



PARKPRE 825

The Attack of the Purple Monster

■ Ever heard of the axiom, “Race on Sunday, sell on Monday”? Parkpre, a relatively new brand, believes wholeheartedly in this concept. You may have to search around a bit to find a bike shop that carries Parkpre, but go to the races and you can spot these guys everywhere! Parkpre’s race team is a large bunch of privateers mixed in with a group of pros. This grass-roots team works on all eight cylinders for Parkpre, as a combination cycling billboard and product evaluation group. Parkpre’s racing and development efforts are apparent on the bicycle dealer’s floor with a quick perusal of the bikes themselves. Even the least expensive Parkpre is a race-oriented design. They simply have “the look.”

The look is so well-thought-out at Parkpre that our test Parkpre 825 looks like the “least expensive custom bicycle in the world.” The clean, classic, diamond frame is rendered in faux-titanium

with Onza bar ends, purple anodized Critical Racing brakes, clipless Onza pedals and Pulstar hubs. Hey, this bike is loaded with the good stuff. Getting an *MBA* test rider, jaded by a life on custom bikes, to become excited about midpriced bikes of any kind is tough, but the 825’s selection of name-brand gadgetry piqued everyone’s curiosity. Could this bike ride as good as it looks?

CRUISING THE PARK

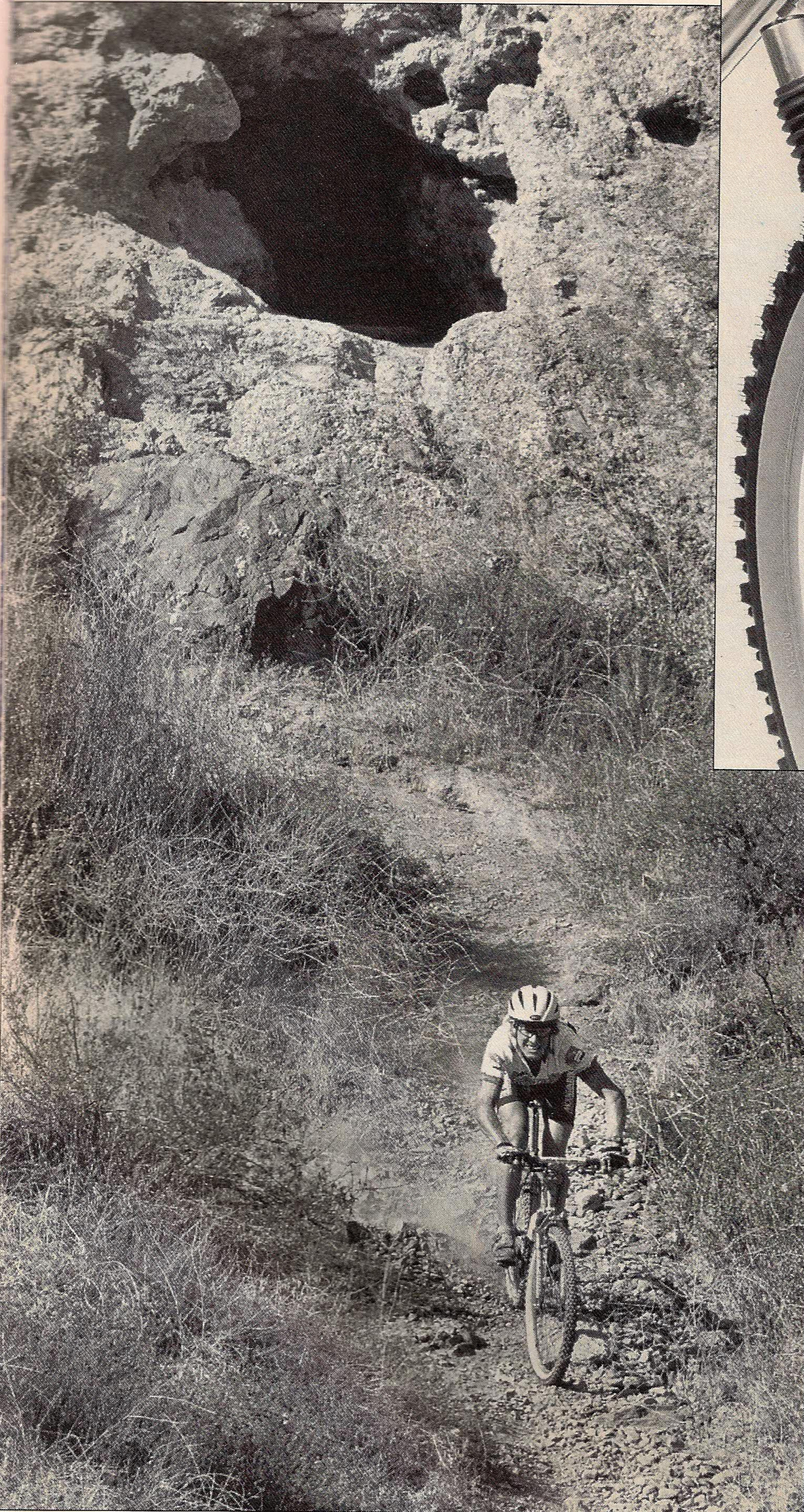
There’s a distinct quality of recognition that a bicycle that is well designed conveys to a rider the instant the bike begins to roll. One of the guys at *MBA* calls it “rightness.” The 825 possesses this quality. Our 19-inch frame was expertly TIG-welded from Tange double-butted, chromoly tubing. Its ride quality was as expected—stiff, with just enough spring to add to the lively feel of steel. Shimano’s new Deore XT eight-speed drivetrain and shift/brake levers are wel-

Gourmet: Parkpre’s \$1670 825 is the consummate NORBA cross-country bike. Even a blind racer could tell this is a no-frills, no-tricks, anatomically correct race bike—clean, straightforward and well made. You gotta love that faux-Ti look.

come quality in a normally mediocre, midpriced world of components. Deore XT has a crisp, professional feel which is reinforced by Onza bar ends and grips on the front half and a comfortable racing saddle on the rear. The stem was a poor choice on this bike, however. Even our six-foot test rider wished for at least a one-inch-lower rise. The high stem dampened the 825’s climbing performance by lightening the front end and raising the rider from an otherwise comfortable cockpit.

Cornering was predictable, and the Parkpre was awesome in the soft stuff. The 825’s geometry was slack with a re-

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Surprising: After a well-earned reputation for making some of the best-engineered and worst-performing forks in the world, the new Tange Pro Struts were a revelation. The microcellular foam bumpers delivered acceptable travel and improved control.

◀ **Grab handles:** Every test rider felt that the 825 was instantly comfortable, with the exception of the stem. The bike was quick-steering, hooked up loose and lively in the rough.

laxed 72-degree seat tube and 70.5-degree head. The numbers worked well, however; it was quick and light at low speed and could hold a line in the fast rough stuff. Onza Porcs up front and a Max 2.1 rear stuck like a scared cat in most conditions.

Conspicuous on the 825 were its purple anodized Critical Racing brakes. The pups really stopped. Clamping hard on the binders provided denture-dislodging deceleration. They did squeal like baby pigs. Fooling with toe-in helped a little.

The big surprise on the bike was the purple anodized (of course) Tange Pro Strut suspension fork. In the past Tange forks have been well-engineered and poor-performing suspension products: lots of promise, cool engineering and very little travel. The new Pro Struts are a quantum leap in the shock absorber uni-

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Long awaited: Parkpre has spec'd the 825 with the oft-delayed and long-awaited Onza click-in pedal. This is a cool pedal for Parkpre to go with. The Onza pedal looks like it uses Shimano SPD internals, but it doesn't. ►

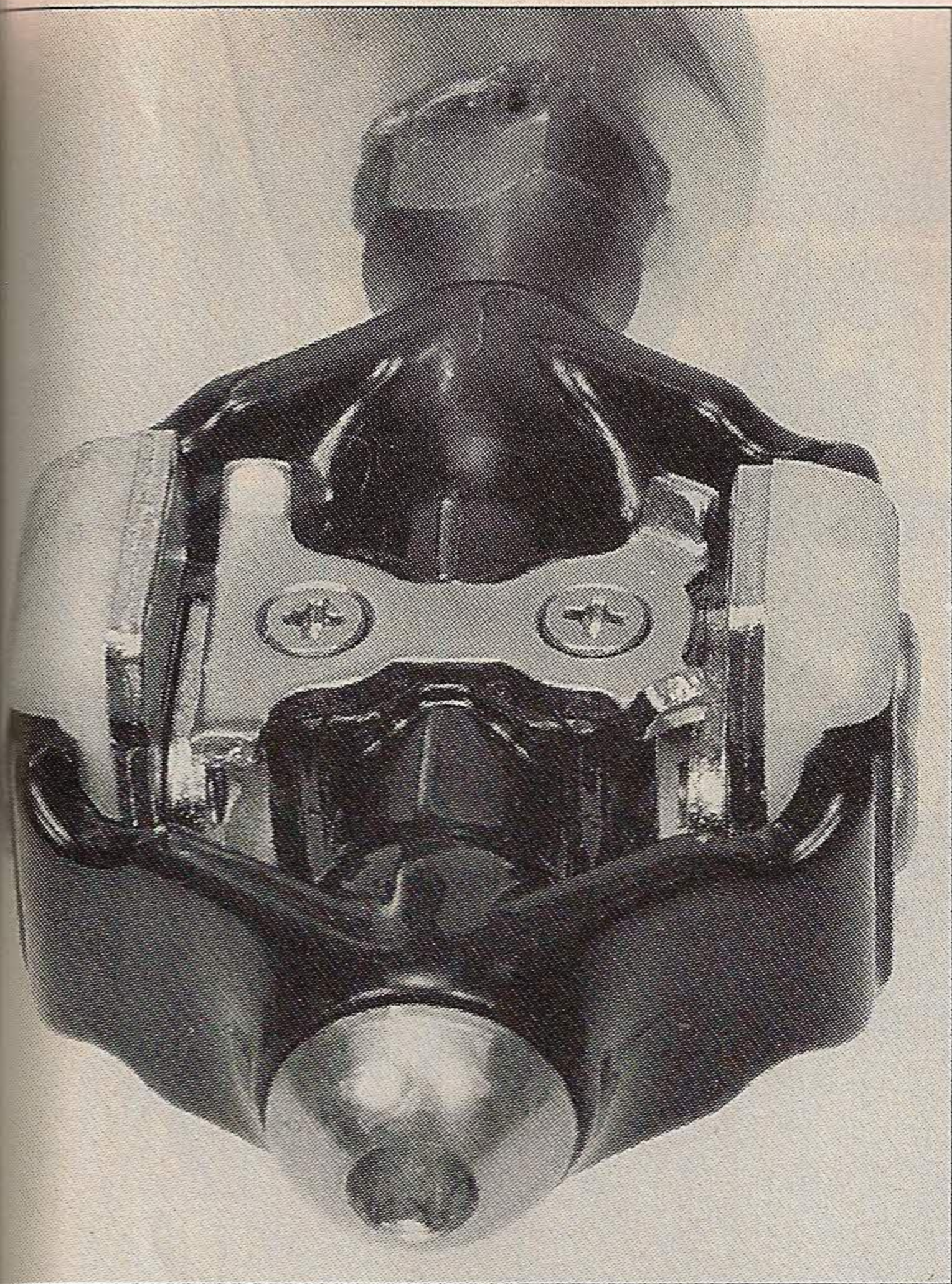
verse. The new Struts have a reasonable amount of travel and perform very well throughout low to moderate speeds. Tange's new fork was an ideal match for this hard-tail NORBA racer. The closed-cell elastomeric foam, as opposed to the denser elastomers, traded high-speed impact performance for a firm feel at the low-amplitude side.

PARKPRE POSTSCRIPTS

Gearing was a bit of a problem. We wished we could hang in the middle ring on the steep section, but to achieve this we would have needed a couple of extra teeth on the last few cogs. An 11-30 would be cool.

Parkpre should round-file the ten-degree stem, and swap it for a zero-degree (or five-degree max) rise stem.

Although this is a minor point, why would someone design a sport racing bike with custom Pulstar hubs, ferruled rims and then use Schrader valves? We like Schraders for trail bashing and going to the gas station, but Presta is the race setup!



HOW DID WE LIKE IT?

Except for some nitpicks, the folks at Parkpre did an excellent job. If you are a self-sponsored racer, the 25-pound 825 is a serious choice (and it comes with a host of serious aftermarket components). The titanium look will fool all of your competition some of the time, and you can spend the money you save over a custom bike on travel expenses. ◻