

# California Dreaming

Nothing in freestyle stays unchanged for long. Like the rider who doesn't stay on top of the almost daily invention of new, ever more complex tricks, the factory that lags behind in development will be overtaken fast. Freestyle riders who don't perform the most fashionable tricks don't win competitions. Freestyle frames that don't keep up with the latest trends don't win sales. Development is the key to success.

When the first CW California appeared it caused a sensation. Taking the 'more tubes equals better freestyler' syndrome a stage further, CW got into scaffolding in a big way. Pegs were welded to the forks, rear toe loops to the chainstays and, most obvious, a HUGE rear platform big enough not only to plant both feet but also to take home the week's groceries, hence the unfortunate title of the 'shopping trolley'. Though this, the first of CW's forays into freestyle was, without doubt practical — all the add-ons were, to a certain extent at least, useable — its weird looks ensured that there were a whole lot more Performers and Masters around than Californias. The CW design department scurried back to the drawing board to rethink their ideas. The second California to emerge from the CW factory received a far better reception than the first. The rear platform which had caused a lot of would-be stylers to turn away from the first model had almost disappeared to be replaced by a smaller, less obtrusive and yet just as practical smaller version that at last silenced the 'shopping trolley' jibes that had plagued the original since it first appeared. Still it wasn't perfect.

The welded-on fork platforms were still too high making them at best awkward to use and at worst mere excess weight. The rear

platforms too received their fair share of criticism. Vans that went into double figures frequently caught them when cranking. The best features of the first frame — the class construction and totally dialled-in frame geometry — thankfully stayed the same. CW may have had to rethink some of the details but, under all that tubing, the basic design was right.

Then came the big push. CW started getting into freestyle in a BIG way. Stateside hotshots Ceppie Maes, Mike Buff and Dizz Hicks were draughted into a new, revamped Factory squad and changes started happening fast. Buff had the front fork pegs moved down and made them screw-on rather than welded. Dizz waved goodbye to the rear toe loops, replacing them with screw-on pegs mounted to the rear dropouts. Ceppie turned his attention to the bars and lowered the familiar double crossbrace by a couple of inches. The result?

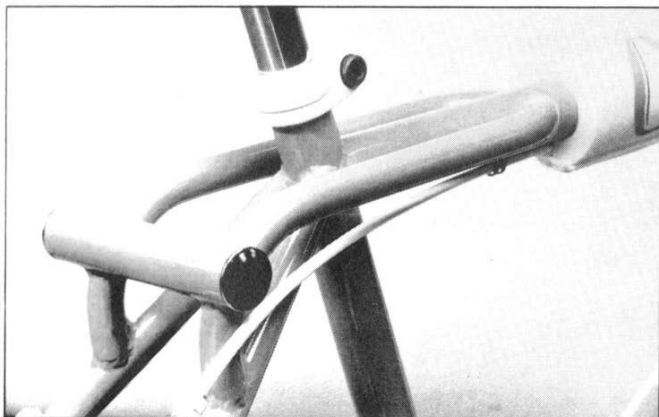
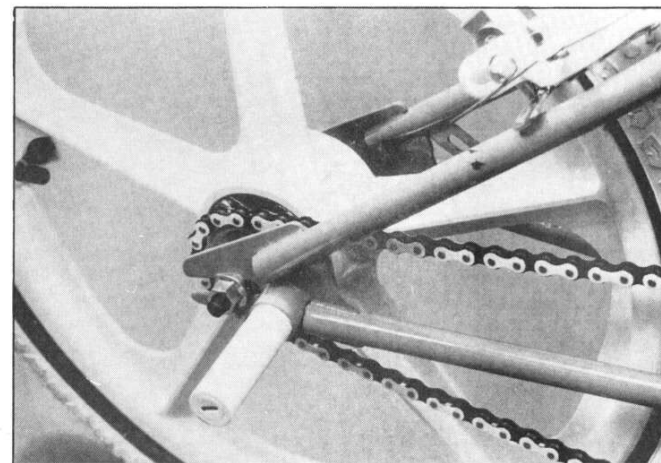
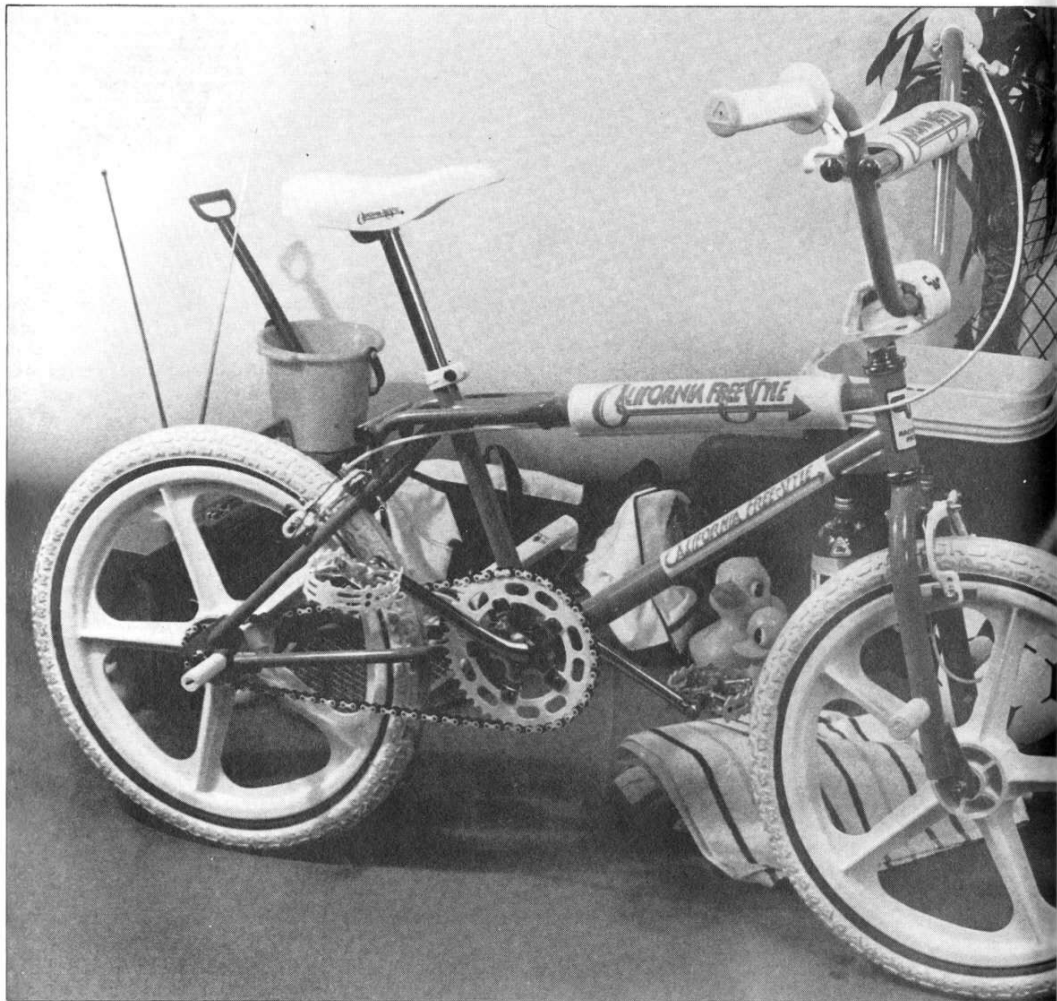
Ladies and Gentlemen . . . I present to you the new 1986 CW California complete bike; the end result of almost three years of research and development at an off-the-shelf ticket of under £300. Interested? Let's take a closer look.

First off, what you're drooling over here is what you get when you plant your cash on the counter. Nothing less. Even the pads and pegs are included. For quantity of equipment, only one other complete machine comes close but you'll pay at least £100 more for it. It takes more than a stack of good components to make a good freestyle bike though. So what has the CW got to offer?

First off, the Generation III California has the looks. No other bike we've tested has ever aroused so many admiring glances wherever we took it. Some have got more attention (notably a totally orange ▶



1986 will be THE year for freestyle, and if the factory bosses have anything to do with it, THE year for C.W. With bikes like the California Freestyle to aim at the competition, you'd better believe them. This bike can rip.



◁ WAY better than the original version, the new rear platform gets maximum points for practicality. Note the mounting of the seat post clamp — a hot tip to gain even more standing space.

VDC Changa Freestyler) but NO other bike has drawn such favourable comment from everyone that saw it. Our own test bike was finished in pale blue with matching bars (CW freestyle items of course) and white componentry though it's also available in lavender, green or black with black components on the last one and white on the rest.

If they all look as good as the blue bike then it'll be a tough choice

deciding which one to buy. Superb colours are no use if they don't stay on but again CW have got their act together and produced a finish that not only looks killer when new, but stays looking good when other thinner and poorer quality painted frames have become scratched and tatty. Even the hard to get at nooks and crannies get a thick, glossy coat that's a match for any other painted frame on the market. Considering the high-priced opposition, that's no mean statement to make.

CW's quality of manufacture is a mixture of very good and excellent. One or two areas of the frame, most notably where the top

△ Now these are trick. For the rider who prefers pegs to platforms but doesn't want to risk damaging his axle. CW bring you the ideal solution: dropout mounted pegs that screw in when you need them, come off just as quickly when you don't. State of the art.

◁ A California beach? Well, not quite but the CW will cause a stir wherever you take it. Cool colours, hot componentry and handling to match. All for less than £300. What more do you want? The skateboard's pretty hot too.

tube standing platform joins the top tube, could be a little neater though the weld quality around the headtube, seat tube and dropouts is beyond reproach — neat, smooth and strong. Particularly nice features are the drilled front fork legs and the mounting points for the rear pegs. A judgment on their quality can be made by inserting the pegs themselves — both front and rear can be turned by hand smoothly and quickly and once fitted are totally solid. Those pegs are of the same quality as the frame, though why those on the rear don't share the same gnarled rubber surface as those on the forks is a mystery. Instead they're smooth, polished and just right for slipping off. A few pence invested in a foot of griptape solves the problem.

In terms of on-board equipment, the CW California gives away surprisingly little to some of the more expensive competition. Most of the componentry is big-name stuff that's quite simply the

very best available. The Skyway Tufts, Dia Compe brakes and CW bars fall into this category. The stem and pedals don't.

To look at the stem, you'd think it was RedLine's celebrated Forklifter system but don't be

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fooled. It is in fact a cheaper copy and, it must be said, cannot match the performance of the original. Tighten up the Allen bolts and it'll grip the bars adequately enough, but do the same to the Potts mod stem bolt and the corners disappear like they were going out of fashion, leaving an untidy rounded head that's impossible to tighten properly. We had to change it for a better quality item, we suspect most California owners will have to do the same. Shame.

The pedals too weren't able to stand up to the customary abuse the test crew handed out. Fine for racing, the Victor Beartraps just couldn't cope with the stress put on them by a barrage of freestyle tricks courtesy of Mr. Irwin. Crunch. Two hours into the test session the white cages were looking bent and twisted. Admittedly we gave them more punishment in those two hours than they'd normally get in a couple of months in the hands of a ▶

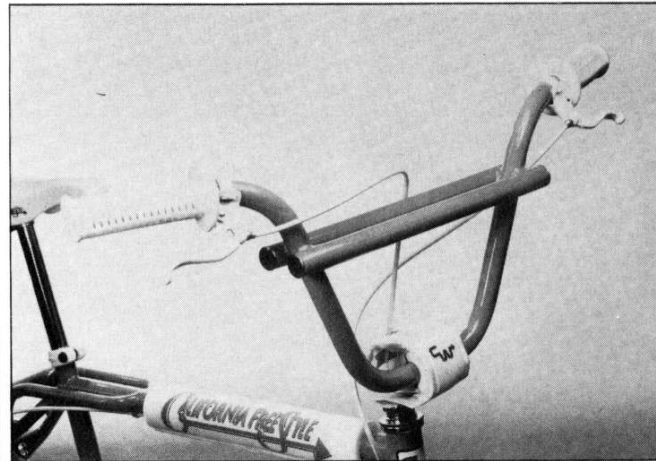
'normal' rider, but even so, we'd like to see them replaced by a more durable platform.

Moans over, the rest of the bike performed faultlessly. It feels right from the first time you climb aboard and the more you push it the better it performs. If that's your first priority (and it should be), then you WON'T be disappointed. This California has come a long way from the first . . . and it shows.

All the time CW put into refining the original design has been time well spent. The rear platform was universally pronounced to be totally dialled, providing a secure base for Vans during hectic framestands, though a hot tip here: mount the seat clamp the wrong way round to give the maximum amount of foot space behind the seat tube where it's needed most. The front end's tight enough to make the bike usefully whippy on the ground and the whole bike feels ready to cope with anything you want to throw at it.

The feature of the bike that EVERYONE freaked over was the pegs. In fitting screw-off pegs front and rear, CW have got an old problem totally wired. It's a fact that, while the trend has led towards bolt-on rear footstands, a lot of riders still prefer to use pegs. The advantage over the platform is that your foot angle can be altered, making back hops a bunch easier. Up to now, the disadvantage has been the stress put on the rear wheel axle by simply screwing pegs onto the ends of the spindle. Not any more. The CW pegs (supplied with the bike) simply screw into mountings situated in the best position possible — on the thick rear dropouts. All the advantages of of pegs and none of the disadvantages. Thanks CW.

If anything, the front pegs are even better. Thankfully, the old welded-on stubs at the top of the forks have been forgotten to be replaced by state-of-the-art screw-in, rubber coated removable items that position exactly where you want them. Andy loved them — just screw them on when you need them and take them off when you don't — for example, when going for air or doing Miami Hoppers. You don't even have to carry a spanner



△ *Up-front trickery includes new, even better freestyle bars, A'me grips and Tech 4 levers. The full padset, by the way is included in the price.*

around, they'll go on or off by hand.

Everything else drew similar praise. The brakes are superb, made better by the provision of welded-on cable guides not only on the forks but also running to the rear brake along the underside of the top tube. The seat, crank and chainring/spider are all tough, durable and well suited to the frame and the wheels; well, they're Tuffs. What more can you say?

Lastly, the CW freestyle tyres are among the best. The right width, well rounded and with just the right amount of grip. Good freestyle rubber.

Testing the California made us realise just what an under-rated bike the CW is. Okay, so the first California wasn't the most popular freestyle machine, but freestyle has come a long way since then, and so has the CW. This, the third generation bike, is as good as ANYTHING from the competition. It looks great, handles brilliantly and, for the most part, reeks of quality from front to back.

Plus there's an added bonus: the price. By the time you read this the California, exactly as tested here will be in the shops for under £300. No final price has been fixed yet, but it could be a lot less. Look around, see what the others offer for the same money, and you'll agree . . . there's no competition.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### PRICE & MEASUREMENT:

**Complete Bike Price:** £299 or less  
**Finish Available:** Blue, lavender, green or black  
**Complete Bike Weight (as tested):** 31lbs  
**Head Tube Length:** 4ins  
**Handlebar Rise:** 8.5ins  
**Handlebar Width:** 28ins  
**Top Tube OD:** 1 1/8ins  
**Down Tube OD:** 1 1/8ins  
**Fork Leg OD:** 1 1/8ins  
**Bottom Bracket Height:** 12.5ins  
**Wheelbase:** 35.5ins  
**Rear Section Length:** 15ins

### COMPONENTS

**Frame:** CW California Freestyle, 4130 chrome-moly  
**Forks:** CW California Freestyle, 4130 chrome-moly  
**Handlebar:** CW California Freestyle, 4130 chrome-moly  
**Grips:** A'me Tri (cams fitted to test bike?)  
**Headset:** YST  
**Wheels:** Skyway Tuff II (built-in coaster)  
**Tyres:** CW Freestyle  
**Brakes:** Dia Compe FS880 (front), 901 (rear)  
**Brake Pads:** Dia Compe  
**Brake Levers:** Dia Compe Tech IV  
**Pedals:** Victor Beartrap  
**Crank:** Sugino chrome-moly  
**Front Sprocket:** Unbranded 44T  
**Seat:** CW Freestyle  
**Seat Post:** CW  
**Seat Clamp:** Unbranded  
**Accessories:** Standing pegs front and rear, full pad set, welded-on cable guides.  
**Purpose:** Expert/professional freestyle  
**Age Range:** 14 upwards  
**Quality of Finish:** Excellent  
**Quality of Welding:** Very good  
**Quality of Componentry:** Mostly very good — two exceptions (see text).  
**Geometry:** Excellent  
**Miscellaneous Drive:** Excellent all-rounder. Very good value for money. Looks superb. Coaster brake anchor should be thicker. Superb handling.  
**Distributor:** HotWheels, 1145 Christchurch Road, Boscombe East, Bournemouth, Dorset.  
**Test Input:** Mike Watt, N.J., Andy Watt and the Test Crew.  
*Special Thanks to Jason at Southport Cycles.*