

Bike test editor Steve Worland takes a brief but exclusive look at the bikes that defy categorisation. With the Buck Shaver, Fat Chance have taken a down-to-earth move, putting one of their hand built bikes into the realms of the 'ordinary' rider

Fat Chance Buck Shaver

Evolution ☎ 0181 290 0807

- £650 frame for the penny pincher tricknophiles
- Custom componentry choice
- Judy dressed to match

Okay, £1,350 isn't exactly cheap for a bike, but it is the most wallet-friendly way of buying into the low key legend that Fat Chance has become. There's very little in the design or build quality that makes the Buck Shaver less worthy than big bro' Yo Eddy but its more straightforward tube profiles and less fiddly detail keep the price to a level that has far more in common with offerings from UK custom builders. Those UK builders keep

asking us why we look at so many US custom built steel frames when they're trying to scrape a living on our doorstep. The answer is that, though we're happy to promote the ideology of buying local, the fact remains that the likes of Fat City Cycles continue to produce frames that exhibit a far greater understanding of pure MTB needs than most of those produced in the UK.

Frame

The tubes are 4130 chromoly, produced exclusively for Fat City by True Temper. The main tubes



Famboyance doesn't win hearts here; slimline and practical's what you want.



Power transmission is claimed to be improved by single diameter stays.

are triple butted and the build configurations are slimline and practical rather than flamboyant. Geometry conforms to accepted industry standards, with an assumption that a suspension fork will be used at some time. Our test

bike is fitted with a Rock Shox Judy XC fork, finished to match the two tone grey of the frame (light on the left, dark on the right). The paint and graphics are hard wearing, and practical heavy use considerations are taken a step further with other frame features: a couple of chain-suck deflector plates are fitted on the right hand chainstay; there's a small rubber seal on the seat clamp to stop water from getting in the top of the seat tube; all the tubes are sealed after welding to prevent dirt and moisture ingress; and there's a gusset under the top of the down tube to deflect front end shocks away from potentially weak points.

Finishing standards are excellent throughout. There's loads of mud room behind the bottom bracket because the chain stay curves around the tyre behind the chainrings. Both the seat and chainstays are single diameter along their length with domed ends rather than taper walls leading into the custom dropouts; this approach is claimed to improve power transmission. The wishbone seatstay design is neat and tidy but there are no rack eyelets for the tourists. Crudguard eyelets are there, there are two sets of bottle bosses, and the triple slotted cable guides run along the right of the top tube.

Ride

Despite its reasonable price tag, the Buck Shaver is certainly not in



The Fat Chance is designed by committed mountain bikers and it shows. The Buck Shaver is a bike to fall in love with.

any way compromised in performance. A couple of riders who've spent time with Fat Chance's top dog Yo Eddy machine said this one feels just as tight and direct in steering, just as nimble on the climbs and just as speedy in acceleration. It's a fun bike to ride and it revels in tackling the sort of terrain that would challenge lesser machines. It has no real highlight performance attributes. It's just a great all rounder, tackling ups, downs, singletrack and boulder fields with an agility that makes you wonder why some frames cost so much more.

There will always be those who say that all quality chromoly MTB

frames with 'standard' geometry feel about the same. That's not true. The riding character of the Fat Chance Buck Shaver may only offer subtle bonuses over an average £650 frame, but they're subtleties that are all too relevant in getting the best out of your own riding technique.

This frame structure is very tight without being overly rigid. The back end is more comfy over the bumps than any aluminium frame we've tested at this price and the finishing standards put it ahead of most of the steel opposition. This is a frame designed by committed mountain bikers, and it shows its pedigree. *

Detail

You could buy an STX-equipped Buck Shaver with Fat Chance's own rigid fork for about £1,200. Our test bike comes as something of a promotion vehicle for importer Evolution's other products, with a Ringle stem and seatpost, big bodied front hub from Bullseye, Cook Bros Racing hub quick release skewers, a Pace/Renthal handlebar (which is too narrow for our liking) and the ever popular Flite titanium saddle. The drivetrain is all STX/RC and the wheels use Mavic 231 rims and a Panaracer Smoke/Dart tread combo. Good stuff; nothing flashy but it all works well and the all-in weight is 25.6lb.

Bike Details

Bike tested	Fat Chance Buck Shaver
Price	£1,350 as tested; frame alone £649
Weight	11.52Kg/25.6lb
Distributor	Evolution Imports ☎ 0181 290 0807

Frameset

Frame	True Temper Custom triple butted chromoly (2,090g/4lb 10oz)
Forks	Rock Shox Judy XC (1,510g)
Headset	Chris King Aheadset 1in (110g)

Transmission

Crankset	Shimano STX 22,32,42 (741g)
Derailleurs	Shimano STX RC
Shifters	Shimano STX RC Rapidfire
Freewheel	Shimano STX RC
Chain	Shimano
Pedals	SPuDs fitted
Bottom bracket	Shimano cartridge (322g)

Wheels/Tyres

Hubs	Bullseye front, Shimano rear, Cook Bros skewers
Rims	Mavic M231
Spokes	DT Swiss butted
Wheel weight	Front 908g; rear 1,334g
Tyres/tube	Panaracer 1.9in Smoke rear (630g); 2in Dart front (661g); butyl (155g)

Brakes

Brakes	Shimano STX RC (185g pr)
Brake levers	Shimano STX RC

Fine detail

Handlebars	Pace Renthal Sub 130 21.75in (145g with end plugs)
Stem	Ringle 120mm (165g)
Bar ends	None
Grips	ATI (90g pr)
Saddle	Flite titanium (201g)
Seatpost	Ringle Moby 355mm (225g)
Seatbolt	Quick release aluminium (39g)

SUMMARY

The frame is an excellent £650 worth. If you want a complete bike, importers Evolution can build one to your exact specifications, starting from a rigid STX model with a handful of trick bits for about £1,200. You could get a better equipped big production bike for the same price, but the Fat Chance kudos should not be underestimated. It's based on riding feel and a quality of workmanship second to none. The sealed tube ends, down tube gusset, seat tube seal and domed stays are little things but you'll learn to appreciate them. The Buck Shaver is a bike to fall in love with. The great thing is that the love doesn't depend on silly money and a reckless ego.