

MOOR



RIDES

A good custom framebuilder will make the bike of your dreams. BA reports on a stunner by Paul Donohue.

The mountain bike tested here isn't everybody's idea of "ultimate", but it is very much an example of a bike built with close co-operation between the framebuilder and the customer — that is, it's a custom-built in the true sense of the word. Paul Donohue built it as a one-off for a customer who knew what he wanted, which was to take everything to extremes. The result was a superlative bike in ride and in detail.

BA didn't have much time to ride the Donohue, but it only took a short try-out to

see that Paul Donohue is a master of the framebuilder's art. So tight is the rear end that this MTB feels more like a road bike than like most of its dirty brethren. It climbs like a rocket due to its 16" chainstays (we always considered 16.5" short!) and stops like nothing in this world — Very mean tyres and Shimano Deore XT II U-brakes with custom stainless steel 'booster braces', mounted very close to the tyres, are more powerful than a locomotive (even if you're travelling faster than a speeding bullet). There's a trade-off, though, which is why ▶



Clockwise from top left: Tioga Prestige bars are very light, colour co-ordinated; Front derailleur cable is routed over the top tube and down the seat tube; Seat cluster with various brazings; Engraved 'D' in the extended seat tube and cables routed along top tube; Deore XT II chainset features new Biopace HP rings; Rear derailleur has Hyperglide and internal cable.



Superb paintwork on the seat stay, as the rear gear cable emerges.

► most people would choose more relaxed specifications: next-to-no clearance between the tyres and the brakes and seatstays is sure to mean clog-up problems in sticky mud.

So it will, but Donohue's customer got exactly what he wanted, which is what custom framebuilding is all about. Ordering a custom frame from a skilled builder is about the best way to indulge your cycling hardware passions, and this frame is a great example of what imagination can come up with. Details like the front derailleur cable-routing just can't be had on a production frame. Or, for that matter, if you want 16" chainstays on a mountain bike, you'll have to order them special.

Mostly aesthetic is the routing of the rear derailleur cable through the seat stay, but custom-quality goes with it: to keep water from getting into the frame through the holes for the cable, it actually runs through a sleeve inside the stay.


Donohue fillet-brazed the frame of Tange Prestige tubing, making a graceful and very lightweight bike. He finds Tange Prestige an ideal material to work with: "One of the best tubings we get in. It arrives in a fantastic state. A very, very high quality tubing." Chainstays are flared out to accommodate the wide rear tyre. In a very novel touch (a clas-

sic example of working with your framebuilder) all the gear cables, and rear brake cable, are run over the top tube. Unsleeved along the top tube, the rear gear cable is then sleeved and runs down through the wishbone seat stay, emerging some three or four inches above the drop out. The front gear cable is routed down the seat tube and round a roller a couple of inches below the derailleur and then back up to the arm. All this gives the bike a very clean profile along the down tube, around the BB, and along the chainstays.

The frame is finished to a very high standard with the sort of pink, white, and green paint job designed to make it stand out in a crowd!

This is one of the first bikes in the UK to be fitted with Shimano's top-of-the-range Deore XT II groupset, a well-finished, lightweight ensemble which incorporates some welcome features. (Shimano assure us that the first stocks of Deore XT will be available this month for custom bikes). Again, the U-brakes are mind-blowingly powerful and their short control levers are an improvement over the longer ones, permitting braking with two fingers while the other two continue to grip the bars. The bike was fitted with a Hyperglide freewheel, the sprock-

ets of which Shimano has notched and grooved to allow down-shifting under heavy load. Whether or not it shifts any better under load than a standard freewheel is debatable, but it is smooth and very fast.

The frame proves that your imagination is the limit when you employ a good builder, so why not get what you want? 

Specifications

Manufacturer: Paul's Cycles, 13 Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham. Tel: 0388 603072

Price: £950 (Frame only: £450)

Material: Tange Prestige

Fully brazed, Haden bottom bracket. Full set of braze-ons, front and rear derailleur cables routed along the top tube.

Frame size: 20"

Chainstay length: 16"

Seat angle: 73°

Head angle: 70.5°

BB height: 11.75"

Components

Shimano Deore XT II groupset. Comprising: chainset (and BB), pedals, front and rear derailleurs, seven speed freewheel, chain, front and rear U-brakes (with custom stainless steel 'booster' braces), hubs, thumbshifters, 'two-finger' brake levers, headset, shark fin.

Rims: Mavic Paris Dakar

Bars: Tioga Tange Prestige

Stem: Handmade Reynolds 531

Saddle: Selle Italia Super Turbo