

Parkpre Pro Image



JERSEY AND SHORTS: AXO, PARKPRE
TEAM ISSUE • GLOVES: GRANC •
SHOES: SHIMANO M110 • HELMET:
BELL IMAGE PRO • VISOR: BELL

PICTURE PERFECT

Pummeled by recent rains, the mountain trails above Los Angeles have been inundated with enough water to drown frogs and send Malibu residents to the grocery store in canoes. The area was a mess. So it was with some frustration that I came home each day to see the clean and polished aluminum-framed Parkpre Pro Image waiting to be ridden. Late one afternoon there was finally a break in the weather, so in the last rays of the waning sunlight I mounted a NiteRider light on the handlebar, packed up some food, clothes and a compass and headed for higher altitude. En route to the trailhead I stopped a couple of times to adjust the angle and position of the Parkpre Factory Racing (PFR) titanium-rail saddle. And that didn't take long since the double-bolt PFR seat post clamp makes small changes a snap. I could tell that the \$2000 Pro Image wasn't just smoke and mirrors, it was



RockShox's Judy SL calms the terrain while Grip Shift X-Ray and Dia-Compe PC-11 levers handle the shifting and stopping duties.

ready to go. In fact, before I knew it I was far beyond the first two pitches and I'd hardly taken a moment to get fully acquainted with the bike's appointments. But later that night, I hosed it, wiped it and checked it out.

IN THE MIX

The heart of the Pro Image—the newest conception from Parkpre's R&D team—is its state-of-the-aluminum-art Easton Elite double-butted 7005-aluminum frameset with a replaceable rear derailleur hanger. Its low-profile geometry (basically a sloping top tube) provides the rider with a more rigid frame and lowers the stand-over height by two inches. That means the 19-inch frame I rode measured 18 inches from the center of the bottom bracket to the center of the top tube.

Front suspension on our test bike was supplied by RockShox's Judy SL. But according to Christian Davies of

The Pro Image mugs for the shutter before some zesty sessions in the hills.



PHOTO: JIM SAFFORD

PERFECT IMAGERY

Parkpre, the Pro Image, like most of the Parkpre product line, is available with a choice of nearly any shock on the market. Smooth shifting is provided by Grip Shift's SRT800 X-Ray twist shifters, and the input is accepted freely by Shimano's ever-present Deore XT drivetrain.

Comfort in the cockpit is accomplished by combining a 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch top tube and long 130mm zero-degree PFR chrome-moly stem, which enabled me to stretch out and relax.

PRO REACTIONS

Last year, Parkpre team riders competed on the Pro Elite titanium frameset but switched to



The tube within a ferrule rear brake cable routing seems a bit of overengineering.

the newly developed aluminum Pro Image this year because, according to Davies, most of the riders prefer the lighter, more rigid Easton frameset. "I tend to punish my bike, so I need a solid rig to support my 180-pound mass, and the Pro Image meets my need for both a firm and precise ride," explained Parkpre pro Alex Smith, now in his fourth season as a Parkpre team rider.

Notwithstanding Smith's assertion, I wanted to test the Pro Image's mettle myself. So on the next nonrainy day, I took the Pro Image out to one of my favorite testing trails, a roller coaster that has 140 consecutive whoop-de-dos, some as tall as six feet. The Pro Image rocked through this wild and mostly airborne section with flying colors. The combination of a plush-dialled Judy and a short wheelbase (41

inches) made the Pro Image respond quickly, saving my bacon on a couple of skewed reentries. As my confidence in the bike's handling and my daring began to swell, I pulled a couple of marginally successful Bob "Hurricane" Hannah double jumps over some smaller lips. With most of my skin still attached, I climbed back up the ridge



Lightweight Araya hoops revolve around Pulstar straight-pull hubs.



The extended seat tube adds rigidity and leaves no question as to frame size.

and had a few more goes at it.

Over the hump, as it were, I headed on to some extended sections of twisty double-track; the Pro Image bounded through and over the rut-riddled trails with admirable aplomb. With the weight well distributed along the length of the bike, the Pro Image frameset handled every indignity I served up. Unfortunately, that didn't hold true for the Pulstar cold-forged rear freehub. It


consistently came loose at the cones in spite of an extremely thorough pre-ride maintenance session that included tightening the hubs. Despite a Tool Burrito filled to capacity with everything I thought was needed, I didn't have the cone wrenches required for proper maintenance of the Pulstar hub. Luckily, another rider came along with a Cool Tool in tow. With that and my small crescent wrench, I was able to complete a temporary service.

FLATS SUCK!



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SPECIFICATIONS

Price:	\$2000
Sizes available:	15, 17, 19, 21 in. (center to top of seat tube)
Size tested:	19 in.
Total weight:	24 lb 4 oz
Frame weight:	3lb 4 oz
Fork weight:	3 lb 4 oz
Front wheel weight:	3 lb 9 oz
Rear wheel weight:	4 lb 12 oz
Frame:	Easton Elite 7005 aluminum
Fork:	RockShox Judy SL
Headset:	Dia-Compe AL-2 AheadSet, 1 1/4 in.
Rims:	Araya 395 Team XC 32-hole
Spokes:	DT Swiss 14/15 double-butted
Hubs:	Pulstar (front and rear)
Cassette:	Shimano Deore XT 11-28
Tires:	Continental 26 x 2.1 Leader Pro (f), 26 x 1.9 Cross-Country (r)
Crankset:	Shimano Deore XT 175mm, 22/32/42
Bottom bracket:	Shimano
Shifters:	Grip Shift SRT800 X-Ray
Derailleurs:	Shimano Deore XT
Chain:	Shimano HG-90
Saddle:	PFR titanium rail
Seat post:	PFR aluminum double-bolt 350mm
Brakes:	Dia-Compe VC-5 cantilevers, Dia-Compe PC-11 levers
Pedals:	onZa H.O. clipless
Handlebar:	PFR 7005 aluminum, 6-degree bend
Stem:	PFR 182 chrome-moly, 130mm, 0-degree rise
Manufacturer:	Parkpre Bicycles, 5245 Kazuko Ct., Moorpark, CA 93021; (805)529-5865

GEOMETRY

Seat tube:	18 in. (center to center)
Top tube:	23 3/4 in.
Head angle:	72°
Seat angle:	72°
Chainstays:	16 1/2 in.
Wheelbase:	41 in.
Fork offset:	1 1/2 in.
Bottom bracket height:	11 3/4 in.

Curious about the nature of the hub's problem, I called Jeff Hoepfner, the operations manager for Pulstar. "The cassette body threads into the hub," Hoepfner explained. "What most likely happened is the body wasn't torqued down sufficiently. Under load of the first few rides [via pedal strokes] the body is reefed down onto the hub. One set of hub bearings is in the cassette body and this tightening movement would definitely affect the cone adjustment. Keep in mind that this shouldn't pose a problem once sufficiently tightened."

SPEED THRILLS

With another day and some more maintenance under my belt, I decided on some extended downhill therapy. Mother Nature's extended outbursts had washed away the hardpack, exposing a bevy of boulders and sharp rocks. In the shallow spots pools of thick mud had gathered, so with the sturdy lugged Continental tires beneath, I surfed some of the sludge, sometimes hydroplaning, slogging my way with quite a grin. Braking wasn't much of an issue, but when it was, Dia-Compe's Power Control-11 levers and VC-5 cantilever ensemble provid-

ed progressive feel and not too much mush. As the trail dropped down into a wash, the water level rose. A kayak would have been better suited for the conditions. But I must admit, river surfing on the Parkpre all-terrain vehicle was a blast.

Overall, the Pro Image is an effective mix of componentry and in-house production PFR hardware wed to a great-riding aluminum chassis. If you're a big rider or dig the firm ride of an aluminum mount, Parkpre has packaged it all here to feed your two-wheel appetite. Add Parkpre's lifetime guarantee on the frame and one year on the componentry and you can ride as hard as you like and rest easy at night. ■



The chainstays provide ample tire and mud clearance.



The Pro Image kicks out and into some tight single-track with ease.