

IBIS HEYWOOD

From Santa Rosa's fun meister *nul erit*

Ibis has so single-mindedly focused on titanium production that few remember that the Santa Rosa, California, bike maker still produces steel frames. The bustling plant will happily crank out custom one-offs for discerning mountain bikers. The Ibis Heywood single-speed is a product of Ibis' custom department. Many of the staff at Ibis are honed single-speeders, so the Heywood is not a warmed-over geared bike with funny rear dropouts.

Proof that single-speed blood pulses through the veins at Ibis is the Heywood's muted "abalone" paint and subtle graphics. Single-speeders know the value of the element of surprise and often camouflage their bikes with dust and mud to slip unnoticed past multi-gear riders. Only the beautiful gold-plated, investment cast Ibis head badge calls attention to the fact that the Heywood is an expensive custom ride.

IBIS' CHROMOLY FRAME

"Rigid in torsion" should be carved into the Ibis coat of arms. The Heywood has a large-diameter front triangle, dominated by a 1.375-inch thick down tube. The frame's tubing choice is custom butted Ibis Moron by Tange chromoly. The conventional, tapered-stay rear end is attached to flat, Columbus track-racing dropouts (skinny-tired track bikes are also single-speeds).

Our 19-inch frame was the monster of the group. The top tube stretched 24.5

Crowd favorite: Although its front tire could be scary, all of MBA's test riders were fond of the Ibis' do-anything handling.

inches long and the 5.5-inch head tube was a full inch taller than average. Chainstay length was short and sweet for a single speed at 16.75 inches. Ibis usually tweaks its frame angles differently from typical hardtails, and the Heywood's 72-degree seat and 70-degree head angles were slack enough to underscore this trend. With frame numbers like these, the Ibis single-speed was obviously designed to bomb over anything smaller than a discarded sofa and handle fire roads like a rally car.

ABOUT THE IBIS HEYWOOD

The Heywood had the most expensive accessories in the MBA single-speed squadron. The status-backed gruppo? (1) An expensive, zero-rise, titanium Ibis stem. (2) A prototype Ibis carbon fiber crankset with a Spot chainring and guard. (3) Paul vee-type brakes and hubs. (4) The drivetrain used the wide 1/8-inch format including a Shimano 17-tooth freewheel cog (gearing was a tall 17/36-tooth ratio). (5) In the cockpit the rider was treated to 26-inch wide, riser, Salsa Moto Ace handlebars, Syncros seatpost and a medieval-looking Giro Nisene saddle. (6) The Heywood rolled on Sun 0-degree Light rims and

Geax Sedona tires. (7) Its Manitou SX-Ti fork topped the bike off. Manitou's "Twin Piston" damping is easy to tune and its coil springs make it a consistent performer in the harshest conditions.

The Heywood was trick-looking. Surely, there wasn't much room for upgrading.

IBIS RIDING IMPRESSION:

"I don't think I'll ever live this down," admitted Harve, an MBA hanger-on. "I just got smoked by Mike on the ranch loop and he was on a single-speed."

Harve was only one of many who would never catch a glimpse of the front tire of the Ibis. The Heywood chassis stayed laser-beam straight even as its pilot grimaced, huffed and hammered on the handlebars. On the descents, the Ibis would roll over the rough stuff like it wasn't there. It was a perfect design for maintaining momentum in arduous conditions.

Climbing the Heywood's tall gearing was not as big a problem as most test riders expected—as long as the rider kept the gas on. Slow down and the rear tire would slip easily on gravel or loose traction spots. Lowering the air pressure in the rear Geax Sedona tire helped the tire hook up without ruining its fast rolling attributes on pavement.

Up front, the Ibis had a huge, 2.5-inch Sedona tire that floated over all but the deepest sand. For a single-speeder, sand is the enemy.

Did it have any flaws? (1) The Sedona front tire had a tendency to push wildly in rutted corners. We turned the tread around to alter its pushing and found the "soft" direction indicated on the sidewall to be the best. (2) The frame was very roomy and best suited to taller riders who could put more weight on the front tire and force it to bite harder. Weighting it through tight bends proved our theory true.

Because the key to efficient single-speed mountain biking is carrying as much speed as possible, the Heywood proved to be a top performer. Its frame numbers are a bit different, but they result in a machine that takes little or no attention from the pilot, leaving you free to knock yourself out on the climbs.

Ibis sells the Heywood frame in steel for \$1150 and offers a more-expensive Ti version for anyone who is allergic to rust. Call Ibis at (707) 523-1919 or check them out at www.ibiscycles.com. □