



Bike-tech

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KLEIN

KLEIN ATTITUDE

With suspension comes a new attitude



As big as it gets: You won't find another headset system on the market that is bigger than Klein's. Originally designed to accommodate the oversized aluminum steerer tube of the Klein aluminum fork, the head tube accommodates the Rock Shox steerer tube by using a steel sleeve. The Rock Shox are custom-painted to match the frame.

■ The story is well known. Klein Bicycles. Designed by Gary. Big aluminum tubes. Wild colors. Stiff and rigid ride. Extremely popular. Pricy. Made in America. Innovative. Successful racing background. There you have it. Well, actually, some of that isn't really true.

We got our Attitude test bike with its wild, horizon linear fade paint scheme and, as with every Klein test bike, we stood there, stilled by what sat before us. Whether they instill a sense of nausea or passion, Kleins are always an eyeful with their oversized tubes and legendary paint. Apparently someone likes the looks because, no matter where you go, you always see Klein bikes. This year the Chelalis, Washington, company sent us a new Attitude with a pair of custom-painted Rock Shox Mag-20 forks, an option this year on both the Attitude and the lower-line Rascal.

SAY IT LOUD

When we first measured our 19-inch test bike, the head angle came in at 70.5 degrees and the seat tube angle was 72 degrees. Our first thought was that the bike must have been originally spec'd with typical 71-degree head and 73-degree seat angles and that the Rock Shox threw the measurements off. However, since when does Klein ever do anything in a typical manner? Once we took a look at the Klein catalog, we realized that we were being presumptuous. The Attitude is listed as having a 70.5-degree head angle and a 72.5-degree seat angle.

The rest of the measurements did ring out as fairly typical. The chainstays measured 16.65 inches, the bottom bracket was 11-7/8 inches high, the top tube was 23 inches long and the wheelbase was 41.8 inches long.

As usual, the Attitude enjoyed the fine degree of craftsmanship that the brand is famous for. Internally routed cables, triple water bottle mounts and a rear fender mount make up the customary complement of Klein extras that make owning the bike that much more enjoyable.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Attitude
Manufacturer: Klein Bicycles Corp., 118 Klein Rd., Chehalis, WA 98532
Sizes available: 18", 19", 20", 22"
Finishes available: Horizon linear fade
Suggested retail price: \$2960
COMPONENTS
Front derailleur: Shimano Deore XTR

Rear derailleur: Shimano Deore XTR
Front brake: Shimano Deore XTR
Rear brake: Shimano Deore XTR
Crank: Shimano Deore XTR
Freewheel: Shimano Deore XTR
FRAME
Tubing: 6061 T-6 aluminum
Head angle: 70.5°
Seat angle: 72.5°
Top tube length: 23"
Chainstay length: 16.8"

Braze-ons: Two water bottle fender mounts
Weight: 24 lb.
NOTE: The MOUNTAIN BIKE ACTION test crew rides its bikes under controlled circumstances, on private property and with respect for the environment. No wilderness or environmentally sensitive areas are used.

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THE FRAME

Before the colors, there was the frame. Gary Klein has achieved his fame and fortune from a bicycle frame that has set itself apart from the very beginning. Take a close look and you will find more than just a selection of fat aluminum tubes welded together. Take a closer look. Did you notice the shape transition of the chainstays, how they start out square at the bottom bracket to maximize tire clearance before meticulously transforming into a round tube at the dropout? Beautiful. Did you notice the horizontal, rear-entry dropouts that double as a derailleur hanger? Normally a trouble spot with aluminum bikes, this design makes sure that the derailleur will require nothing short of an incredible blow to do any damage to the dropout.

Manufactured from 6061 T-6 aluminum, the Attitude frame is no longer made from straight-gauge tubes. This year the head tube is double-buttressed and the down tube and seat tube are single-buttressed. With the butting comes increased weight savings.

THE PARTS

Klein offers the prospective customer a choice between purchasing a complete

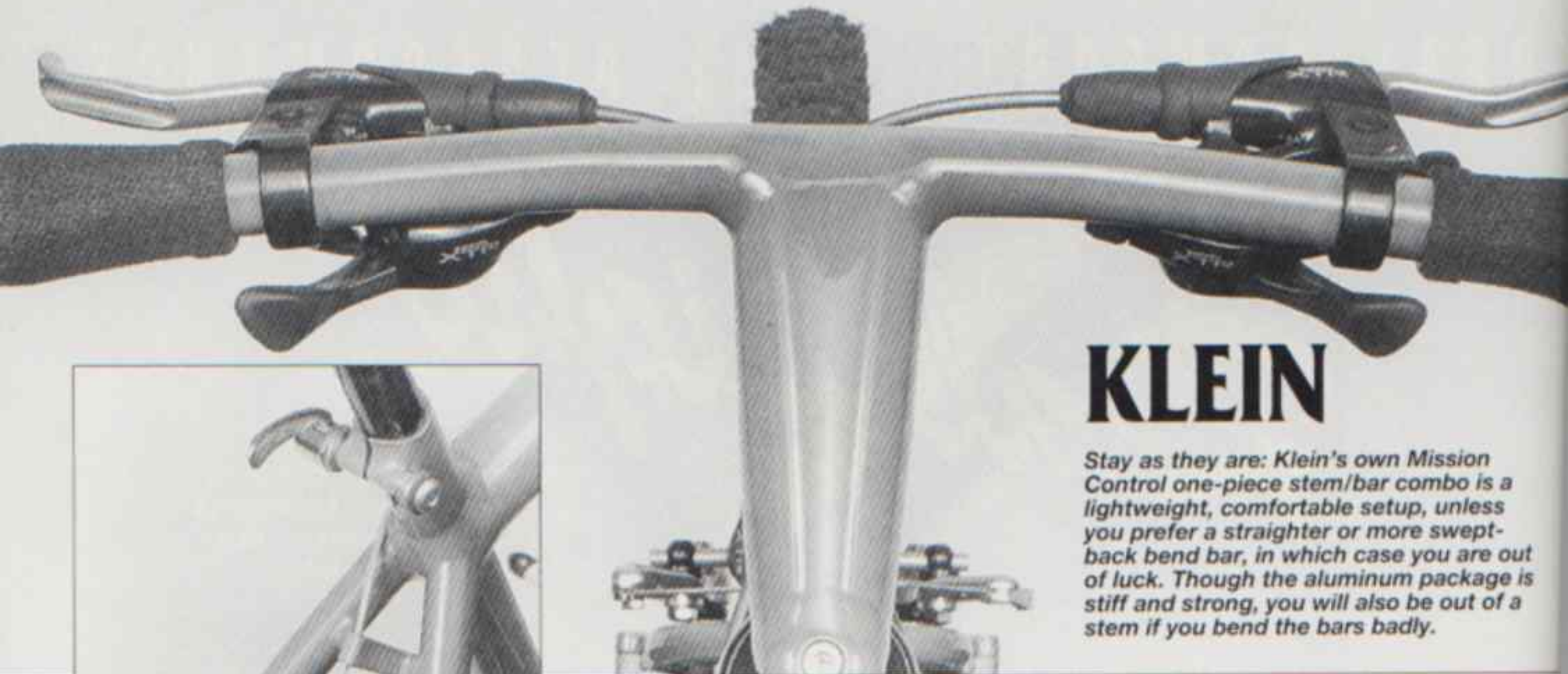
◀ *Let's dance: The sloping top tube on the Attitude is a real plus when it comes time to move around the bike when maneuvering. However, when it comes time to carry the bike, the sloping design prohibits portaging, which can be a real negative. Despite the relaxed angles, the Klein was still a responsive handler.*

bike or just a frameset. We got the complete bike—talk about a high-class setup. Our Attitude was outfitted with a Shimano Deore XTR component set. In case you have not heard the rumors, the new elite gruppo has raised the performance of mountain bike shifting and braking to new heights of excellence. Define the XTR group in three words or less? Sure. Simply the best.

Wheelsets are comprised of 32-spoke Surly C-16 rims, mounted with Specialized Ground Control tires (the catalog calls for a Klein Deathgrip tire spec). The tires are not directional, nor are they meant to excel in any one area. They just work well everywhere.

New this year are two name-brand items of Klein. First is the one-piece Mission Control bar/stem combo. As expected, the Mission Control is made of aluminum and features a stem with 4.75 inches of reach and 2.5 inches of rise. The non-adjustable handlebars are 22.5 inches wide. Why do we dislike one-piece systems like these? Because they are one piece. Adjustability is the spice of life with mountain bikes. Suppose you have lived with and swear by zero-degree sweep bars; then you plop down almost \$3000 for your new Klein with bars that have a built-in five-degree rear sweep. Not a life-threatening dilemma, but worth noting nonetheless.

The other Klein part found on the Attitude is the Chain Control Device. It's an aluminum plate that mounts to the bottom of the chainstays to keep the chain from sucking up between the chainrings and



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Stay as they are: Klein's own Mission Control one-piece stem/bar combo is a lightweight, comfortable setup, unless you prefer a straighter or more swept-back bend bar, in which case you are out of luck. Though the aluminum package is stiff and strong, you will also be out of a stem if you bend the bars badly.



Practice makes perfect: Klein bicycles have always been made from aluminum. After all these years you would think they could learn how to lay down a beautiful weld—they have. Craftsmanship on the Attitude was first-rate.

the chainstay. The plate is cut away to conform to the face of each of the three chainrings and is definitely an easier approach to preventing the problem than going through the trouble of building an elevated-chainstay frame.

THE RIDE

It was when we wheeled the Attitude outside for testing that we realized there was a part of the Klein story that wasn't true—no longer true, we should say. We have test-ridden Kleins for years, and one thing has largely remained the same: the

ride. Most often described as stiff and rigid, with the addition of the Mag-20 forks that is no longer the case.

If you attended any of the NORBA Nationals last year, you may have seen the enthusiastic crowd response that Klein team rider Tinker Juarez received lap after lap. If you have ever ridden a rigid Klein, especially one with their oversized aluminum fork (which Tinker rode all year), you would have been cheering, too. Tinker's reputation as a tough rider was no doubt enhanced by his bike selection

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last year. No one would want to subject himself to that kind of abuse—especially when the competition gets to enjoy the luxury of suspension. Klein frames have always been super-stiff and super-rigid; now they are just super-stiff. The Rock Shox has taken a very good bike and made it great. The sting from all that unsuspended, oversized, thin-wall aluminum is gone. With one of the stiffest rear ends in the business, the suspended Attitude is now a well-balanced machine. It goes where it is pointed and the low 24-pound weight makes it a blast to throw around through the tight stuff, even though it steers a tad on the slow side.

One thing about Kleins that we have always been critical about, and remain so, is the sloping top tube. Though the extreme slope does allow for maximum standover height, it also makes portaging the bike difficult. After getting lost on a test ride and having to carry the bike for almost two hours, the flaw became all the more apparent when the rider was never able to slip a shoulder under the top tube/seat tube juncture.

We would never believe that a suspension fork alone could make a bike. However, we do know one thing for sure: It makes a good bike a lot more enjoyable to ride. □