

TWO GRANDS' WORTH OF DAVE LLOYD



At a time when almost every MTB that lands on the doorstep bases its whole 'raison d'être' on the 'over-super-mega-hyper-fat' and chunky philosophy, it's interesting to be landed with a bike built by someone who chooses to look the other way.

Dave Lloyd has a pedigree that should make anyone sit up and take note of his feelings on bike design, even if those feelings in this case appear to have led him into a fairly exclusive and somewhat limited sector of the market occupied by a very

particular category of customer. Dave Lloyd makes bikes to order. He's a custom builder whose expertise relates mainly to a phenomenal race background as one of the fastest road riders Britain has ever seen. Which does little to qualify him as an MTB guru, though it's worth recalling the road beginnings of names like Gary Fisher and Chris Chance... Dave keeps threatening to blitz the Vets races and insists his MTB development work relates to the performance equation.

The machine we tested was full of contrasts, questions and

STEVE WORLAND casts a critical eye over a custom machine from the Wirral. Pics by David Rainsbury

answers, a far cry from the off-the-peg character of even the best of the groupset gear test bikes that pass through.

Tubular bills

Very few builders are brave enough to use lightweight road tubes to build an MTB. Dave mixes Reynolds 653 and 753. Beautifully fillet brazed, with wonderful super slimline wishbone seatstays, the frame has an almost dainty look to it, contrasting starkly with the vast majority of production MTBs. We're not alone in our reservations about the long term fatigue life of such a frame, though. Dave himself recommends the frame to light riders who can benefit fully from the light, agile ride the frame gives. It is not recommended for heavy race usage for more than one season.

A Kona Project II front fork was fitted to the bike we tested. While benefiting stability and steering, the Project II adds weight to the original frameset

concept which used a superlight but more flexible fork.

In contrast to the super-sleek image of the frame, Dave decided to use Hope Technology disc brakes, incorporating neat braze-on mounting plates and cable guides within the frame design. This was the first time we'd tested them. They are superb. Mounted by a bolt-on aluminium spider on their own large flange hubs, the discs are firmly fixed and of hardened steel. They pass through floating pads enclosed in a robust aluminium housing, with cable operated calipers.

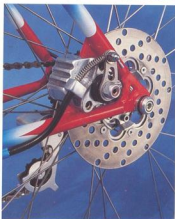
Our only niggle related to adjustment. It was difficult to stop the rear brake from dragging slightly on the pads without the short reach levers needing full travel to the bars to operate the brake to maximum strength. Old fashioned full-hand levers may be better than the short reach Ritchey units fitted. This was less of a problem than we've previously encountered with the Answer Pro Stop units. Precise fitting alignment and accurate cable routing are extremely important. Stopping time with Hope disc brakes is vastly reduced and the brake action and lever feel are energy saving and frighteningly good. The benefit is when riding in wet and slimy conditions that can disable a normal cantilever. The allen key fixed hubs were 32-spoke laced to Araya RM-17 rims, shod with the excellent Smoke Lite 1.9in tyres.

Campy cogs

We like the new Campag top of the range groupset. The smaller chainrings (22/32/44) allow the use of a close ratio rear cluster. Dave had fitted a Regina America aluminium sprocket unit (12-21), saving weight and giving an adequate gear set-up for most terrain, though our own choice



The Lloyd's rear end is elegant and laterally stiff and the Campag groupset works well.



At the rear the Hope disc brake produces huge amounts of easily controlled stopping power.

would have been up to 24 teeth at the back to allow more hill work on the middle ring. The new thumbshifters are extremely light and reliable though gear changes were not as sweet as with a **Campag** contoured tooth rear cassette cluster.

The other bits

The best trick bits are essential on any \$2,000 bike. Dave opted for a **Flite** titanium railed saddle and **USE** titanium post to match. **Ritchey Pro Lite** bars, with bar ends and a light, high stack **Stronglight** headset were the sort of fine detail we expect on a machine of this standard. ○

Stop press

Since we tested this machine Dave Lloyd has made several modifications, principally in response to the needs of riders on the race circuit this year. As an obvious response to the popular efforts of other frame builders, the bike now has a silly name, **CATS WISKAS**, and yes it does stand for something. Would you believe "Cycle All Terrain System With Integral Suspension Keeping Alignment Static". Quite.

Dave has abandoned some of the more super-light tubes and now uses an unusual but perhaps ultimately more sensible mix of Reynolds 653 and Columbus OR. The Hope disc brakes have literally taken a back seat and are now only mounted on the rear wheel to make room for a Pace RC 35 suspension fork up front. Price for a bare frame and fork is about £895, with complete bikes starting at about £1,600. All custom work, Dave tells us, is gladly undertaken.

The MBUK verdict

Weighing in at 25.25lb, mainly because of the disc brakes and chunky forks, this machine falls into a class alongside **Fat Chance**, **Bontager**, **Chas Roberts** and **Ritchey**. They all continue to employ thin tubes, using their own combinations to produce their idea of the ultimate machine. Dave is brave in using road tubes to save more weight. It is a decision that we can only assume he has calculated well. As a custom builder, he has the ability to choose his customers as they choose him. His MTBs start at £800ish for

DAVE LLOYD CATS WISKAS 37 Clayhill Ind Pk Neston, Wirral	
Frame material	Reynolds 653 main tubes, 753 rear triangle
Fork	Kona Joe Murray Project II
Headset	Stronglight alloy
Hubs	Hope Technology
Rims	Araya RM-17 silver
Spokes	Stainless
Tyres	Panaracer Soso Lite 1.9in
Crankset	Campagnolo Z2/32/44
Bottom bracket	Campagnolo sealed
Pedals	Campagnolo Racing
Chain	Seda silver
Freewheel	Regina America 13/21
Deraileurs	Campagnolo
Shiftlever	Campagnolo Thrustshifters
Handlebars	Ritchey ProLite
Stem	Dave Lloyd custom
Grips	Ritchey
Brakes	Hope Technology Disc
Seat	Flite Titanium
Seatpost	USE titanium
Weight	25.25lb
Geometry	On 18.5in bike
Head angle	71
Seat angle	73
Top tube length	23in
Wheelbase	41.75in
Rear end	16.25in
BB height	11.5in
Price	\$1,995

a more standard machine and, as far as he's concerned, the sky's the limit. This machine would retail at £1,995. It has very particular ride characteristics which we would describe as 'reactive'. The tubes appear to absorb shock as if spring loaded, possibly the nearest we've come to drawing parallels between steel and titanium. Trail bumps are absorbed more readily than with fatter tubes and the increased flexibility of the frame as a whole creates a comfortable and nimble feel to the ride. Only a long

term test would show us the real benefits or detriments to the wisdom of an MTB made of light road tubes. Dave Lloyd is more than willing to advise on who should or shouldn't choose a bike like this. We admire him for pushing the boundaries out from the standard mould. A machine like this will appeal to individuals looking for a bike to treasure more than thrash although, from our relatively harsh few days riding the bike, our confidence in its off-road performance grew to match our admiration of the superb attention to fine detail oozing from every part of the frame.

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