



Every mountain biker from the United States who has traveled up to Canada seems to notice the same thing: There's a ton of Rocky Mountain mountain bikes around.

They're pretty easy to notice. Most look quite different from the typical MTBs we see here in the U.S. Their unique sloping top tube and dynamic color combinations make them a breeze to spot.

Now bikes might sell pretty well the first year just on their good looks, but you've got to have better than average bikes to sell

them year after year. And since we know Rocky has been around for some time, we decided it was time to see just what makes 'em tick.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN STYLE

Rocky Mountain is a Canadian based company which can be credited with truly helping the sport of mountain biking grow in their country. They've designed bikes with specific geographical sales areas in mind and found consumers from other areas demanding the product as well. As the bikes

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLIZZARD

Rocky Mountain has mounted Shimano U-brakes front and rear in an effort to standardize braking power, rider feel, and brake maintenance.



got out, more and more people sought them out. They didn't want mountain bikes. They wanted Rocky Mountain bikes.

Rocky is still concerned with their market. Though they're now beginning to expand into the States, they're still concerned with keeping close contact with their local markets.

Rocky Mountain has never been a "me, too" company. They designed products the way they believed. They manufactured the bikes where and when they so desired. And they have set up and distributed bikes to the best of their abilities. With sales bigger and better than ever, they must be doing something right.

To add to this success up north, let us throw another log on their fire. Everyone knows that mountain bikes are selling well

Canada's leading mountain bike manufacturer shows how it's done up north with the Rocky Mountain Blizzard!

By the staff of MOUNTAIN BIKING Magazine

BLIZZARD

in the U.S. Many experts believe Canada to be selling more mountain bikes per capita. They're not selling more bikes, mind you, they're just selling to a higher percentage of the population.

If you could point to only one thing about Rocky Mountain, it would probably be the management attitude. The guys at Rocky headquarters seem to look, listen, and think as much as, if not more, than any in the business. They're selling across the price spectrum, from affordable Japanese manufactured bikes on up to handbuilt Canadian bikes. And they seem to do a pretty darn good job across the board.

Rocky hasn't dropped down into the econo-bike category. There are others, competitors, who have jumped into the lower end price points, and Rocky is content with their being there. Rocky feels they make really good mountain bikes for real mountain bikers and that real mountain bikers want really good mountain bikes. (Funny how that seems to work.) With attitudes like that, it's easy to see how the quality cuts across all levels.

So what is it that has made Rocky Mountain the hot ticket over all the hot shot brands that make it across the border? Let's find out!

BLIZZARD

We chose to test the Blizzard, a bike in the mid-to-upper range of Rocky Mountain's lineup. It's a bike that sells for under \$1600 Canadian (around \$1250 in the U.S.). Rocky designed it for the mountain bike enthusiast who wants quality and performance, but not the all-out racing design (and expense) of their more radical top-of-the-line Wedge.

The Blizzard was originally designed by Rocky Mountain for Eastern Canadian sales. The Eastern provinces were calling out for tight, fast bikes which could be ridden over the predominantly fast and flat territory. After the introduction, word traveled fast across the country and the Western riders soon asked for the same thing. The design proved not to be region specific, but rather a really diverse bike for widespread application.

As we mentioned in our intro, the sloping top tube design of the Blizzard is quite eye catching. We're used to seeing the large aluminum top tubes that grace bikes such as Kleins, Cannondales, and Diamond Backs. Rarely, though, have chromoly mak-

ers used anything but a horizontal (or nearly horizontal) top tube. The Blizzard's top tube is at a 20 degree slope, and the Blizzard is an all chromoly frame.

Why a sloping top tube? Rocky likes their bikes to be tight, performance oriented bikes. The sloping top tube design tightens the frame up, on both front and rear triangles. Likewise, in the eyes of Rocky Mountain, it makes the seatpost an integral part of the frame. Since the top tube slopes down, the seat tube can be shorter (and stronger). Therefore they recommend that the seatpost be used at maximum height. This, in effect, becomes a sort of shock absorbing member of the frame. It is this sloping top tube and long extended seatpost that gives the Blizzard its dynamic look.

Geometry, on the other hand, isn't so different. The head angle is 70 degrees, and the offset is 1.75 inches. The seat angle is 73, with chainstays of 17 inches and a wheelbase of 41.5 inches. This all equates to a pretty standard and even keeled mountain bike.

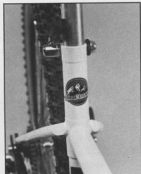
The top tube measures an actual center to center length of 21 inches. With an imaginary horizontal top tube, the Blizzard has an effective top tube length of 22 inches. The seat tube measures a scant 13.5 inches center to center, and 18 inches center to top. If you were to extend it up to our imaginary horizontal top tube, you'd get an effective 18.5 inch seat tube.

The Blizzard uses Tange Prestige double butted tubes in the main triangle, with a Tange MTB fork and 4130 chromoly stays. This combination of carefully selected tubing, unique frame design, and high quality components makes for a sub-27 lb chromoly bike. That's pretty darn good!

Componentry, as we just mentioned, is first class all the way. Our model was an '89 frameset released before the '89 components were available. Shimano Deore XT parts were used whenever possible, including U-brakes, levers, shifters, derailleurs, cranks, pedals, and hubs. Later '89s will have Shimano Deore XT II.

Of interesting note is the front mounted U-Brake. Rocky Mountain liked the performance of the U-Brake in the rear, so they questioned the need to use a different style in the front (e.g., cantilevers). They believe that there's an advantage to having brakes which have the same feel, same power, and which you can use the same tools on. Okay,

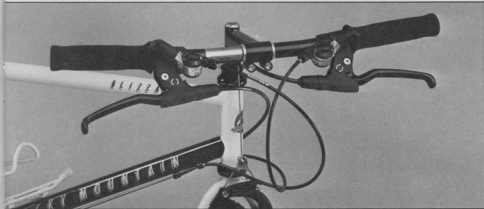
The sloping top tube isn't just for aluminum bikes. Rocky Mountain has adapted its use on most of their chromoly bikes including the Blizzard.



Rocky Mountain's theory is that the long seatpost becomes a shock absorber when designed properly in conjunction with the sloping top tube. After our tests, we'd have to agree.

"The sloping top tube design tightens the frame up, on both front and rear triangles."

Prestige bars and a custom-made Rocky Mountain chromoly stem make the bike comfortable and controllable.



BLIZZARD

Among the other notable components are the areas of controls and wheels. Up by the controls, the Blizzard comes standard with Tange Prestige handlebars and a custom 150mm Rocky Mountain chromoly stem. As for the rolling stuff, Rocky uses the Wolber AT-20 rims. Though they're just now getting into and gaining acceptance in the U.S., the Canadians have loved them for some time. They are light, strong, hold their roundness longer than almost anything available, and have a great braking surface. The Blizzard finishes the wheels off with Ritchey Force 1.9 Racing tires front and rear.

The Blizzard is one of the first bikes to make use of the Tange roller bearing headset. Rocky Mountain tells us they have had great success with it. Ours was somewhat unnoticeable during the first few rides, then seemed to tighten up. Tange and Rocky Mountain recommend tightening it a little more than conventional headsets, to the point of a slight resistance. This is designed to make the headset steer freely when under the load of a rider. We found it to be fine for a while and when properly adjusted, but it slipped out on occasion. Maybe it just takes a little getting used to, but we've never had much problem with quality sets with traditional bearings. It's worth looking into.

RIDING THE ROCKY

Rocky Mountain designed the Blizzard to be a stiff bike for fast and high performance mountain biking. In our opinion, that's exactly what they've come up with.

The bike feels solid and stable underneath you from the moment you swing your leg over it. Rider positioning is very good. Of our numerous riders, only one felt it wasn't sized quite right. Other riders of the same and different heights felt extremely comfortable. Even six footers could feel relatively comfortable trail riding our 18 inch model, though they'd probably opt for a bigger one for really fast riding.

The Blizzard didn't completely excel in any one area as much as it did everything above average. This led our variety of riders, from beginner to expert, to thoroughly enjoy riding it. Our long and hard rides were just as fun as short and easy ones.

Climbing was noticeably above average on the Blizzard. The 17 inch chainstays and Ritchey Force tire gave the rider lots of traction and power at the rear wheel. Seated climbing was good. Standing climbing was even better.

Fast and flat terrain, including city riding, were comfortable and controlled. The

light weight of our Rocky seemed to accentuate this, letting you get up to speed quickly and efficiently, without fighting the mass of the bike.

Descending was also better than average. Neither fast freeroad downhill nor tricky single tracks posed any problem. In fact, they were a blast.

The brakes, U-style front and rear, worked fine for all of our rides. They did feel similar and have similar powers, so it looks like Rocky achieved their goal of a balanced system.

The flat bars, long stem, and Ritchey Force tire in the front combined to give the Blizzard excellent steering characteristics most of the time. As we mentioned before, the headset seemed to lose adjustment and tighten after a while. This was one of only two functional problems we encountered while riding the Blizzard. When adjusted (or readjusted) properly, though, the bike steered like a champ.

The only other problem was also a com-

"It's light, tight, and lots of fun."

ponent problem. The Shimano Deore XT pedal on the left side backed out a thread or two on a long climb. It then jumped the thread and stripped the left crank. It's only the second time we've ever experienced this, and in several years and thousands of hours of hard riding, we'd have to consider it a fluke. Likewise, it's a factor of the component, not the bike's design. Rocky can't be faulted for it in any event.

SUMMARY

The Blizzard isn't a cheap bike, nor is it for just anybody. It's a performance oriented bike that almost begs to be ridden in the mountains. It's light, tight, and lots of fun.

What would we change? We're still unsure of the headset. We'll be doing more testing, since testing so far has proven inconclusive. Otherwise, the component selection is excellent and shouldn't be touched. There's a lot of nice design elements incorporated into the frame, and likewise it has a lot of integrity. It should be left alone.

Who should buy this bike? Quality minded riders with budgets in the \$1200 range should thoroughly enjoy this bike. The rider who wants a well rounded bike with very good overall handling characteristics can

feel confident that the Blizzard will come through. It can be cruised, ridden, raced, and toured almost equally. This sloping top tube design may not work for specialty riders, but then, only specialty designs usually do.

All in all, we can see how Rocky Mountain has gained such a foothold on the Canadian market. As more and more Americans are exposed to Rocky Mountains, they'll no doubt be showing up on more of our own trails.

Our only concern is that some U.S. manufacturers may not like the competition. Oh, well, it'll keep them honest. Very good job, Rocky Mountain. Very good. **MB**



Wolber AT 20 rims are light, strong, and have an incredible braking surface.



The Rocky Mountain isn't a cheap bike, but then, it proved to us that you do get what you pay for.



BLIZZARD

MFG. OR DIST: Rocky Mountain Cycles
 #2144-5920, Richmond, B.C., Canada V6V 1Z1
 (604) 270-2710

APPROXIMATE SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$1575 Canadian, \$1260 U.S.

SIZES AVAILABLE: 16.5", 18", 19.5" (center to top)

SIZE TESTED: 18"

COLORS AVAILABLE: white and black

WEIGHT: 26.5 lbs.

FRAME:

Head Angle 70 degrees
 Seat Angle 73 degrees
 Fork Offset 1.75 inches
 Top Tube Length 21 inches
 Seat Tube Length 13.5 inches (center to top)
 Chainstay Length 17 inches
 B.B. Height 11.75 inches
 Construction TIG welding

COMPONENTS:

Front Brakes Shimano Deore XT U-Brake
 Rear Brakes Shimano Deore XT U-Brake
 Levers Shimano Deore XT
 Handlebar Tange Prestige
 Handlebar Stem Rocky Mountain 150mm chromoly
 Grips Grab-On
 Saddle Rocky Mountain Turbo leather
 Seatpost Surflour XC 300mm

DRIVETRAIN:

Front Derailleur Shimano Deore XT
 Rear Derailleur Shimano Deore XT SIS
 Shifters Shimano Deore XT
 Crankset Shimano Deore XT
 Chainrings Shimano Biopace 28/38/48
 Freewheel Shimano
 Gearing 13-28 six-speed
 Pedals Shimano Deore XT white clips
 Chain Shimano UG

WHEELS:

Rims Wolber AT-20
 Hubs Shimano Deore XT
 Spokes Stainless
 Tires Ritchey Force 1.9 Racing