



ROCKY MOUNTAIN ALTITUDE

More Canadian substance

■ The Canadian mountain bike market is full of Canadian-built bikes, but most of them, like the Brodie also tested in this issue, are made by small manufacturers. Rocky Mountain is one of the few big companies in the Great White North that brings bikes in from overseas as well as making them in house. No other Canadian mountain bike has consistently impressed the wrecking crew over the years with such diverse, quality bike designs as Rocky Mountain. In terms of frame design and material variation, few companies, even in America, come close to matching Rocky Mountain's production diversity. Every bike we have tested of theirs shows an incredible attention to detail. Some of the bikes are purposely overbuilt to handle the most extreme conditions found around the globe. Others, like

our Altitude test bike, are built to be racers. On close inspection it's plain to see that even the race bikes are of a sturdy design.

Rocky Mountain mountain bikes fall into two categories, Enduro and Race Lite. The Altitude falls into the latter high-performance category, which is made up of five different bikes aimed toward the racing market.

The Altitude is the same bike that Rocky Mountain factory rider and two-time Canadian National Champion Andy Tout will be campaigning this year. It retails for \$2100 and is available in 17-, 18.5-, 20- and 21.5-inch frame sizes.

SAILING AWAY

Our test bike measured in at 18 inches, though Rocky Mountain measures it, according to the sloping top tube, at 17 inches. By

Canadian racer: Rocky Mountain delivered our Altitude test bike with the same setup used by their racing team. Production bikes won't have the Shimano SPD pedals or Wolber rims with the glued-on tubeless tires. With the bike built in Canada, the addition of made-in-Canada Synchros components is a nice touch.

utilizing a custom blend of Tange's Ritchey Logic Prestige tubing, the Altitude weighed in at an impressive 25 pounds. As usual, frame construction is first-rate. Whether it's been a Rocky Mountain, Brodie or Off-Road Toad, we have always been impressed with Canadian craftsmanship. With its two-tone red/yellow Dupont Imron finish, the Altitude is almost too pretty to ride! Following along the bike from the reinforced head tube to the monostay rear end, Rocky Moun-

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tain's workmanship is outstanding. The cable routing is clean and effective, the reinforced seat collar adds strength, and the rack and fender mounts are a nice plus (standard in Canada).

Our test bike had a 72-degree seat and 71-degree head angle (Rocky Mountain claims a 72.5-degree seat angle), with a 22.5-inch top tube, 16.8-inch chainstays, 41-5/8-inch wheelbase and an 11-3/8-inch-high bottom bracket. The massive Syncros aluminum stem had a 4.5-inch reach and a 2.5-inch rise.

CUSTOM COMPONENTS

Built in Canada, the Altitude profits from a selection of the top Canadian-made components from Syncros. Like Rocky Mountain, Syncros has a reputation for building quality, high-performance and sturdy parts. The double-binder 6061 heat-treated alloy stem is massive but gives a super-firm grip on the Syncros 7000-series alloy handlebar. One of the most impressive pieces is the Syncros Powerlite fork with a beautifully machined 7000-series alloy crown bolted and bonded to a pair of chromoly blades with alloy dropouts. The fork crown is a work of art. A Tange/Sekai 1.125-inch headset houses the fork. Of course, no Syncros group is complete without their 7000-series alloy seatpost, which is an example of strength



Be brave: You may not find too many bikes spec'd with the Grip Shift twist shifters, but it's not because they don't work well. Paired with the Shimano Deore XT drive train, aggressive riders enjoyed the shifter's performance and action. The longer three-finger SunTour levers make up for the distance between the grip and the lever caused by the shifter.

and simplicity. A Ringle QR is mounted in front of the seat tube and elicited one of our few complaints about the bike—the seat binder is still unnecessarily too wide. For such a hardcore race bike a more efficient

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and compact design would be found by just using a bolt.

The tides must be turning, as the Altitude was the second bike tested this month that came equipped with Grip Shift. The twist shifters are being used by the entire Rocky Mountain team this season, and matched up with a Shimano Deore XT drive train provided aggressive, efficient shifting. The cranks and brakes are Ritchey Logic units that helped keep the bike's weight down.

Wheel assemblies have always been a big to-do with Rocky Mountain. The Altitude's hoops were handbuilt by Wheeltech using

Wolber TR-1 rims (the Rocky Mountain catalog calls for Ritchey Vantage Comp rims, but the Rocky Mountain team uses the Wolbers) laced with DT competition spokes with alloy nipples to 32-hole Shimano Deore XT hubs. The rims have been spec'd to accommodate the Wolber Avoriz tubeless tires, which we are wary of. The tire's tread design features a giant W-shaped knob running down the center. We generally eschew any product where the design priority is to feature a logo or company name. We doubt that the Wolber technicians first arrived at the W-knob tread design by virtue of its gripping qualities and only later celebrated the fact that it also acted as a cute rolling logo.



Conspiracy theory: We doubt that the Wolber tire's W-shaped knob was created for its adhesion qualities. Nevertheless, it's nice to have tire development keeping up with everything else. Craftsmanship on the Rocky Mountain is first-rate. From the reinforced seat collar to fender mounts, no small point is overlooked.

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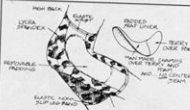
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We talked to racer Andy Tout, who told us that it is impossible to suffer a pinch flat since the tire and tube are one piece. In case of a flat tire he uses a special air/glue sealant that works like a Quikfil. Wolber is supposed to be working on a newer high-viscosity sealant to be used with deeper cuts in the tire.

IN CANADA OR CALIFORNIA

No matter where the Rocky Mountain Altitude is ridden, it will be enjoyed. The bike has a light and nimble feel to it while still enjoying fast fire road stability. Front and rear wheel clearance rates as very good, so in the wet climes of Canada the bike should keep rolling with little hesitation. The Syncros stem and fork provided direct and stable steering. Aggressive riders liked the sloping top tube which provided ample room to move around on the bike through fast-paced technical sections. The Shimano short-cage rear derailleur kept the delay of the Grip Shift twist to a minimum.

If you're the type who longs for something unlike all the rest, consider the Rocky Mountain Altitude because it rates among the best. It is a top-quality mountain bike that exudes a strong sense of style and purpose. For more info contact Rocky Mountain at (604) 270-2710. □

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