

T E S T

TED WOJCIK'S MAC-STRUT

*A conservative
builder's moderate
approach*



Ted Wojcik. You've heard that name before, right? Yeah, isn't he that Polish cyclocrosser guy who defected to New Jersey to race mountain bikes? No, Ted Wojcik is one of this country's quality framebuilders. All American, Ted has built a loyal following of road and mountain bike aficionados along the East Coast. Ted's conservative fare of well-crafted hardtails is the staple of his micro-manufacturing business, but the rising acceptance of full suspension has put pressure on all cottage-industry framebuilders to offer a top-performing rear-suspension design—or step aside. Many custom craftsmen have refused to take the suspension leap, and are now memories, but Wojcik didn't hesitate.

A strong believer in the lightweight simplicity of MacPherson-strut suspension designs, Wojcik embraced the concept with open arms. Wojcik's current take on full suspension incorporates a Battle-built MacPherson-strut rear suspension on his hand-made front section. This off-the-shelf rear-suspension solution allows Wojcik to concentrate on the finer aspects of the frame—its geometry, individual fit, cable routing and finish—while avoiding the hassles of trying to reinvent the rear-suspension system. The store-bought concept isn't revolutionary. Over the last five years, AMP Research has served as a missionary to custom framebuilders by supplying its Mac-strut rear ends to a select few. Wojcik was an early AMP customer, and with AMP now concentrating on its own product line, Battle has taken on the outside supplier role.

ALUMINUM MEETS CHROMOLY

Battle isn't very well known outside of the small cadre of mountain bike insiders, but the Wyoming-based suspension-bike builder is already doing a brisk business selling its rectangular-tube, Mac-strut rear ends to other artisans. Battle's rear end offers rectangular seat and chainstays constructed out of Easton aluminum. They are torsionally rigid and every junction terminates in a beautiful, CNC-machined alloy piece. Each pivot bushing has a grease port, and the Fox Alps air shock can be clamped in different positions on the compression strut to adjust the bike's ride height.

While the Wojcik's rear section is wrought (and bought) from 7005 alloy, its front triangle is TIG-welded Reynolds 853 tubing. The mixed mediums are unusual, but not revolutionary. Fat Chance fielded a similar aluminum/chromoly configuration (with an AMP rear end) that earned rave reviews. Wojcik's intimate relationship with butted steel frame tubes, and his ferrous wisdom, were evident in the bike's light weight and rigidity. The dimensional contrast between the steel and alloy components of the frame underscores the difference in strength between the two metals. Nowhere is this more evident than at the interface between the swingarm and bottom-bracket shell. Here, an inch-thick, machined aluminum swingarm is supported by two steel ribs, each less than an eighth of an inch across.

While the Wojcik is technically cool, its finish stands out as its most striking attribute. No off-the-shelf production bike could outshine this custom gem. At a time when corporate giants are sucking up cottage-industry builders like high-tech armadillos, a custom-built frame like Ted's is a real inspiration—a bike with a soul.

WOJCIK MAC-STRUT RIDING IMPRESSION

With the Wojcik's Fox shock set at 100 PSI, the *MBA* rest riders flipped a coin to see who would be the first to get the beautiful midnight-blue mountain bike dirty. The Wojcik's rear suspension was supple but a little overdamped. Heavier riders (over 165 pounds) liked the setup, especially with slightly higher air pressure in the shock. Lighter test riders felt the compression damping of the Fox unit gave the bike a harsh ride over choppy bumps. In an odd way, the rear suspension was perfectly matched by the bike's Judy SL. Both fork and shock were slightly harsh in compression but felt progressive over big hits. The Wojcik's three inches of rear wheel travel mated well to the Rock Shox's 2.5-inch travel fork.

In an uphill, out-of-the-saddle sprint, the Wojcik was brisk and willing. Its lowish front end, 74-degree seat angle and rigid Mac-strut urged the rider to hammer out of the saddle. Steering response was

Exotic in steel: Only a few framebuilders are given the okay to use Reynolds' 853 butted steel alloy tubing. Ted Wojcik is one of them. His steel front/alloy rear Mac-strut design shows that an ex-roadie can run with the mountain bike big boys.

quick and aggressive—a sprinter's dream. Not many full-suspension bikes have a 72-degree head angle. The steep head and seat angles were largely responsible for the Wojcik's sprint-bike agility.

On tight singletrack, the blue bike's steepness allowed it to be flicked between boulders and trees with accuracy and alacrity. However, the steepness paid the piper in sand, or any combination of shifty soils. Holding a line and maintaining forward momentum in loose terrain was not natural for the bike's handling, but the Wojcik loved harder surfaces. If the tires could get a decent grip, this bike would rail around any corner. In rocky situations, the Wojcik would shift around in search of a line, but its steering remained neutral. As long as its pilot remained cool, the Wojcik could corner through some pretty nasty stuff.

MBA'S IMPRESSION OF THE WOJCIK

In the final analysis, the Wojcik Mac-strut was popular among the *MBA* wrecking crew, especially for finesse riders. As a suspension bike, it leaned towards a firm ride that was well suited to power rides with rolling hills, quick (but short) downhills and lots of in and out of the saddle transitions. The Wojcik could really haul on flat land, and its razor-quick steering made it a most enjoyable single-tracker. For fast-paced, long-distance treks, this bike would be hard to beat, and it could double as a very good racing mount as well. *MBA's* tenured suspension-bike professors gave the Wojcik a solid B for dirt comfort, an A- for cross-country worthiness and a blue ribbon for graphic design and craftsmanship.

The Wojcik MacPherson-strut frame retails for \$2149 with a Judy SL fork. Sizes: One-inch increments from 14 to 23 inches. For more information contact Ted Wojcik Cycles at (603) 329-8057. □

