

Mountain
BIKING
OFFICIAL TEST

Versatile performance in an attractive package — you can't do much better than that!



CO
I
A
T

first m
Rocky
in the
twistin
also sta

As
favorab
at the s
headse

The
buted
tubing
frame h
vertical
rack an
clamping
forewar

Th
and stil
comes
namely
alumin
bearing
headset
respons
rear wh
which,
should
saddle,
ride is

For
realm o
deralle
Face cr
clipless

Clearly
Canadian

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ALTITUDE

There's an old saying that goes something like, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Rocky Mountain, one of Canada's oldest mountain bike manufacturers, has been making quality bikes with the same distinctive characteristics for about as long as we all can remember. One of the first mass production companies to really feature a sloping top tube design, Rocky Mountain bikes are built and tested for the kind of riding typically found in the Pacific Northwest, and more specifically, British Columbia. A lot of tight, twisting singletrack dictates that Rocky Mountains be quick and responsive, yet also stable for the high-speed logging roads that also proliferate in the area.

As with most Rocky Mountains we've tested, the Altitude received universally favorable comments for its appearance, the deep blue main frame to a silver fade at the stays and gold graphics blending nicely. The touches of gold at the headset, cranks, and seat binder pulls the whole thing together.

The Altitude is Rocky's top-of-the-line chromoly bike, with a custom mix of butted Tange Superlight/Concept Prestige main frame tubing, and butted Prestige tubing for the stays. The ovalized downtube at the head tube helps stiffen the frame both laterally and vertically, and the sloping top tube also adds to the bike's vertical rigidity. Special touches that you'll find include Ritchey dropouts, full rack and fender braze-ons, and an angle-cut seat tube and specially shaped clamping collar that is light yet very strong. And, of course, the seat tube cut is forward facing so mud and water won't foul the seatpost.

The Altitude comes with a RockShox Judy which complements the handling and stiffness characteristics very nicely. Another feature of the Altitude is that it comes with some of Rocky's own components, namely the Race Face forged and machined aluminum LoPro cranks, Turbine RS sealed bearing bottom bracket, and Real Seat aluminum headset. The cranks combine with the stiff yet responsive frame for direct power transfer to the rear wheel. You also get a very firm rear end, which, if you have the legs and buns for it, you shouldn't mind. Included is a suspended rail saddle, but even with the shock absorbing seat, the ride is fairly unyielding.

For \$2250 (U.S.), you're really getting into the realm of nice components. Shimano Deore XT derailleurs, Grip Shift SRT 800 shifters, the Race Face crank and bottom bracket, and Ritchey clipless pedals make up the light and efficient



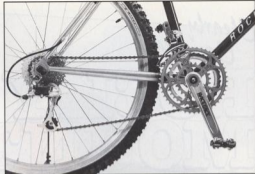
The laterally ultra-stiff RockShox Judy XC complements the resilient ride of the Tange Ultimate Superlight frame.





The Altitude doesn't stop short in the parts department, either. Syncros single bolt internal wedge stem, Dia-Compe PC7 levers, Grip Shift SRT 800, butted alloy handlebar, Bontrager TiTec seatpost, Vetta TriShock shock absorbing saddle, and Avid Tri-Align low-profile cantis are all state-of-the-art.

drive-train (see test of Ritchey in next month's issue). While the pedals Grip Shift works okay with the XT derailleurs, we continue to have mis-shifting on the middle cogs with both SRT 600 and 800 when used with an XT rear derailleur. While not intolerable, it does reduce drive-train efficiency somewhat. The front



The drive-train is a bristling mix of high performance and custom spec. Shimano Deore XT derailleurs, Race Face LoPro forged and machined alloy cranks, and Ritchey clipless pedals is about all you could ask for.

TESTERS TALK

— "I like the way the bike gets up and goes when you hammer out of the saddle."
 — "It's quick, but it can beat you up in the rough stuff if you're not careful."
 — "Even though the stem is a zero rise, you can still get the front wheel up off the ground pretty easily, and it doesn't feel like you're too far over the front wheel either."
 — "Why did they put a 1.9 tire in the front?"

shifter uses the ratcheting version, not indexed, which was easy to use. Since the rotation has been reduced, there is far less chance for error or not being able to find the desired chaining. Several of our testers even said they preferred it over the standard indexed shifters.

The rider compartment is certainly set up for aggressive cross-country riding. The zero degree rise Syncros stem commits the rider to the front end, but also lets the rider have just enough control over the front wheel for lifting the tire over obstacles. However, the lack of bar ends leaves the control center feeling incomplete.

Another interesting spec is the 1.9-inch wide Ritchey Z-Max front tire and 2.1-inch Ritchey Z-Max rear tire. Rocky's thinking is that you don't need a large air volume front tire since you have the shock, and the larger air volume

SUSPENSION PERFORMANCE RATING

COMPLIANCE — 7.5
 BIG HIT RESPONSIVENESS — 6
 LATERAL STIFFNESS — 8
 COMPRESSION DAMPING — 6
 REBOUND DAMPING — 5
 ADJUSTABILITY — 6

COMMENTS — The new Judy XC should quiet any complaints about past problems of lateral flexibility. Larger stanchions, a wider crown, and a constant seven-inch overlap between stanchions and sliders make for an extremely precise handling fork. The new micro-cellular urethane spring technology and oil cartridge damping is not as plush on big hits as an air spring, oil damped fork, but it's very active on small to medium bumps, and takes the edge off big hits adequately.

rear tire acts as a cushion, or static shock absorber if you will. However, a 1.9 front tire is sometimes adequate in terms of both traction and strength. To reduce the chance of pinch flattening, you have to run it at a high psi, which means that the tire is less compliant over small rocks, even with the shock. The 1.9 is also very, some might say overly, responsive. We understand the theory, but in loose,

BRAKES

Front Brake: Avid Tri-Align alloy cantilevers with Koal Stop pads
 Rear Brake: Avid Tri-Align alloy cantilevers with Koal Stop pads
 Levers: Dia-Compe PC-7

BRAKING PERFORMANCE RATING

POWER — 6
 MODULATION — 7
 ERGONOMICS — 5

COMMENTS — Custom performance from some of the best custom brakes on the market. PC-7 levers work very well when matched with good brake cables, but require a fair amount of reach for smaller hands.

STEERING/SEATING

Handlebar: Race Face custom butted
 AnAlloy aluminum, 22-inch/559 mm width,
 3-degree sweep
 Stem (as tested): Syncros Cattlehead internal
 lengths proportionate: wedge clamp threadless,
 135 mm, 0 degree rise
 Headset: Race Face 1 1/8" Seal
 aluminum threadless
 Grips: Rocky Mountain Kraton
 Bar Ends: None
 Saddle: Vetta Tri TT-Shock,
 Manganese rails, synthetic leather cover
 Seatpost: Bontrager 2014, 350 mm
 Seatpost Binder: Alloy collar with binder bolt

RIDER COMPARTMENT EVALUATION

CONTROLS — 5
 SEATING (COMFORT, SHAPE) — 5

COMMENTS — The reinforced optimal height section of the Bontrager seat post is a step in the right direction as far as building a post that truly can hold up to off-road cycling demands. The zero rise stem is definitely for cross-country positioning, which is a moot point since the bike only has a front suspension. Lack of bar ends left the control center feeling incomplete. A typically (for the Pacific Northwest) narrow handlebar makes adding bar ends a continuing proposition.

Front Derailleur:
 Rear Derailleur:
 Shifters:
 Pedals:
 Bottom Bracket:
 Chainrings:

Logs:
 Wheelset:
 Chain:
 Pedals:
 Saddle:

DRIVE-
 TRAIN
 EFFICIENCY: SPEED
 ACCURACY — 5
 ERGONOMICS PR
 PERFORMANCE RAN

COMMENTS — F
 noise with an XT
 the 12-32 cog sta
 more conventional
 little better than
 less you more h
 combined with XT
 Shimano's light
 slip immensely.

BIKE NAME:
 MFG. OR DR

SUGGESTED
 COLORS AVAIL
 SIZES AVAIL
 SIZE TESTE

GROSS BIC

FRAMESET:
 Frame Mater

Frame Const
 Fork Weight
 Fork

Materials:

Construction:

Weight:
 Travel:

DRIVETRAIN

Front Derailleur:	Shimano Deore XT
Rear Derailleur:	Shimano Deore XT
Shifters:	Grip Shift SRT 800
Crank:	Race Face LoPro forged and machined aluminum
Bottom Bracket:	Race Face Turbine sealed bearing
Chainrings:	Sugino Superlight alloy middle and big, steel inner
Cage:	Shimano XTR Hyperglide
Freehub:	Shimano XTR
Gearing:	Front, 24/36/46; rear, 12-32 eight speed
Chain:	Shimano HG 90
Pedals:	Ritchey Logic Step-In Clipless

DRIVETRAIN PERFORMANCE RATING

SHIFTING SPEED — 6 (front), 6 (rear)
ACCURACY — 5 (front), 6 (rear)
ERGONOMIC PRECISION (SHIFTING WHILE RIDING) — 5
GEARING (RANGE) — 7.5

COMMENTS — Rocky Mountain makes an interesting spec choice with an XTR freehub combined with an XT derailleur. The 12-32 cog stack enables the Sugino chainrings to be a more conventional 24/36/46 range, which just seems to shift a little better than Hyperdrive-C (compact gearing) and also gives you more high-end gearing options. Grip Shift SRT 800 combined with XT is still a bit finicky in the middle cogs due to Shimano's light action feature. Gore Ride-On cables can help immensely.

nasty conditions, the 1.9 just doesn't quite have the muscle. You can simply reverse the tires for better front traction, but then you're faced with the problem of a sub-standard rear tire in terms of taking big hits.

THE RIDE

There is still some headroom for lighter (read more expensive) parts. For the price, you are getting a very functional bike with a frame that will last several seasons of racing, and many years of trouble-free trail riding. About the only thing we'd add right away would be bar ends. In order to get the bike to be as responsive as it is, the top tube is not exceptionally long, and bar ends would aid in seated climbing as the bike can

GEOMETRY

Head Tube Angle:	71 degrees
Seat Tube Angle:	74 degrees (16.5), 73 degrees (17.5), 18.5, 73 degrees (19.5), 72.5 degrees (21)
Top Tube Length (as tested, lengths proportionate):	22.75 inches/578 mm effective
Chainstay Length:	16.75 inches/425 mm
Wheelbase (as tested, lengths proportionate):	42 inches/1054 mm
BB Height:	11.5 inches/292 mm
Fork Offset:	1.5 inches/38 mm

HANDLING PERFORMANCE RATING

SPEED — 6
SINGLETRACK — 6
TECHNICAL RIDING — 6
CLIMBING OUT OF THE SADDLE — 6
IN THE SADDLE — 5

COMMENTS — It is immediately apparent that the Altitude is set up for aggressive cross-country riding. The stiff frame and commated rider compartment demand quite a bit from the rider, but the payoff is a very efficient, responsive ride. A somewhat short top tube creates a more upright position, so even though it's a lower rider compartment, it's still not overly stretched out. This is why it's both responsive and stable at the same time.



VITAL SPECS

BIKE NAME:	Altitude
MFG. OR DIST.:	Rocky Mountain
	1322 Cliveden Ave., Ann Arbor Park
	Delta, British Columbia, Canada V3M 6G4
	(604) 527-9993/fax 527-9977

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE (APPROX.): \$2250 (U.S.)

COLORS AVAILABLE: Blue/charcoal fade

SIZES AVAILABLE: 16", 17.5", 18.5", 19.5", 21"

SIZE TESTED: 18.5-inch (measured center to top of seat tube)

GROSS BICYCLE WEIGHT (AS TESTED): 23.7 lbs

FRAMESET: \$23.7 lbs

FRAME MATERIAL(S): Tange Superlight/Concept Prestige main frame, Tange prestige stays

Frame Construction: TIG-welded

Frame Weight: 3.9 lbs

Fork: RockShox Judy XC, multi-stage micro-cellular urethane spring/old damp compression suspension

Materials: Magnesium lower legs, Easton EA-70 aluminum stanchions, aluminum crown, aluminum brace

Construction: Cast lower legs, drawn stanchions, forged crown, forged tube

Weight: 2.8 pounds

Travel: 2 inches/50 mm

WHEELS

Rims: Sun CR-17A alloy, double wall with eyelets, 32 holes

Hubs: Rear, Shimano XTR; front, Shimano XT Parallax

Spokes: DT stainless steel, 15 gauge

Tires: Front, Ritchey Megabyte Z-Max WCS 1.9 inch, Kevlar bead; rear, Ritchey Megabyte Z-Max WCS 2.1 inch, Kevlar bead

TIRE PERFORMANCE RATING

TRACTION/CORNERING — 5

CLIMBING — 5

STRENGTH — 6

BRAKING — 6

FEEL (COMPLIANCE) — 6

COMMENTS — The narrower front tire is a bit inadequate for aggressive cornering, especially since the rounded profile of the Ritchey tire is not as well suited for loose terrain.

COMPILED BY: Mark Langton

suffer from a light front wheel at times in technical ascents. And while out of the saddle climbing was good, the rear tire did have a tendency to spin. This is the one detriment of a stiff frame; sometimes the power transfer can be too good.

Nit-picking aside, what it comes down to with the Altitude is a remarkably buoyant ride. Step on the pedals and the bike seems to go forward almost effortlessly. The bike flits through turns with just the slightest rider input. Almost magically, it also carves lines at speed and remains not at all twitchy under braking, even in loose conditions. Perhaps the thing we were most surprised at was the fact that it wasn't as

quick in singletrack as we would have expected. This didn't disappoint anyone, as the bike was so neutral that it would have been sketchy.

The Rocky Mountain Altitude is not going to turn heads on the trail. A subdued midnight blue paint job with a subtle fade to silver on the chainstays signifies the portent

of the bike: Tried and true performance for the discriminating rider. **MB**

(Ratings are on a scale of 1-10, 10 being highest. A five is given if the characteristic we are evaluating is what we would expect. Scores are based on a variety of testers' input, and relatively to current products on the market. They are also based on performance interrelative to the entire bicycle package.)