

BMX ACTION
EXCLUSIVE
test

DB's REACTOR

WRITTEN & RIDDEN BY MAD DOG

You can tell a lot about a bike just by sitting on it. Most race bikes that are real inexpensive feel tall, cramped, and flimsy. The stems have no reach, the tires are thin and cheap, and the bars feel ten feet high. Cheap bikes never feel anything like your own race machine. Every once in a while, much to my delight, BMX ACTION gets to test a full-on PRO caliber bike. This month, after a five month wait, the Diamond Back Reactor was in my filthy hands and begging for abuse.

When I first sat on the Reactor I could tell it was a class bike. The bars had a pretty flat bend and they weren't too tall. At 28 1/4 inches wide, the new DB horns are definitely pro sized, but by hackin' off a few inches they could be perfect for most teenagers. The new ACS brake lever was long, powerful, easy to remove, and just plain killer—'bout time somebody started using a good brake handle. The Oakley B-1B grips felt good and offered a little nostalgic value to the whole package. All these great components were sitting on top of another new/quality DB product—the stem. At first glance the neck looked exactly like a TNT. The aluminum head dropped down a little

instead of being at a 90 degree angle to the bolt. The neck worked hot and was probably designed this way because Harry has used a TNT for quite some time. The bars slipped forward a few times in the first 20 minutes due to the paint at the base of the bars. This is bound to happen with all new bikes, so try to sand the paint off when you get the bike or just let it flake off when you're riding. Just be sure you carry your allen wrench for the first day of breaking in the bike.

When I looked over the bars and down at the front wheel I almost passed out, I couldn't believe it—Diamond Back actually put a 20 X 2.125 Comp III on the bow. With the big lever and the fat tire I was beginning to think this was my metal. Heaven was rapidly approaching. Down near my foot area, the 3-piece aluminum cranks were looking very powerful and the SR Speedtrap pedals were beggin' for abuse. The SR's, I believe, are the best pedals in BMX right now. They aren't super expensive like some and they don't seize up like certain round pedals. The SR's are also the easiest to add Urchins to—you don't have to re-tap the threads to accept the new bolts.

One of the other things that surprised me on the DB was the upside down ACS U-brake called the Gripper. The cable was routed under the down tube and was exposed without a housing in the mid-section. Under the bottom bracket shell was a teflon guide to direct the cable. All of this technology definitely paid off in smooth, accurate, responsive stoppers. My test bike wasn't as dialed-in as Harry's and the brakes still worked good. Some people feel U-brakes work too good for



Did all of you trivia freaks read the back of Mad Dog's jersey? Now guess what it means: [A] He's broke/has no money. [B] The bike is (or is about to be) broken. [C] He's goin' for broke, Crews-in' at Honda Hills.

If you guessed B, you're WAAAAAY off. Except for some slight fork probs that will be fixed on production bikes, The Reactor held up AWESOME. If you said C, you're close and could be right. But if any of you knew the Dog, you'd immediately guess A.

MELTDOWN



Big, bad, and pretty rad—Matt Hadan, freshly reunited with DB and lovin' it. The Reactor frame was a bit short for him after racing a Free Agent Limo all last year, so Diamond Back might be getting a works bikes made for him.

BMX and lock up too easy. Before this test, I had believed the same, but after using a fine tuned set like the ACS' I could see how progressive the brake can be. For tuning info, read the how-to article by Steve Blackey in the September '87 issue of BMX ACTION or refer to Eugene A. Sloane's Bicycle Maintenance Manual for detailed instructions (try your library for this literary work).

The Reactor had a 1.75 Comp III in the back and a cool set of high flange, sealed bearing Suzue rollers laced to the classic Araya 7X rims. Not only did they choose a great hub and a superb wheel, Diamond Back also used black aluminum nipples. This may seem to be all looks and no function, but the weight saved is actually significant since they are a rotating mass. A 43/16 gear was sported and a 1/8 inch chain turned it all. A 3/32 would be better and Harry is doing his best to get one put on the production bikes.

With all these buccu-buck components you're probably wondering how the thing rode and what came apart. As far as geometry, the Diamond Back was different, interesting, intriguing, colorful, titilating, original, etc. In a market where almost all bikes are designed out of comparison, DB decided to use personal input from their pro team of Eddy and Harry. The result was a highly responsive specialized bike for hardcore racing. As with most high performance products that are daring and eccentric, some people love it and some people hate it. The Diamond Back was made for a person—not a sheet of statistics, so not everybody is totally satisfied.

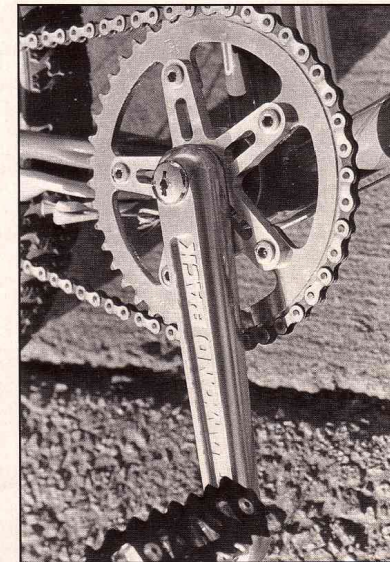
I took the bike around the So. Cal race circuit and gathered comments during evaluation. Some people said, "The front end is too short." Others said, "This bike turns sharp. I love it!" Opinions varied like night and day on this bike. At my local track, an intermediate rider rode the Reactor and dug on it. He described it as a BMX Ferrari. My friend "Big E" thought the bike was too small and way steep (he's 6 foot and 200 pounds). Personally, I felt the high bottom bracket and no fork rake was the best I've ridden. Local So. Cal. hot shoe Joe Tippit felt the bike was a change from the normal and he liked it. Paul Green believed the bike was good if you don't get squirrely—like him. Having a lot of test input is always good, but I can't read other

people's minds, so I'm going to describe the handling as I felt it.

Gate starts on the Reactor were excellent once you got used to them. Your weight should be a bit more centered than back. Raw power gets the DB out of the hole, not finesse. Pull hard, push big time, and grunt. Your starts will be consistent on the bike—no frills, just powerful pulling. No tricks. Speed jumping requires you to bend your knees. The high bottom bracket must be able to suck up into your body. As with most short front ended bikes, the front wheel will come down so you don't have to worry about looping. Jumping the Reactor seems to center around tight, sharp, steep situations. The DB wants to be precise—not flailing 20 feet in the air. In turns, the bike needs to be controlled. This is no Harley and you can't slack off like a hessian. Put that outside elbow up and carve. The big rubber up front will handle it. All of these things (starts, jumps, and turns) are complimented by a unique design built into the frame. This new innovation was designed by Harry and involves weight distribution. The tubing on the Reactor is thick on the down tube and the lower chain stays and thinner on the top tube and seat stays. This puts the bulk weight down low and lets the bike handle better, giving it a much more stable feel. Just one



Frothing at the mouth, the Mad Dog attacked the mailman . . . er, I mean, the long awaited DB. After six jumps he said it was the first bike he's ever ridden that felt just like his own—short, stubby, comfortable, etc . . .



The main reason for Diamond Back's late release of The Reactor was crank evaluation. The final product, seen here, came quite a ways from the first prototypes which resembled Cook Bros. We dug on 'em and would only suggest possible pinch bolts like the GT's.



All we can say is before you buy ANY other BMX bike, go to your nearest Diamond Back dealer and check out a Reactor. And if the frame fits, ride it. This guy here, Harry Leary, seen powering through a berm at Flem's, is the guy responsible for making it 100 percent raceable and sized for under 6-foot tall racers.

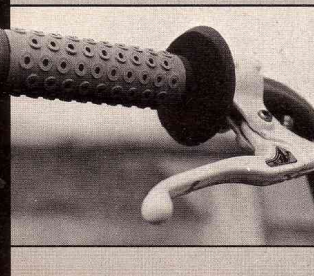
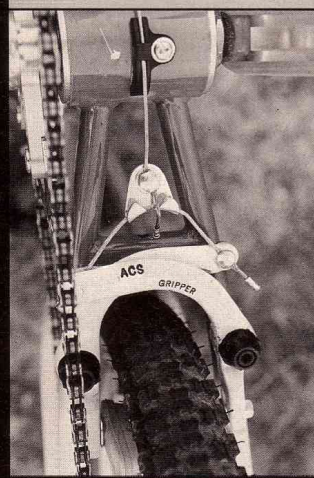
more high tech aspect of the new Diamond Back.

So what went wrong this month, you ask? The forks bent out a tad on a crazy triple jump at Honda Hills. A jump that shouldn't have been tried. None of the guys on the D.B. team bent their identical forks. The left crank arm kept coming loose—solved easily by putting some lock tight on the spindle nut. Keep tightening the bolt until the crank seats itself. Ten speed cranks are like this as well. After a few days it won't come loose that much. The chain

occasionally hits the upside-down brake, making a slapping sound, but don't worry—just tighten the chain a little. Let it spin freely, though. And finally, believe it or not, the seat DID NOT bend (I want this one).

All in all, I'd say the new '88 Diamond Back Reactor is pretty nuclear. Watch out for meltdowns. Is DB really moving their plant to 3 Mile Island? And is their new cruiser going to be called "24 Dead at Chernobyl?" If you've got the bucks and the skill and are under 5'-9", think about buying this Reactor. ■

S P E C S



HUBS: Suzue, sealed, high flange.
SPOKES: 36, chrome, 14 gauge.
NIPPLES: 36, black, alloy.
TIRES: Tioga Comp III's, 20 X 2.125 in front, 20 X 1.75 in rear.
BRAKES: ACS Gripper.
BRAKE PADS: ACS.
BRAKE LEVER(S): ACS 6770.
CRANKS: Diamond Back, 3-piece, aluminum, 180 mm.
BOTTOM BRACKET BEARINGS: Tioga sealed.
FRONT SPROCKET: Sugino 43 tooth.
REAR SPROCKET: Sunfour 16 tooth, chrome-moly cog.
SEAT: Diamond Back.
SEAT POST: Tioga, 15 inches of straight chrome-moly.
SEAT POST CLAMP: Tioga, aluminum, white.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

PURPOSE: 100 percent hardcore racing.
AGE RANGE: 14 and over.
QUALITY OF FINISH: RAD! Colorful. New wave. Good graphics (stickers).
QUALITY OF WELDING: KILLER. Small beads, occasional glitch, Taiwanese.
QUALITY OF COMPONENTRY: THE BEST! Ultimate brakes, futuristic in technology. Awesome cranks—'cept they could maybe use a better spindle or pinch bolts...
GEOMETRY: Strange. SUUUUUUJPA! steep! Short front end—maybe too short? Perfect for someone 5' 7" or 5' 8".
HANDLING: Different. Light on top, heavy on bottom, because of Harry's tubing specs. Way quick, stay awake at all times. Enjoy the ride.
MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS: "Dude, I've seriously never seen a bike that shows more signs of geometry experimentation and product development. It's obvious that some serious input went into the Reactor. Not like other companies who just use the first proto-type and don't listen to their riders' comments."... "Is this a Turbo 2 or what?"... "This bike is so race it wouldn't let me do a helicopter without getting my foot stuck on the tire."... "This thing rides killer. Are you sure Gork built it?"... "For a while, I thought nothing would bend. Then came Honda Hills and the new Diamond Back Harley".... "Throw some ice on this Reactor dude!"... "Where are the brakes?"... "Amazing... a fat front tire, it must be a mistake."... "How 'bout bike of the year?"... "Cats and dogs living together... total mayhem".... "I wouldn't kick it out of my garage for dripping grease."... "I love it!"
TEST AREAS: "Flem's" in Diamond Bar and Honda Hills in Azusa.
TEST INPUT: Harold Leary, Edwardo King, Mathew Hadan, Very-mad-but-not-angry Dog, and Gorkler.
MANUFACTURER: WSI/Diamond Back
 1837 DeHavilland
 Newbury Park, CA
 91320
 (818) 499-0421

COMPLETE BIKE PRICE: \$550.00 to 590.00.
FINISHES AVAILABLE: Two choices—grey front/aqua middle/white rear or chrome front and back with a black mid section.
COMPLETE BIKE WEIGHT: 25 1/2 pounds.
FRAME WEIGHT: 4 pounds, 15 1/2 ounces without brake. (5 pounds, 8 1/2 ounces with rear ACS Gripper.)
FORK WEIGHT: 1 pound, 12 1/2 ounces.
HANDLEBAR RISE: 8 inches.
HANDLEBAR WIDTH: 28 1/4 inches.
TOP TUBE O.D.: 1 inch.
BOTTOM TUBE O.D.: 1 1/4 inches.
HEAD TUBE O.D.: 1 inch.
HEAD TUBE ANGLE: 77 degrees.
SEAT TUBE ANGLE: 70 degrees.
BOTTOM BRACKET HEIGHT: 11 5/8 inches.
WHEELBASE: 34 1/2 to 35 3/4 inches.
REAR END LENGTH: 14 3/4 to 16 inches.

COMPONENTS

FRAME: Diamond Back Reactor, 4130 chrome-moly throughout.
FORK: Diamond Back Reactor, 4130 chrome-moly throughout.
HANDLEBARS: Diamond Back, 4130 also.
HANDLEBAR STEM: Diamond Back, aluminum head and chrome-moly shaft, TNT type.
GRIPS: Oakley B-1B's.
HEADSET: Tioga Bear Trap 2.
RIMS: Araya 7X.