

KLEIN ADROIT

Are you the target audience?

From all outward appearances, Klein mountain bikes have not changed too much over the years: big aluminum tubes, sloping top tubes and a triple neon fade finish that returns every year like the swallows to Capistrano. Be that as it may, the allure of the Klein look continues to make it one of the most popular top-end mountain bikes around. Gary Klein has consistently made an issue out of lightness, and his mountain bikes have a reputation as some of the lightest available—light like many others, but still different due to their construction and the materials used.

Probably no other bike is as misunderstood as the thin-walled, aluminum-tubed variety. Many people think thin wall translates into short life—not so. Had it not been for a top-notch race team that Klein has sponsored over the years, it might be easy to suggest a lack of confidence in his design, but year after year Gary has sent his team out on the tough National circuit for all to judge. Riders like Cindy Whitehead, Cindy Devine and Tinker Juarez have put the frames through some of the toughest conditions imaginable, and they have survived.

The one thing that remains true about the bikes is that it takes a certain kind of rider to appreciate what the bikes provide out on the trail.

MORE THAN PAINT

Klein sent us their first available Adroit test model and, as it rolled into our offices ready to ride, it hit the scales at 20.6 pounds. Wow! We had heard of other bikes in this weight range recently and how they had not lasted long in the rough. Would the Klein be any different? Out on the trail, the bike consistently caught people's attention due to its radical appearance. There were some who had a rather ho-hum attitude based on what they thought the bike was all about: No, it doesn't use straight-gauge tubing and, no, the bike isn't just a differently painted Attitude left over from last year (*MBA*, Feb. '90).

As the 6061 T-6 aluminum frames have evolved, changes have been made that are not visible to the naked eye. The Adroit is different from the Attitude by virtue of a bigger two-inch down tube and 1-3/8-inch seat tube (versus the Attitude's 1.75/1.5 tubes). Also, by laying sheets of boron/carbon fiber in strategic places (fork crown, chain and seat stays), excess metal has been taken out of the frame to save weight, but without minimizing frame strength. Still the most massive on the market, this year the

fork has been redesigned. Dubbed the Uni-Klein, the fork is unique and even the most hardened techno-weenies were impressed with the workmanship required to pull it off. Equally unique is the oversized headset that uses aircraft thrust bearings—no one else utilizes this kind of technology. Also new this year is the zero-degree-rise, one-piece stem/handlebar unit.

WHAT DID WE GET?

Not all Adroits you see on the trails will weigh under 21 pounds. The bike we tested was the Adroit Ultra-Light, retailing for \$3650, which is built with only the lightest components available. A SunTour XC-Pro drive train (with a Campagnolo aluminum freewheel) is mated to Grip Shift shifters; Hi-E hubs are laced to Campagnolo Contax rims; Dia-Compe SS-5 brake levers pull in a pair of Dia-Compe 986 cantilevers; Ringle Ti-Stick skewers are used throughout; and a Selle Italia Flite saddle is mounted on a Ritchey seatpost. If you would like to build up your own Adroit, a frameset is available for \$1995.

We found a 70-degree head angle and 72.5-degree seat angle on the Adroit, along with 16.65-inch chainstays, 11.5-inch-tall bottom bracket, a 23-inch top tube and a 41.75-inch wheelbase. It was nice to see a third water bottle mount on the underside of the down tube.

THE RIDE, THE RIDE

Test riders either loved the Adroit or hated it. It's that kind of bike. No compromises. No lowest common denominator thinking. The stiff, fat-tubed frame delivers a consistent, straight and true ride on the climbs. Everyone reveled over the bike's weight and how easily it could be thrown around, but then there was the ride over the stutter bumps. Is it a coincidence that Tinker Juarez is considered one of the toughest riders on the circuit because he rides an Adroit without suspension (Klein teammates Cindy Whitehead and Penny Davidson both use Manitou suspension forks)? One rider felt battered at the end of a long ride full of wicked descents. Another fell in love with the bike. Others weren't as affected by the stiff feel and lightweight oscillations. For half of the *MBA* test riders it was proven possible for a bike to be too light.

Kleins are a particular type of bike that cater to a particular type of rider. If you want a stiff ride, the Klein is for you. If you want light weight, the Klein is for you. If you want to spend a whole bunch of money, the Klein is for you. If you want all that, and also a strong frame, then what are you waiting for?

For further information contact Klein Bicycles, 118 Klein Rd., Chehalis, WA 98532; (206) 262-3305. □