

NEW FOR

92

SHOW  
REPORT

# SHOW TIME

**Eurobike, Interbike, fullbikes.**

**Here's the trade show lowdown of what's happening in 1992.**

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Two trade shows, several thousand miles apart, witnessed the unveiling of most bike companies' plans for 1992. The inaugural Eurobike exhibition - a new bike-only rival to the bike and motorbike show that alternates between Cologne and Milan - was held in Friedrichshaven, a charming little town on the edge of the Bodensee Lake in southern Germany. The big US show Interbike celebrated its tenth year of existence in Anaheim, southern California, a couple of blocks from Disneyland.

The talk of both shows was suspension. Practically everyone had a full suspension bike on display. And if they didn't, they had a frame designed to take front suspension fork. Some of the full suspension bikes looked like they would work, others had 'prototype' stamped all over them. Attention grabbing seemed their sole purpose in life.

It's easy to get carried away by springy things and forget that some carry price tags larger than a down payment on a house. The same holds true for bikes in the wonder materials, titanium and carbon fibre, that also featured prominently. The hope is that one day such top end developments will filter down and become affordable for the rest of us.

In the meantime, finding ways to save weight has also occupied the attention of many manufacturers. It may not be as sexy as suspension but the fact that many of 1992's new bikes are lighter and more competitively priced is of greater relevance to people who want to buy a new bike next year and not in the year 2000.

## PUSHING THE LIMITS -

Sometimes it is a thin line between R&D projects and pre-production prototypes. Out of all of these, the ones we're most confident you'll actually see in the shops in any numbers are the Cannondale and Offroad models.

### MERLIN

Merlin Titanium had by far the most exotic and exciting full suspension bike of the show, weighing in at only 19.5 lbs, a full 5 lbs lighter than anyone else's. The bike uses the natural strength and flexibility of titanium to do away with the pivot assembly that all other rear suspensions have used. 'Flexure bike' is the term used. The only barrier to accepting the design is disbelief that you can bend metal thousands of times without it fatiguing and eventually breaking, but Merlin assure us titanium can. The front fork is a new leading link design by Bob Girvin. This bike epitomises the 'state of the art' of full suspension: light, stiff, expensive, maintenance free and not available just yet.



### ALPINESTARS

AlpineStars' Bill Stevenson said the company had turned to motorcycle technology for inspiration when designing their first suspension bike that had an aluminium main frame and steel rear end. Rear suspension is supplied by elastomer bumpers sled inside the frame's main tube. 'Upside down' front forks carry on up to the custom bars. With four inches of elastomer-based travel both front and rear, and no lock-out system, it was still claimed that the bicycle had no inchworm effect and would not dive when braking, suggesting that this may have been one prototype that was intended as an attention-grabber. AlpineStars' non-suspension bikes and components may be less radical but still have much to offer.



### BRODIE

Brodie, the Canadian frame specialist, had the most way-out front suspension fork design with the brake mounted on the



# FULL AND REAR SUSPENSION

end of a steel loop that ran from the front wheel axle around the back of the wheel. Paul Brodie explained that what he was trying to achieve was a maintenance free, simple design which requires no lock-out to prevent front wheel dive when braking.

When the front brake is applied it grips the rim of the wheel and pivots the front mechanism, causing the front end of the bike to rise. Although heavier and more complicated than a typical front suspension fork, it shows there are still plenty of open minds out there trying to tackle the challenge of fitting simple suspension to a mountain bike.

## CANNONDALE

Our September issue covered the Cannondale Delta V full suspension range in some detail. They use an improved version of last year's EST with a more rigid shock absorbing unit and pivot. They also have their own new front suspension fork with the gubbins, including the use of ingenious needle bearings, hidden inside the head tube. The slightly odd top tube arrangement allows plenty of clearance for the rider, whilst accommodating the front suspension fork. With prices starting at £1099 for a Deore LX equipped model (front suspension fork only), Cannondale remain a serious player in the suspension stakes.

## CHECKER PIG

Checker Pig, newly imported into Britain by Coloursport UK Ltd, showed three full suspension mountain bikes with the same circular carbon fibre rings on the rear as last year's prototype, but this time in strips, linked to a slider mechanism to provide rebound within 1/100th of a second. This seems to take no account of dampening and might act like a pogo-stick. Three strengths of ring and strips will apparently be available to fine tune the suspension to individual rider weight. We shall have to wait for a test ride to see whether you can get away with no damping on a full suspension bike or if Checker Pig lives up to its name.



## MONGOOSE

A rear suspension bike was debuted that featured a spring unit hung off the underside of a triangular top tube. It looked weird. More conventionally, the company also had a line of good-looking aluminium frame machines.



## OFFROAD

Offroad were offering a similar range to last year but with Proflex Generation 3. By adding an extra pivot at the rear dropouts and adding a new elastomer housing they have increased the amount



of rear travel slightly while also losing weight. Flexstems as usual up front, except on their top end model which made use of the new Rockshox 2 coupled with a titanium Flexstem; the idea here being that the Rockshox can be dialled in to take out the bigger lumps, leaving the Flexstem to take out the high vibration chatter. All this and it still weighed in at under 26 lbs.

## PACE

Adrian Carter of Pace Engineering shocked even his US distributors by arriving in Anaheim with the first prototype of his fully suspended, externally butted box section tubing frame. In the sleek tradition of Pace, it is CAD/CAM tested and sweet to behold. Expect to see it in the shops next year with a lighter version of his carbon fibre suspension forks. The new and improved forks borrow from Ferrari the latest in composite technology: chrome-plated carbon fibre tubing.



## S'BIKE

The Swiss made, American designed S Bikes have expanded their range to a total of seven models, including a rear suspension machine that appeared only slightly modified from their standard rigid bike, but with a pivot installed just in front of the seat tube and the shock absorber just behind. This ▽



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simple design, weighing in around the 2 lb mark, is actually quite rigid and certainly impressed the crowd. The problem is that rear suspension is not very useful without suspension up front. Once a Manitou fork (optional extra) has been exchanged for the titanium and aluminium one fitted as standard, the bikes becomes just that little bit too heavy and just that little bit too expensive for the average mountain biker.



## SCHWINN

The Schwinn Paramount SASS was another early prototype suffering from an attempt to look different, with a large oil and spring shock absorber mounted underneath the bottom bracket and a cumbersome linkage system providing four inches of travel. One wag suggested the best thing about this bike was the Rockshox used in the front. Rumours persist that Schwinn are about to launch their complete range in the UK.



## SCOTT

The Scott CST (Competition Suspension technology) although also a mere prototype, was one of the more convincing bikes on show with a Marzocchi shock absorbing unit mounted



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underneath the top tube, just in front of the seat tube. The final production model will have a crumple rear triangle that uses two teflon sliders, either side of an aluminium block to maintain rigidity. This original and simple idea is one which may prove to be too simple as there was

nothing to prevent dirt getting into the gap between the block and the sliders, and no guarantee that this would not eventually wear loose, although replacement parts will be available. With a Marzocchi front fork this may actually be in production by the spring.

## TREK

Trek have apparently spent a fortune developing their full suspension mountain bikes, which should be a available early suspension and DCS3 front suspension fork. The T3C rear unit is a box section swingarm with the shock absorber tucked neatly in front of the seat tube. This is surprisingly rigid but may incur a weight penalty over a rear triangle such as is used by Cannondale or Offroad. Again we'll just have to wait and see. The DCS3 is designed to be retrofitable to almost any mountain bike and features adjustable spring rate and progressive damping.



## YETI

Yeti's John Parker likes 'ain rad and fast, and the Easton aluminium framed Johnny D suspension bike had the lot. Manitou forks, disc brakes, front and rear, a Rockshox operated rear end and one of the least conventional chainsets - the RMS - we've ever seen. Wow.



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## TRIED AND TESTED - FRONT SUSPENSION AND CONVENTIONAL GEOMETRIES

### SPECIALIZED

A lot of companies have gone with front suspension only, including Specialized, who have launched a new range of top end bikes under the S Works label. The S Works M2 Team is used by the Specialized team and is made of Metal Matrix Composite. It features the new Specialized 'Future Shock' front fork, which, like the Trek fork, will retrofit to most bikes.

The Team heads up a list of two other MMC bikes and one carbon fibre machine. Under the Specialized marque there's also a Future Shock equipped Stumpjumper, a fleet of other variants on Stumpjumper, Rock Hoppers and Hardrocks and a new tandem, the Deja Two.

### CARBONFRAMES

The genius of Carbonframes has been taken out of 'small time struggling' and into the realm of streamlined production and promotion by Greg Lemond. The American cycling phenomenon made Carbonframes his favourite ride on the Tour and since then has incorporated the technology into his own line of bikes. The MTB version - the Lamontar - with rounded titanium seat stays will be available in the spring, weighs a creamy 22lbs - frame weight 3lbs - and is tried and tested by the man.



### CLAUD BUTLER

The new Antaeus frame features Reynolds latest Magnum 653 tubing and is equipped with Rockshox. The bike looks much sharper than many of this year's machines. We'll have to ride it to see if it is.

### DAWES

The British manufacturer stepped out at Eurobike with front suspension forks as an option on several bikes. They also showed a new 18 inch frame model that should please the less tall among us who want a quality British made frame that fits.

### DIAMOND BACK

Diamond Back have launched their Response and Response Comp bikes with Marzocchi forks as standard, and have also fitted Avenir bars for extra climbing ability, to their top five models. Incidentally, many bikes at both shows had bar-ends of one form or another as standard.

### GT

The 'Triple Triangle' design has been refined. As well as the Flip

Flop stem, top end models also feature a Groove Tube that snugly tucks away cables under the top tube - an idea used by French manufacturer MBK last year.

### HARO

The Extreme Comp is designed around the new magnesium legged Rockshox. Is XTR equipped and looks lean and mean. Whether it is available in Britain remains to be seen.

### MUDDY FOX

Renewed vigour was apparent on the MF stand at Eurobike with a titanium prototype equipped with Pace forks. The company also had machines on display equipped with the Browning suspension forks too.

### KONA

Kona's no-nonsense range appeared smart and effective and although they didn't have a suspension fork as such, their new Future Shock suspension fork has a simple and effective design that may prove a popular add-on.

### KLEIN

Klein have abandoned their distinctive forks in favour of a more conventional uncrown affair. Apart from that they win the award for the most stunning paintjob with their new 'linear luster', a unique 3-colour paint scheme that matches on directional surfaces, presenting one colour from the front, another from the side, a third from the back.



### MAXAM

A relatively new Canadian bike range sporting a Flexstem on their aluminium top end bike, has been picked up for UK distribution and will be available shortly. Rumour has it that Don Broos, the Canadian equivalent of Jazz Aways, will be paying a visit to the UK to lunch the range. If he does, all I can say is, be there! His stunts at Michigan and in Quebec this summer were somethin' else.

### ROCKY MOUNTAIN

Rocky Mountain were adventurous in the use of a new Wolber tubeless tyre on their top bike, the same as used by Alison Sydor, the rising Canadian woman rider. Lance Lolar, their product designer, explained that this allowed the use of a true box section rim and resulted in a lighter front wheel set up. When asked what would a racer do if he punctured, he pointed out the suitability of various instant flat repair foams available in aerosols.

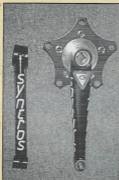
Rocky Mountain also have three RockShox equipped machines on offer: the Altitude, the Titanium and the E-stay Cirrus.

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## COMPONENTS

**Groups first: Shimano, SunTour and Campagnolo all launched their 1992 product at the shows. SunTour we've already talked about in the Midsummer issue, while we cover Campagnolo and Shimano elsewhere in this issue.**

- GripShift's new system which has half of the hand grip as the shift mechanism, was on a surprisingly large number of bikes and was especially popular on hybrid bikes.
- Specialized surpassed themselves with a whole range of new accessories including DirectDrive pedals with titanium axles, crank arms, headsets, bars, shoes, bags, gloves and a Prolog saddle that is longer than a conventional saddle to allow the rider to sit further forward when climbing.
- Tom Ritchey's WCS 26x1.9 Kevlar beaded competition tyre topped the scales at a featherweight 465 grammes. Ritchey also had a Magabike on display in a curious brick red colour.
- Cosmic showed off their new tool bag with quick release strap and software as well as long fingered versions of the Dominator gloves.
- One neat move from Shimano: a clip-on cover for SPD pedals that allows you to ride with conventional shoes. Just the job for those trips to the shops.
- SR launched a new Power Bulge titanium handlebar - the 520mm wide version weighs 178gm.
- Cannondale's new bag and 'Seat Cleef' range included ingenious designs that left one exploring all the various pockets, zips and functions with the excitement of a Christmas stocking. We won't spoil the fun by telling you about them - you'll just have to see them for yourself.
- Both Giro and Bell launched revamped helmets in a variety of bright colours.
- Syncros continue to wage the weight war with a pair of tubular cromoly cranks that weigh only 410 grammes a pair including the spider, but don't phone up Cyclesland just yet as they were a prototype, and putting tubular cromoly cranks into production is a complicated matter (we are still waiting for the Girvin cranks launched this time last year). Their Log Cog, a lightweight chainring protector, weighed in at just 100 grammes, and along with their Spider Home, are available now.



One thing I liked was the way they drill a hole in the base of their seat pins to allow a 'U' lock to fit threaded through when locking the bicycle, thus preventing the seat and saddle from being stolen. This is particularly important when a titanium set post is attached to a titanium railed saddle, as the two together are worth as much as an entry level MTB.

- Pedro's and Ringlo have collaborated on a tube dispensing device which can be fitted to water bottle bosses. When squeezed it deposits

lubricant through a tube attached to the front derailleur onto the moving chain. This was apparently developed in response to requests by many top US racers.

- At Eurobike, a German firm called Bike Technology showed an innovative form of combined handlebar and brake system called Direct Response, which at first glance looked thoroughly unsuitable for mountain biking. The system works by twisting the wrist forward to operate the brake mechanism, and only by riding it did one overcome the suspicion that when you go over a hump, the brakes would go on. The designer contended that his ultimate aim was to integrate the gear system to the grip as well, so you'd never need to take one's hand off the grips at any time.

- Barlex claims to be the world's only flexible handlebar. This carbon/fibreglass composite handlebar incorporates very high strength and lightness (less than 125 grammes). Barlex is designed to prevent shocks, absorb vibrations and increase comfort level with about an inch of flex. Shortly available for tests, and priced very similarly to the Fleistem, this could be a popular alternative front suspension add-on.

- Salsis's new quick-release skewers weighed only 102 grammes a pair, with a sweet curved roller cam handle and their Manos d'acier bar ends (love handles) distinguish themselves from other bar ends flooding the market in two ways; firstly they offer two alternative hand positions, and secondly they have the coolest packaging, using a handy cotton drawingstring bag.

- Mountain Cycle has been shaving down Suspenders by a 1/4lb and are presently perfecting a low to no maintenance braking system for the week of techmeat. Their booth at Anaheim also included the seemingly mandatory, fully suspended prototype. There's a trick, five ounce elastomer-controlled rear shock, and a triangular seat configuration that bolts onto a beefy Trimble-like frame. A different seat triangle customized the frame to the individual rider without muddling the angles vital to the suspension system.

- Bullseye got colour, showing off their hubs in a variety of bright hues.

**What else can we say? If bike sales are static, the bike show biz is booming. Both Eurobike and Interbike were big and we're bound to have missed some stuff. There's no let up in the furious pace of technological development in the mountain bike field. Suspension is here to stay, although it may take time for some of it to be available at a reasonable price. Even so, plenty of interesting bikes and kit will be on display in the shops in the very near future.**

