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OFFICIAL TEST

KUWAHARA

THE NURD HERD TESTS A HOT NUMBER FROM THE LAND OF GODZILLA

STORY BY LEN WEED
PHOTOS BY BOB OSBORN

The first thing Building Leapin' Jones said was, "What's this thing called, a Kowa-how-are-ya?"

"Nah, it's a Kuwa-Haro, replied Trick Teamer Bob, taking a day away from the design board and nearby practice ramp.

"I think it's a Cowabunga," added Buff, puffing as he arrived late. He'd just dreamed up a new product in chemistry class. A pain reliever. He figured he'd call it Buff-erin. Nobody had the heart to tell him.

Anyway, the correct spelling is Kuwahara. And if the guys were a bit perplexed about the name, that's understandable. The Japanese bike has only been over here in the U.S. for a few months. There's always an initial sales resistance to new items, whether it's selling ice boxes to Eskimos or thermal underwear to desert dwellers. It takes time for the new-kid-on-the-block to catch on. So . . . altogether now. Follow the bouncing ball. Ku-wa-ha-ra.

The Kuwahara is a racer, so the mighty MFMobile headed south to Corona for some track time. Building Leapin' Jones came along because he heard about a new hous-

The Kowa-how-are-ya . . . uh, Kuwa-Haro . . . uh, Kowabunga . . . uh, Kuwahara. Whatever you call it, this is full-race machinery, right out of the crate.



Buff doin' a Jones. Some day Buff is going to invent a Buff.

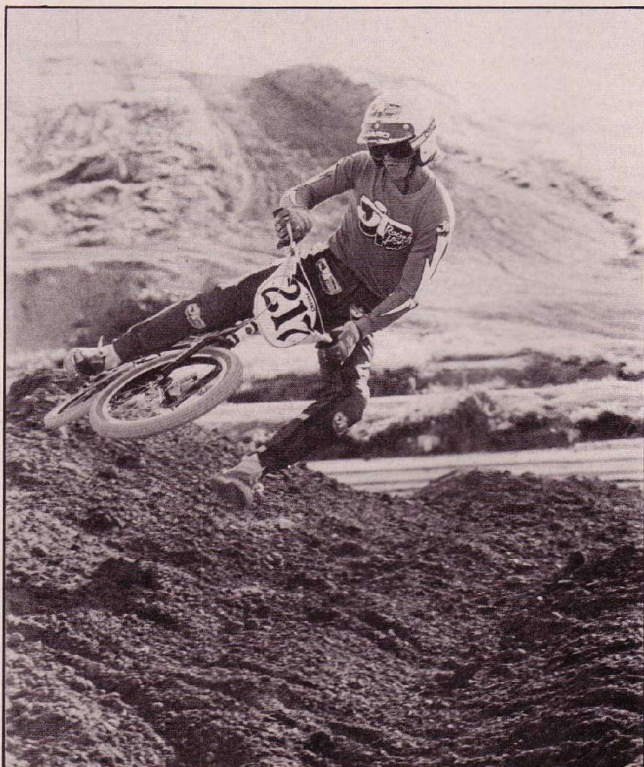
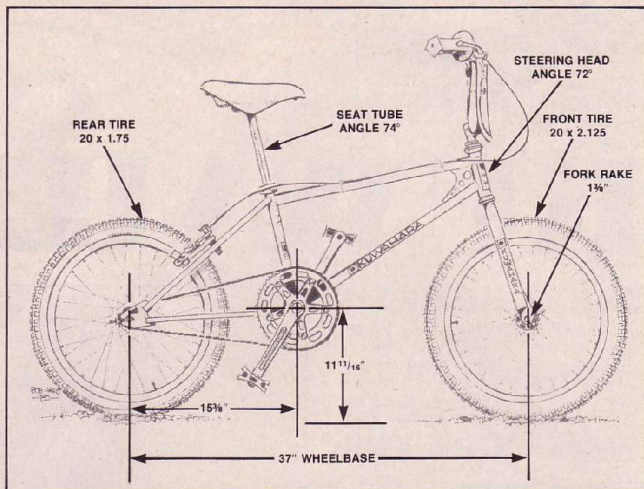
ing development by the track. He wanted to jump over it. Haro came along because his pencil broke. Buff came along to give us some off-the-cuff-Buff comments.

The Kuwahara is quite light. An

even twenty-three pounds. Kuwahara makes the frame and forks, using Tange chrome-moly tubing. There are Sun Tour parts everywhere, like the stem, hubs, cranks, spokes, seat post, and seat post

KUWAHARA SPECIFICATIONS

FINISH: Electrostatically applied powder epoxy
COLORS: Black with gold, blue with gold, white with blue
WEIGHT: 23 pounds
RETAIL COST: Around \$300, West Coast
FRAME: Kuwahara, constructed with Tange chrome-moly tubing, heli-arc (TIG) welded
FORKS: Kuwahara chrome-moly
HANDLEBARS: Red Line approved, Micro Line size, chrome-moly V bars
GRIPS: Osaka vinyl
STEM: Sun Tour forged aluminum
RIMS: Ukai box aluminum
SPOKES: .080/36
HUBS: Sun Tour high-flange aluminum
BRAKES: Dia-Compe MX-1000 side-pull caliper, rear only
TIRES: IRC BMX Racer skinwalls
PEDALS: KKT Lightning
CRANKS: Sun Tour VX 170mm (6.7 inches) aluminum cotterless
FRONT SPROCKET: Sun Tour 44T aluminum chainwheel
REAR SPROCKET: Sun Tour 16T freewheel
SEAT: Taihei Elina nylon, unpadding
SEAT POST: Sun Tour fluted aluminum
SEAT POST CLAMP: Sun Tour aluminum
FOR MORE INFO: See your local Kuwahara dealer
MANUFACTURER: Kuwahara Cycles Limited Osaka, Japan
DISTRIBUTOR: Everything Bicycles 15000 Staff Court Gardena, California 90248 Tel: (213) 532-7261



The Kuwahara is a hot cookie. With the exception of the bar-gooseneck power position, we'd rate it up with the best.



Boy, you put out a good product and everybody jumps on it. MX-1000 by Dia-Compe . . . strong, light, and rigid. Trick calipers. But their shoes are lame. Go for Kool-Stops or Mathausers.



The Sun Tour forged aluminum gooseneck is cosmo equipment . . . but better suited for smaller guys' bikes than for the full size Kuwahara.

clamp. The saddle clamp features a safety bar over the post. That means a loose seat clamp and a long jump won't conspire to leave you singing soprano forever.

So it's light, and it looks good. The question is, what can it do? Buff and Building's initial comments: "The bike feels really good. The bars are a little low and narrow for larger riders." Leapin' decided that the bike was built for a short rider with long arms. Picture L'il Robert Em-



Buff, landing the Kuwahara on a moonscape test site. This bike has all the right geometry.



Haro, approaching rendezvous with Saturn III. We should never, never have tested a race bike in this manner. But you know how the Nurd Herd is . . . mean, vicious hombies. Bite, kick, scratch, stomp. They bent the forks and twinkled the rear Ukal.

rich with Kareem Abdul Jabbar's arms and you got it. Haro didn't say anything. He had found a piece of burnt wood on the ground and was busy making charcoal sketches of some anthills.

Local shoe Greg Keyes also climbed aboard the test bike to do some berm blasting. He said the bike washed out on him at first. He shifted his weight back some and it worked just super in the corners. Which is neat if it works for Greg,

but is kinda weird when you think about it. You shift your weight back to make the front stick better? That seems bass-ackwards, but like the French chef said to the ant eater, "Whatever works for you."

The mighty bash and mash BMXA

Greg Keyes, our guest test wooble, knows how to bake those cakes. We rated the new IRC skinwall tires right up there with Cycle Pro Snakebellies and Competition II's.





... like a bird.

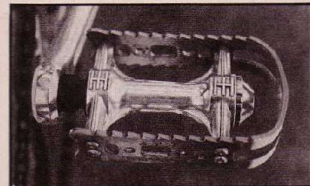
crew came up with a couple of suggestions for personalizing the Kuwahara. Both had to do with improving the power position for their sizes. They wanted a taller gooseneck that placed the bars a bit forward—something like a Red Line or a Pro-Neck or Tuf-Neck. And they'd replace the lower Micro Line bars with something like Pro Line bars.

Everybody thought the Dia-Compe MX-1000 caliper was super, big and beefy and really capable of doing the job. The Dia-Compe also has a quick-release feature that allows for almost instant offing of the rear wheel.

The brake shoes were about as effective as using ten year old flypaper to slow down a 747. The hot tip would be either Kool-Stops or Mathausers.

Out on the track, everybody pretended they were little persons with long arms. The Kuwahara would really stick in the corners. The IRC Racer tires were judged super. Haro somehow remembered that he runs them on his own bike.

The 37 inch wheelbase seemed just right. Again, the only complaint



KKT Lightnings. Light and strong. Could use a stickier tooth pattern.

was the slightly low and rearward power position of the Micro Line bars and Sun Tour stem.

A mini-Purple-Heart went to the rear Ukai rim. It got a little twink. That's what happens when you cross a tweak with a kink. But considering what it survived, that's great.

Survived? Yep. Remember we said ol' Building Leapin' was along? He couldn't find that housing tract to jump so he commandeered a 'dozer and started landscaping. He came up with a ten foot tall dirt wall, nearly vertical at the top, that

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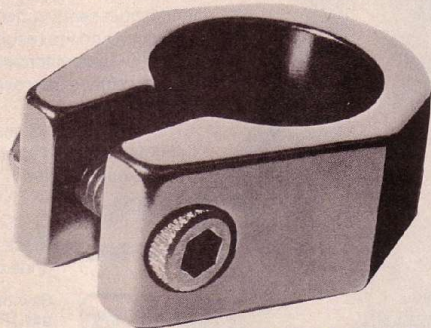
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KUWAHARA

gave the test trio enough air time to get cited by the FAA for flying without a license. What was neat was the marshmallow mound of dirt on the other side. In other words, the guys could get totally craaaaazeeeee.

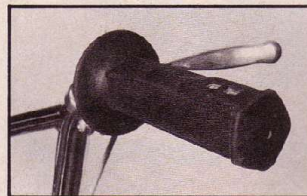
Jones even got on the horn trying to call out the water truck to make a pond. Then he wanted to borrow a shark or two from Marineland to make it really rad. Buff suggested a piranha because they're littler. Maybe he just wanted more time to sell some Buff-erin to whom-ever jumped short.

The Kuwahara was still going strong at day's end. 'Course the forks, as Buff noted, did get choppered. That's pain reliever chemist talk for raked out, stretched. The guys added about 5/8 inch to the wheelbase. Since everything up front is chrome-moly, that gives you some idea of how brutal the jumping was.

All this sky time led to the First Annual Great Rate the Aviator and

or a Takagi Cr-Mo one-piece jobber on there and he'd give it a nine. That's mighty fine since a ride on a true ten causes you to shave your hair off, build a set of goose feather wings and take off for Tibet.

Jones, who leaps from continent to continent just like the Incredible



The Osaka vinyl grips are kind of funky looking at first. But they are surprisingly comfortable and have good surface tack. Hot grips.

Hulk, but with more style, abstained. He doesn't need a bike for jumping. He just takes one along for appearance sake.

So the day ended, and the tempestuous trio were astounded that a mere mechanical creation could survive what amounted to six months of thrasher testing. Jones was worried that he was slipping. Buff was worried because he heard somebody else was using his name to sell aspirin. And Haro was worried because he couldn't think of a name for a good accessory brake lever. But three Naugleburgers later, nobody was worried.

Meanwhile, what about the Kuwahara? How about sayin' the geometry was great, the wheelbase was great, and it flies fine. Make the power position changes if you need to—otherwise run it like it is. Oh, yeah. Don't let Jones, Haro or the Mad Chemist take it flying at Corona.

Our conclusion, while wiping some Naugleburger sauce out of the way of our eye teeth so we can see what we're saying: This bike is as good as the best. It doesn't have the prestige or image of a well known name yet, being so new, but the word should get around. After all, with a name like Kuwahara, it has to handle... Hara... Handle... Hey, Bob. How about Haro Handles?... Pssst. Pass the Naugle sauce, will ya? ■



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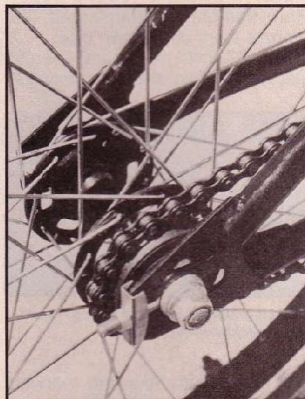
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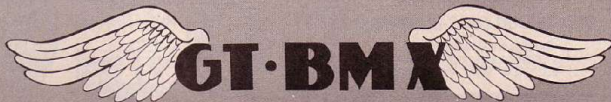
The south end of the Kuwahara: Sun Tour hub, Sun Tour freewheel, and a single chain adjuster.

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Haro gave the Kuwahara an eight, which is purty good, provided it had Red Line Pro Line bars, Flight Cranks and double-clamp goose-neck. Buff was even more impressed. Put Dura-Ace alloy cranks

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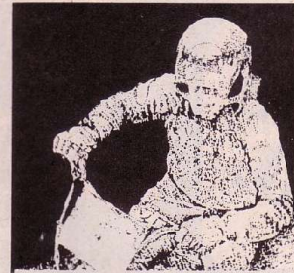
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