

Rocky Mountain is one of Canada's earliest and most successful mountain bicycle companies. The small but bustling manufacturer mixes a conservative design philosophy with a dare-to-be-different attitude. Like other British Columbian fat-tire folk, Rocky Mountain isn't hog-tied by a Shimano rubber-stamp component group philosophy. They go their own way! Unlike their Western Canadian compatriots, Rocky's president, Grayson Bain, and head designer, Larry Ruble, were instant converts to the fully suspended off-road cult. To the Canadian duo it was like instant karma; after preaching frame rigidity, titanium and microscopic increases in pedaling efficiency for years, the two discovered rear suspension and threw the book out the window.

Rocky Mountain, like most serious off-road companies, worked on its own suspension designs and was set to go into production when fate intervened. It unearthed a system that worked better than its own, and to its credit, and business acumen, Rocky Mountain didn't let its ego get in the way. The simplicity and adaptability of the then-new AMP Research system was tough to beat. The AMP rear end has proven reliable, lightweight, race-ready (after three years on the NORBA circuit) and was a perfect match for Rocky Mountain's north-of-



Rocky on the rocks: Short and sweet, the Edge jumped and shouted when things got tough and technical. Every test rider came out of the singletrack segment of our test with a stupid grin that wouldn't wash off.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN EDGE

Throwing the book out the window

the-border-style, sloping-top-tube frame design. After some extensive testing and intensive talking, Rocky Mountain became the first outside member of the AMP camp (which was supplying MongOOSE), mating its Easton ProGram alloy front triangle to an imported AMP rear suspension. The Rocky Mountain Edge was born.

FIRST LOOK

Rocky Mountain's Edge is such a clean and simple bicycle that the uninitiated might overlook the fact that it's a full suspension bicycle. The Edge uses the complete AMP Research rear linkage, including the AMP thru-shaft shock. Up front, a

zero-rise stem clamps a multi-position handlebar. Traditional thumbshifters are a counterpoint to Magura hydraulic brake levers. Our Edge was outfitted with an AMP Research linkage fork. A Rock Shox Mag-21 is optional for those with telescopic desires.

Visually, the most striking thing about the Edge is its huge-tube TIG-welded Easton frame. Surprisingly, Canadian frame builders have almost made a point of staying away from aluminum. Early prototypes of the Edge were chromoly and MBA's test staff has grown used to skinny-tubed steel bicycles from the north. Rocky Mountain broke the chromoly mold and manufactures and assembles the fat alloy front section in Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. The frame may have broken the steel vice grip, but it follows the northern tradition of a radically sloping top tube to maximize standover clearance. Intelligently, the Edge has a short head tube to compensate for the tallish nature of suspen-

sion bicycles. Both front and rear sections are powder-coated for maximum durability, adding to the Edge's no-fluff, down-to-business appearance. Every aspect, right down to the under-the-top-tube cable routing, seemed to be spot-on on this bike. Rocky Mountain stayed on track with this one.

THE NUMBERS GAME

The Edge is available in three sizes: 17, 18.5 and 20 inches. Our 17-inch model had a 22-inch top tube, 16.625-inch chainstays, a 12.5-inch bottom bracket and a 41.5-inch wheelbase. Frame angles were straightforward: 71 degree-head and 73-degree-seat. Suspension travel was two inches up front and 2.5 inches in the backyard. Frame weight is 5.1 pounds including shock. The Edge is available as a frame and fork (AMP or Rock Shox Mag-21) for \$1645, or as a complete bicycle for \$2995. The price includes an alloy brake bridge for the MacPherson strut. For info contact Rocky Mountain USA, P.O. Box 1568, 1400 A St. #D4, Blain, WA 98230; (604) 270-2710.

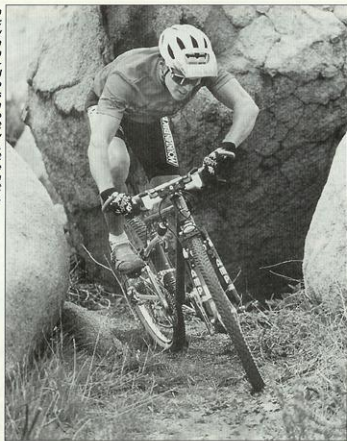
COMPONENT PICKS

Rocky Mountain really mixed and matched the Edge's parts. Controls are attached to a multi-bend Race Face alloy

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▲ A northern luminary: Rocky Mountain broke from the steel-hardtail mold common to Canadians and mated an AMP rear to an ultralight Easton alloy front section. Every aspect of the Edge sprang from authentic dirt know-how.



handlebar. Magura hydraulic brake levers and Shimano Deore XT thumbshifters accompany a pair of comfortable grips. Rocky Mountain's 135mm, threadless-type, chromoly stem transmits steering to an AMP linkage fork. A Vetta SP saddle perches on an extra-long Syncros alloy seatpost. Stoppers are Magura hydraulic units that fit on standard cantilever posts. Shimano Deore XT derailleurs handle the shifts between a Race Face crankset with 24/36/46 chainrings and a 12-28 seven-speed XT cassette. Deore XT Parallax 32-hole hubs, laced to Ritchey 440 rims, turn Panaracer Hard Core 2.1 tires (Dart front, Smoke rear). An alloy clamp-on brake bridge reinforces the rear brake area. In another break from the durability-at-all-cost Canadian tradition, the Edge is equipped with high-buck Ti-shaft pedals with sealed bearings and toeclips. Most companies choose cheaper pedals, assuming that the customer will be refitting the bike with Shimano SPD or other binding-type units.

ON THE DIRT

For riders between 5'6" and 5'8", the 17-inch Edge is a perfect fit. Its 22-inch top tube is well matched to its frame size. Standover height is very good and made all the better by the under-the-top-tube cable guides which are out of the way. The controls are laid out comfortably. The XT thumbshifters seem antiquated in this era of Rapidfire and GripShift, and even the hardcore retrogrouch riders

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

found them awkward to operate.

The Edge rolls along in-the-saddle most happily; up, down, fast or slow, the red Canadian steel motors. Out-of-the-saddle, the 135mm stem and AMP fork cause the front end to wander noticeably, especially at low speeds. As the test riders spent more time on the Edge, this wag was moderated with experience. It was never a problem on blazing downhill or fast sections, and surprisingly was less apparent on ascents than it was on the flats.

One of the most pleasant surprises we discovered while hammering the Edge is its use of Magura brakes. The nemesis of MacPherson strut rear ends is flexible, mushy-feeling rear brakes. *MBA* test riders have run Magura hydraulics before and were lukewarm about their performance, criticizing the brakes' ability to be modulated and feathered. The new Magura units are top performers and are the best rear brakes by far of all the MacPherson Strut bicycles we have thrown a leg over. Even the high-flying, tilted-downhill, BMX-converts raved about 'em.

Technical climbing was fun due to the Edge's size and active rear suspension. Tight, twisty stuff was its forté. The bike is way overgeared, however; only the strong could survive for any duration on a



Alternative design: Rocky Mountain doesn't play follow-the-leader in any way, shape or form up front. About the only common features here are a rim and a tire. Everything functioned as well as or better than the Mister Normal items that we have come to expect on fat-tire front ends.



Best of the test: The hefty Afterburner brake bridge minimized the flex in the Edge's compression strut, allowing the Magura hydraulic brakes to squeeze the life out of Rocky Mountain's rims.

steep pitch. The Smoke/Dart tire combo proved to be excellent performers and could be the new all-purpose full suspension tires for '94. Best results on long climbs were achieved by staying out of the saddle for a while rather than switching positions constantly. Stem and handlebar positioning were set for cross-country work.

Technical or fast descents could be testy if the rider didn't shift to the rear of the bike. The Edge's short front-center

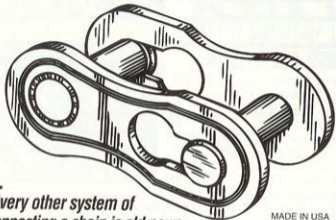
measurement required this. The punishment for staying forward was the heart-stopping feeling of a weightless rear end, swapping back and forth in chatter bumps when the brakes were applied.

SUSPENSION SPECIFICS

AMP hydraulic dampers are thru-shaft designs. This means that the central shaft continues in one end and out the other side of the oil chamber. This simple design allows the damper piston to run completely in fluid without changing the volume of oil in the shock (hence, no need for high-pressure nitrogen volume compensators). Both the tiny fork damper and more conventionally sized shock can be rebuilt by anyone with a little skill and simple tools. This is a plus, but the AMP shock's reliance on readily available O-rings as seals created the infamous AMP hiss. As minute amounts of air move back and forth from one side of the shock piston to the other, the shock makes a hissing sound. It's not a sign that the shock is worn out, because it can occur as soon as the first ride. It's just part of life on the Edge.

Both front and rear setups are too stiff on the Edge. With the preload backed out all the way, the AMP fork is too harsh in the slow to medium speed chop. The front damping seems to be in the ballpark and a softer fork spring would probably cure the low-speed chatter. The rear is the opposite. The 450-pound spring is spot-on for our 135- to 150-pound test staff.

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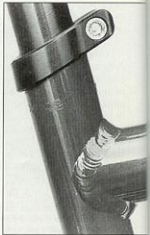
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Missed it by that much: The Edge had an extended seat tube, cut on the bias with a clamp to match. Only a NASCAR mechanic's air wrench could tighten the clamp enough to keep the seatpost from twisting—the bike's only nagging problem. ▶



The bike is supple over the little stuff, but compression damping is overly harsh on most high-amplitude impacts. Cranking more preload into the rear spring and backing out the fork preload achieves the best front/rear balance. AMP offers a range of different springs for both fork and shock. We like to switch to a lighter oil viscosity to soften the damping for light riders. Bigger riders over 150 pounds will probably find the damping about right.

SUGGESTION BOX

Rocky Mountain has done well with the Edge. The bike simply needs tuning to dial it in. Our test riders recommend these setup moves: (1) Slide the saddle back a half-inch or so more than normal to weight the rear end. (2) Take 1cm off the stem length to approximately a 125mm zero-rise unit. This would also keep more weight back over the rear suspension. (3) The seat clamp looks trick but failed to secure the seatpost in place; dump it. (4) Swap the rear cogs to a 12-30 or even 32. (5) Upgrade to Rapidfire shifters. (6) Switch the fork spring to a lighter unit. (7) Gain weight or go to a lighter-weight oil in the rear shock. The shock does lighten up after break-in time, so if it's borderline, give it a chance.

WHAT DO WE THINK?

Without any changes, Rocky Mountain's Edge is a nice ride. With some tweaking, the Edge has *mucho* potential. We liked the Canadian bicycle for its solid reliability, great brakes and technical singletacking ability. We have had good luck with the AMP fork, but the shorter offset of the Rock Shox Mag-21 would probably be a better match to the Edge's 71-degree geometry. The switch should keep the front tracking straight when pedaling out of the saddle. As a cross-country bike, the Rocky Mountain Edge is a good pick for a hardcore woods rider. If downhillers are your form of entertainment, choose the largest-size Edge you can comfortably ride to pick up some extra stability at speed. □



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