

**The following was a question I posted on Facebook and the responses that followed:
July 2012**

How does everybody REALLY feel about this Boat Rock stuff? I have been trying for years to kill the demand that the wholesalers keep putting on me to supply this and when I object they tell me that the stores refuse to pay for the air freighted stuff and that everyone thinks Boat Rock is good enough because it is cheap! Even though WSI goes through special treatments buy dipping and chilling the stuff to make it as good as it can get I will be the first to admit it is far inferior to "fresh" rock. Does anyone agree with me or have we really become a cheap ass Wall-mart nation (thanks Steve for the term) that does not care about quality anymore? I thought reefers were in a special class that wanted top quality products or is it the case that all the customers (and stores) believe their supplier telling them it is flown in Attention everyone! This is a lie! I still have a few customers that insist on flown in rock but trust me; they are a serious minority!

That was my question? I was seriously interested if the hobby was aware of these issues and if they thought "boat rock" was suitable for their reef tank aquariums. I have been pushed to be interviewed on this subject and thought I would ask the hobby for their point of view. I am being told that nobody cares anymore as long as it's cheap yet I feel the overwhelming responsibility to only provide the best there is. The responses that followed were enlightening and informative. I thank all those that contributed to this post, some with passion and some with inquisitive interest what we were talking about. This has been valuable to me and I can truly say that now I am more confused than ever! LOL But really, thanks everyone!

[Steven Jabsheh](#) Please educate me . What is boat rock ? Thx

[Federico Klosowski](#) Here in argentina reefers can only get low quality live rock. Our LFS doesn't care about rock quality. As a matter of fact the rock we can get is almost base rock with few microfauna.

[Reef Lagoon](#) The united states is one big walmart now, everything is a cheap product but high price, I have seen stores sell dry rock that has set in a tank for a month to give it a darker look and put your name on it and call it live rock and sell it for \$10 a pound. the hobby has gone from enjoying something nice to taking a loan out to buy things.

[Mark Milazzo](#) The saltwater hobby needs to crash to save itself.. Especially when it comes to corals.. Not trying to change the subject but it is what it is.. I have to spend the same price or more for decent corals then what I use to sell them for.. Some of the whole sellers have gotten way ahead of themselves on the price of things and all it does is kill the market in my opinion..

[Pee Ca](#) You get what you pay for in this hobby...

[Mark Milazzo](#) It's not a hobby for me, it's a business...

[Jerry Jones](#) I agree..totally! I don't see much of an advantage to buying "boat rock" over buying concrete moulded into..well..what looks like live rock! By the time "boat rock" reaches its final destination, most..if not all of the quality organisms are long dead, and their remnants are introduced into aquariums, left to decay and foul water quality. Its quite ironic...In the early 90's, live rock retailed in Canada for \$9-\$11/lb, today it retails for \$5-\$9/lb. However, airfreight cost is 3-4 times it was then!

[Terry Webster](#) Personally if your going to buy boat rock you are better off getting Real Reef, the guys with the clownfish boxes. If you are going to buy live rock it has to be flown in or its just dead rock with dead stuff in it.

[Mark Milazzo](#) Real reef rock is awesome.. Just got a few boxes this past week for the first time...

[Tim Beck](#) Sorry but WS rock is the only way to go. It is like who works on my car and who takes care of my family and who has my phone service and who does every service I purchase. Of all 5 tanks of mine I have only used WS Figi rock. Never had a problem with anything. And I am sure that he would stand behind it. Any other rock you got people passing the buck.

[Ryan Gerlach](#) Proud to say that Harbor Aquatics boat run rock is the only thing in all of my aquariums. Some of the best for people that want to watch a reef grow naturally..... and don't want an instant ocean on the living room.

[Terry Webster](#) Harbor aquatics? Wasn't that Joy Meadows place years back.

[Robert Shepard](#) I always like flown in rock. I sell yours by the ton!! Boat rock sux!!!

[Robert Tondre](#) Flown in rock in my opinion will have more parasites we don't want in our tanks. I prefer boat rock for that reason, yes it may take some time to get color back but I could care less about that. My corals take precedence over the rock! I may be a minority on this but I couldn't care less. I only buy WS boat rock. That's in all my tanks and has been for a long time. My customers would shit themselves if I sold rock for more than I do now, no matter what it looks like!

[Chad Smith](#) 95% of the time price rules. It sucks but thats what the majority of my customers look for. People may pay a bit more if they truly see a big difference but not a lot more.

[Sam Garcia Jr.](#) I'm sick of aquarists who insist on the "cheapest" rather than the best! This is why there is still a market for cyanide and rotenone caught fish with a 50% mortality! I am almost ready to recharge a campaign for awareness! Big TV programs who kill fish for the sake of an ornamental tank used in an episode for entertainment also sickens me! I will get shot down for this comment! Livestock is not expendable and money hungry store owners that care about profit first should be boycotted! They are ruining the image of our hobby! Whatever! Just a rant!

[Sam Garcia Jr.](#) Please, store owners and service guys, educate customers because when they learn the truth, they become wiser aquarists!

[Steven Jabsheh](#) Thankyou Sam.

[Jeremy Stoffel](#) I don't have a tank currently but when I set it up I want the best rock that I can find at the time. Whatever the trend is. Its the foundation of your reef house and I want it to be healthy diverse and pretty to look at.

[James B Stime](#) I have only been involved in four Reef Tank set-ups and LR purchases in the last three years, two were 'refrigerated cargo' and two were 'Indonesian'. the Indo rock arrived with absolutely no visible life on the rock, or the bottom of the box. the 'cargo' version looked good but had no 'life' attached to it. I am anticipating a reef tank sale shortly and have quoted Walt Smith LR thru Pacific Aqua Farm.

[Sam Garcia Jr.](#) Live rock should have living algae and small creatures, desirable or not living in the crevices. It needs to be cured but at least it actually represents a live reef. The other rock is great for fish only tanks. So is the artificial live rock. Just shop wisely for the best stuff!

[Robert Tondre](#) Why would you want any undesirables, algae or critters, in your tank? I'm sorry but I'll take rock with dead stuff over the chances of putting something in that I can't get out any day. It's not about the money, its about my reef. It's hard enough making sure the rock a coral comes in on is clean. That's where all these flatworm, bristle worms and all the crap we have to treat for come from, flown in rock!!!

[Guy Thorsby](#) I don't see why something classified as scleractinia is even allowed to be shipped by boat. While we can ship tidal species wrapped simply in plastic as long as its less than or right at 24 hours that is the maximum time you can expose these animals to atmosphere. Proper acclimation includes quarantine which includes dipping even if its been done by the shipper. Boat rock is not only crap rock but it shouldn't be legal. Ship a dog inside a bag of water in a boat around the world and see what happens. I would never put anything in a tank that smells like that and will never support this ugly side of the industry. The industry has flexed to make keeping a reef tank possible for anyone. Proper husbandry and technique unfortunately seems to be slowly drifting away.

[Sean Morgan](#) I have 200 lbs. of rock that was flown in and I paid the price for it. That was my choice and mine alone. Now that I don't have a LFS. I have to go with whatever I can get unfortunately. Can I purchase from you?

[Don Baker](#) I hear that a guy here on Guam will be setting up a culturing ops and will include the culture / nurturing of artificial 'Live Rock'...from Guam USA.

[Marie Elize Sloterdijk Court](#) amen!

[Marie Elize Sloterdijk Court](#) My beef these days is all the fragging going on in the town and selling on craigs list, while I have to pay the sales tax on all that is sold along with the licsense we have to buy and the inspection from Wildlife, and insurance to even carry the Business of everything. Walt what is your take on this!

[Walt Smith Int'l Fiji](#) one word would be be bio piracy! But who am i to say? I have about 300 people to support and village communities that I have set up with community projects to grow coral that we purchase from them to provide income where little chance of income exist. These folks depend on the careful use of their resource and our training to provide them a living month to month. I have stopped sending large and extra large corals in my orders to make it hard in the States to steal this resource in one easy swipe and create a product that will eventually put the original owners of that coral out of business. This is just one point of view even though I do support aquaculture and experimentation. It is very hard to call and sorry to say there is nothing we can do about it. You are feeling a similar hit to your economy just as these islanders will eventually feel.

[Dan Ragle](#) I like your boat rock but I love the flown in rock.If you cook the boat rock for a month or so its pretty comparable IME
We do need the cheaper stuff for the low cost and FOWLR aquariums to stay competitive with the dry rock pushers abound

[Kevin Adams](#) The issue at hand is really more a matter of timing than anything else, so I doubt efforts to educate and market higher priced rock based on quality will have much impact. Most buyers of “boat rock” are new entrants into the hobby; those most desperate to start their first reef tank with the least amount of capital investment. Therefore, trying to persuade beginners-on-a-budget to pay \$5-6 lbs. for premium liverock is tantamount to selling French bottled water to sharecroppers. Given such wide parameters on the hobby maturity scale, I believe both types of product will be necessary for to satisfy consumer demand, at least for the foreseeable future. Rock On!

[Walt Smith Int'l Fiji](#) Yes Kevin, I realized this long ago. that is why we do sell "Fiji Ultra" and this market seems to be increasing a little. My intention here was to try and educate some of the new guys about what used to be the standard and to respond to a recent post (that upset me) stating "there is no such thing as Fiji LIVE rock anymore" as a business person I should take the attitude that a sale is a sale but as a hobbyist and quality freak I see this as a sad turn of events.

[Carlito Coloian](#) 98% of wholesale customers want cheap and "now". There are a select few that want quality and are willing to wait and pay the price. I'm glad I waited for air rock years ago. I wouldn't want to do it any other way.

[Jon A Stead](#) No one wants it cause of the amount of live stuff that still dies and then takes much longer to cycle. Americans want things fast or not at all.

[Bob Fenner](#) Many good points voiced here. Yes, the boat rock is inferior, and yes, it generally harbors less undesirable (and desirable) life. There is an established market for cheaper products and livestock in our trade. IF I could wave a/the magic wand I would gladly increase the quality segment of the industry to hobbyist "pie", cut back the "intermediate" and greatly reduce the price slice that is way too big currently. Thank goodness for the extant sizeable service side and their wealthier customer base who largely don't mind paying for quality.

[Margi Wilcox Shindell](#) I just want to come visit you and Deb in Fiji!! :)

[Suzy Applegarth](#) I wonder if this is a marketing issue. The very first post asks "what is boat rock", and those of us outside the industry don't have a clue what you are talking about. I have had my tanks set up for years, and rarely buy any rock. New reefers do tons of "research", reading the blogs and forums. I haven't read anything there about this. It is all about this companys new light or that companies new pump. Maybe take a month and start promoting it where new hobbyists are reading. And, maybe you can get some experienced people to replace some rocks!

[Sam Garcia Jr.](#) We don't need marketing genius in this industry. What we need is education. Some have taken my comments wrong. I am not partial to any rock available in the trade but I am opposed to certain artificial rock that has been proven to be unable to support reef encrusting organisms successfully. All natural rock is properly composed by nature and will quickly grow coralline algae, beneficial macro algae, and encrusting sponge and bryzoans and such. These organisms still need to be introduced into the aquarium if desired by introducing a certain amount of good quality live rock. Unfortunately, most holding systems in the US are incapable of supporting the life that is shipped on fresh air rock for long periods of time. In this case, it is essentially the same as boat rock by the time most consumers get to see it. For those of us who have been heavily involved in the aquarium industry, we know the difference when we open up a fresh box of air rock. It has a sweet ocean smell and everything appears alive. After only a few hours in a hot warehouse, the rock quickly begins to deteriorate. I have always hoped that a company would start culturing live rock locally in Southern California but I imagine it would be costly and have many drawbacks. In the late 90s I sold the best rock without any problems for as much as \$15/lb and it always sold out! It really was THAT good! Now, I get a sigh of disgust when I sell excellent rock at \$7.99/lb. With a little bit of discussion most customers realize that they are responding to prices that they are used to seeing at competitors stores and not actually looking at the rock. Sadly, most live rock sold sits in stagnant, stained, polluted water with off salinity (too high or too low) that is not filtered or changed often. Unfortunately, with restrictions placed on the collection of live rock in many areas...which I agree needs to be controlled...our resources are shrinking! I do not condone the use of nice quality live rock in a FOWLR system. Leave the good stuff for the reef aquarists. I believe dead rock, boat rock, recycled rock or artificial live rock suits those systems better. Just remember to support the aquarium shops who TRULY CARE about the livestock they sell and do not support the shops that do not care about the health or husbandry of their living "inventory".

[Tim Beck](#) I am a crazy one. I feel that rock should hurt when you buy it. Walt, keep shipping it and let the economy decide.

[Jeffrey Felter](#) I couldnt afford my last tank set up with all air rock that was flown in. I guess thats why I went with 75% dry rock and the other 25% was very fresh flown in that day rock from you. I guess I had to get the most for my pennys.

[Eric Cohen](#) It's been about 10 years or so since shipping by boat became the norm? Would you say? All in all, it helps hobbyists get into the hobby at a much lower price. Affordability on equipment and setup bring new hobbyists and help expand the former. In 30 days from entering the retailers or hobbyists aquarium, it's all cured and equally effective...so while I love having the option to both types, I don't see anything wrong with the boat rock, but do prefer it's shipped by refrigerated container to produce what I feel is quality VERY similar to flown in rock at first look. It may not cure as quickly, or remain as colorful during the curing process, but the end result will be the same. I support both types of rock and do let the market decide. If I were a retailer, I would carry all types, and educate the customer to the differences, and let them decide. I can also really appreciate all the cultured rock that is performing well, looking great, and takes the pressure off of wild harvested rock. I know some purists in the reef community that swear by starting your new reef tank with dried out rock to make sure 100% no hitchhikers are found. Not my cup of tea, but some believe in it and it has sound logic behind it.