ankle.



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All in all, the Viking high features great craftsmanship with a smart use of different stitching techniques. This good craftsmanship is also visible in the minimal peeling of the bottom- and side part of the sole that other brands have problems with.

The insole manages to absorb all average forces that develop while landing. It has an ergonomical shape and, as said above, is thicker in the heel area than others, which adds damping and improves comfort while skating in them.

Support

Due to its thin and soft construction, the Viking doesn't offer the same ankle support as a regular high-top skate shoe. It features just a small C-shaped plastic reinforcement in the heel, which seemed pretty weak while doing the "squeeze test". When worn, the high cut, combined with the reinforcement, offers a good amount of support though. So, all in all, it's somewhere between a low and a high top support-wise. A problem for people with wide feet could be the very slim heel area, which could turn out to be uncomfortable and not very supportive if your heels are too wide. If this is the case, you should at least try them on in a shop first and maybe pick a different model. Overall, the support is good but not extraordinary. It is similar to the Nike SB Blazer, which is also a high top but with a very flexible shaft. This could also be an advantage though. If you mainly skate low-top models and want to switch to a high top, or if you generally search for a shoe with ankle freedom in between that of a low and high, the Gravis Viking high vulc is a great choice.

One sentence summary

The Gravis IVsk8 Viking high is a thin vulcanised high top with the feel of a low top and good grip, boardfeel and craftsmanship.