



If you want an inexpensive freestyler, just add a front brake and coaster brake, and you've got it. Mike Buff behind the bars.



KUWAHARA NOVA

IT'S A STAR!

nova / 'nō-və/ n: a new star that suddenly increases its light output tremendously and then fades away in a few months or years.

Is Kuwahara's Nova shining like the nova in the definition? You bet.

It's a fact for sure that econo-qual is fully happenin' in the complete bike market. And we've been fully dazzled with some of the high-qual, low dollar scoots showing up. Five years ago nobody would have believed you could go out and race competitively on a bike that went for under \$250. If you'd suggested it even last year people would have laughed. Well, they're not laughing any more. These days you can get an amazing amount of bike for your buck, and the Kuwahara Nova is just one more example of this new breed.

Will this Nova burn itself out in a few months or years? Don't count on it. Kuwahara has a hot number here. They're not messing around. And surprisingly enough it completely withstood everything Buff and R.L. could throw at it.

Nope. No burnout here.

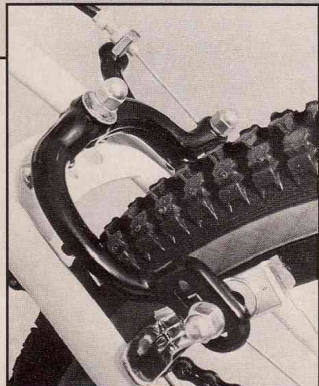
GOODIES SUPREME

The Nova goes for \$240. A price that's not too high, but it is up to-

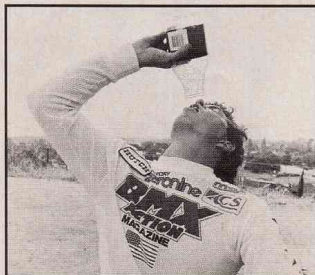
KUWAHARA NOVA



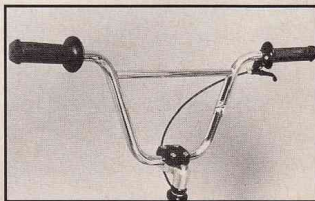
The Kuwahara Nova. While most economical bikes seem like they're geared for radsters in the 12 to 13 year old range, the Kuwahara will fit guys that are a few years older. Like all the way up to 16 or so for racing. Bitchen! Do you want to go racing for \$240? The Nova'll do it.



Spend a little time dialin' the Dia-Compe standard caliper and you'll have plenty of stopping power. Not as killer as the Dia-Compe MX calipers, but very good.



It was hotter than one of R.L. and Buff's BMXA Trick Team shows out at Honda Hills, where Clint and Harry Leary do a lot of their practicing, and where we did our testing this month. The Gatorade disappeared right quick.



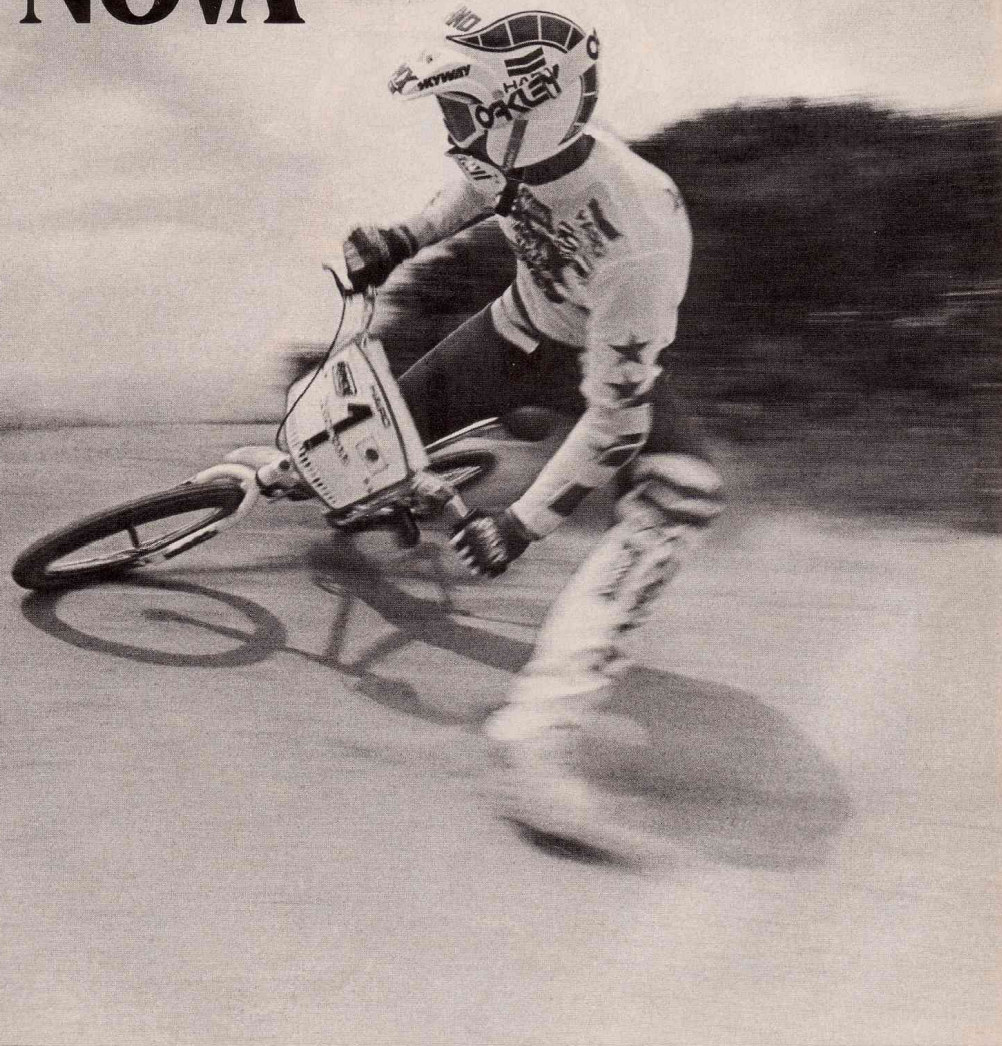
We couldn't find anything to complain about in the steering components - 'cept the grips. The bars are totally sano. Plenty wide enough, and the bend was dialed, too. The WIN gooseneck never slipped.



Photo by Steve Gberson

Clint Miller, stylin' heavily up at Honda Hills.

KUWAHARA NOVA



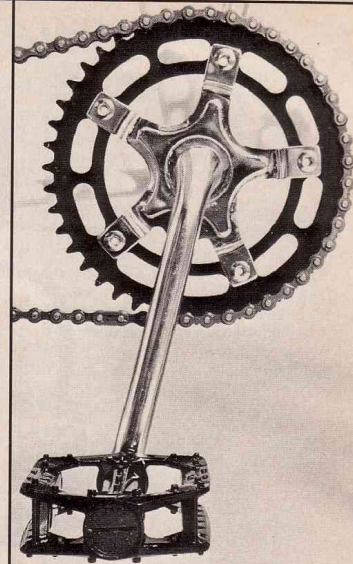
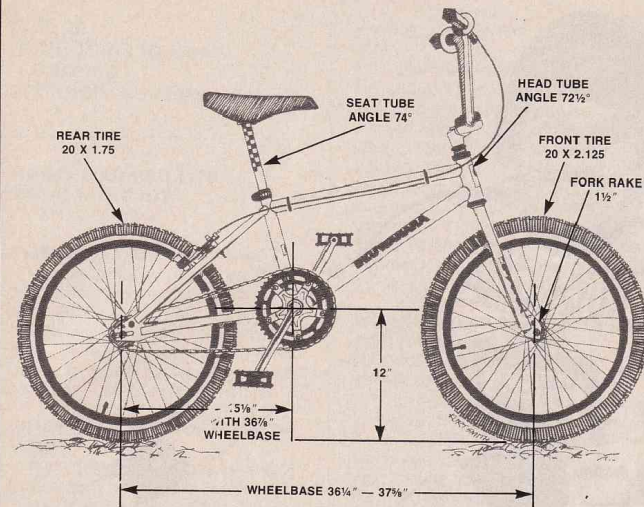
Banzai flattrackin is completely comfy on the mighty Nova. This is due in part to the traction afforded by the IRC's and partly to the stable nature of the Nova's handling.

wards the top of the economy class. Quite a few of the new strain of econo-racers originate in Taiwan. Not so with the Nova. Its frame and fork are built in Japan — just like the rest of Kuwahara's bikes.

Construction for the frame goes like this: the front triangle (including head tube and bottom bracket shell) are chrome-moly. The rear triangle is high-tensile steel. Several companies have built frames this way in

the past (most notably Mongoose, who originated the idea), and it's proven itself to be a very reliable method of construction. The forks are completely chrome-moly.

KUWAHARA NOVA



CHAIN: K.E.C., 1/8 inch.
SEAT: Elina UL seat/seat post combo.
SEAT POST CLAMP: SunTour Arrow, aluminum.

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

PURPOSE: Racing (up to and including expert). High qual, low budget streeter.
AGE RANGE: 11-17 street, 12-16 racing.
QUALITY OF FINISH: Excellent.
QUALITY OF WELDING: Very good to excellent.

GEOMETRY: Excellent.
HANDLING: Very neutral in both cornering and jumping . . . Didn't do anything funny without warning . . . The tires are designed for dry hardpack — and they work well there.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS: Front wheel fit is perfect . . . The back wheel is about 1/8 inch too wide but that's cool 'cause it gives you a little room to mess with chain alignment . . . Both the bottom bracket and headset cups went in and out without a fight — they also weren't sloppy . . . We've said it before, but we'll say it again — it needs a lay-back seat post . . . Everything survived intact . . . Look for a new pair of grips — your palms will thank you . . . If you spend a little time dialing the brakes, they'll work really well . . . The tire setup using two different tread patterns is different, but it works.

TEST INPUT: Clint Miller, R.L. Osborn, Mike Buff, Steve Giberson, Windy Osborn.

Distributor:
Everything Bicycles
23145 Kashiwa Ct.
Torrance, California
90505
Tel: (213) 325-6300

PRICE & SPECS

COMPLETE BIKE PRICE: Chrome, \$240.00. Painted, \$230.00

FINISHES AVAILABLE: White or chrome with black and chrome components. Black or blue with silver components.

COMPLETE BIKE WEIGHT (without pads or plate): 24 pounds, 12 ounces.

FRAME WEIGHT: 4 pounds, 6 ounces.

FORK WEIGHT: 1 pound, 12 ounces.
STEERING HEAD TUBE LENGTH: 4 inches.

HANDLEBAR RISE: 8 1/2 inches.

HANDLEBAR WIDTH: 27 inches.

TOP TUBE O.D.: 1 1/8 inches.

DOWN TUBE O.D.: 1 1/4 inches.

FORK LEG O.D.: 1 inch.

BOTTOM BRACKET TYPE: Large.

COMPONENTS

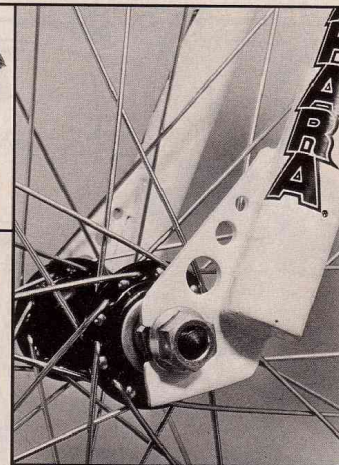
FRAME: Kuwahara Nova, front triangle chrome-moly, rear triangle high-tensile steel.

FORK: Kuwahara Nova, chrome-moly.

HANDLEBAR: Kuwahara, high-tensile steel.

HANDLEBAR STEM: WIN, aluminum and chrome-moly.

GRIPS: O.G.K., vinyl.



HEADSET: Hatta MX-II.

RIMS: Ukai, aluminum.

SPOKES: 36, .080, with aluminum nipples.

HUBS: SunTour, low-flange, aluminum.

TIRES: IRC.

BRAKE PADS: Dia-Compe.

BRAKE LEVER: Dia-Compe Tech 3.

BRAKE CABLE: Dia-Compe.

PEDALS: KKT SMX, aluminum and chrome-moly.

CRANK: Takagi or Sugino (depending on availability), one-piece forged, heat-treated, 175mm.

BOTTOM BRACKET SET: Hatta.

FRONT SPROCKET: Takagi steel chainwheel, 44 teeth.

SPIDER: Takagi, steel.

FREEWHEEL: SunTour, 16 teeth.



FIVE MINUTES WITH CLINT

AGE: 22
HOME TURF: La Verne,
 California
SPONSOR: Kuwahara

HOW'S MARRIED LIFE TREATING YOU?

"Good. I enjoy it."

HOW WAS YOUR WEDDING?

"It was the best time I've ever had. The reception was bitchen. I didn't get drunk and I had a great time. I can't say the same for everybody else. There were so many smashed people there. My dad was even a little bombed — and he NEVER drinks."

WHAT ELSE IS COOKIN' WITH YOU?

"I've been to Australia and England. I went to Australia for the BMX Titles Championships. Gary Ellis and I were there for two weeks."

WHO WON?

"I did. Gary got second. That was the biggest race they've ever had. Most televised, most magazines. It was their biggest deal ever. Almost 200 motos. BMX is doing good over there."

"After that we came home for almost two weeks and then left for England for the Kelloggs Series."

HOW'D YOU DO THERE?

"Third."

WHO BEAT YOU?

"Nelson Chanady won by two points, Eric Rupe got second, and Brian Patterson and I tied for third."

HOW DO YOU LIKE TRAVELLING TO ALL THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES?

"It's pretty good. It makes you appreciate what you've got at home a lot more. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else."

"I almost flew home from England. I called home and found out Kelly was about ready to have our baby but they told me to stay and I did. We're still waitin'. I think it's gonna be like Greg Hill's baby — it's gonna be late. Not too late I hope — I don't want to miss out on the Murray race."

WHAT ARE YOU HOPING FOR? A BOY OR A GIRL?

"A boy. I wanted a girl at first but then I started thinking about it. My sister has two boys and I really en-

joy being with them. They're neat kids."

"I was really sceptical about having children this early but the way I look at it, it's part of life. I was really worried about it 'cause moneywise I was going. 'This is gonna put me back a few years.' I've got those goals, and now I've got to change everything. It's okay. My business (Ed note: Clint's company is California Racing Designs) is progressing really well and I'm still gonna be working just as hard — if not harder."

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT FOR A CAREER AFTER RACING? WILL YOUR COMPANY DO IT FOR YOU?

"I think so. Right now it's looking like it will, but with business you can never tell. You can be on top of the world one day and be bankrupt the next. Right now it's surprising, but it's making money for me. I'm being real cautious where I spend my money and I'm not going gung-ho and spending every dime I've got on it just because I figure I'm gonna be racing another four or five years. I want to build it up to be a well established business and I don't know where it'll go from right now."

"I started out making pro signature t-shirts, and selling just a few of them through mail order. Now I'm selling those; I'm selling all types of different products, and manufacturing brake guards in large quantities for manufacturers. I don't think the brake guards will last forever, but maybe I'll get into manufacturing frames, or who knows? I kind of doubt it 'cause the frame business right now is just so competitive — if you don't have \$150,000 forget it. If anyone out there has \$150,000 to experiment with, by all means, contact me."

IS KELLY WORKING TOO?

"No, she's just relaxing. I had her quit her job about four months ago, and now she helps me a lot in the company. She does about as much work as I do. She does a lot."

IS SHE A SALARIED EMPLOYEE?

"Nope. The best kind — cheap labor."

HOW ABOUT YOUR RACING THIS YEAR?

"I haven't been too happy with it 'cause I've been stuck out of the country so much. I lose out on a bunch of publicity and I'm out of it in ABA completely. I can't even get a

plate — which doesn't really bother me a lot. But in the NBL I've fallen behind, too. The way I look at it is, I'm gonna do my best, get as much coverage as I can and try to win some more races. That's all I can do."

HOW MUCH LONGER DO YOU THINK YOU'LL BE RACING?

"Four or five years maybe. I enjoy racing. Travelling — especially winning. But the competition's so tough right now it's unbelievable. You've really done something just to make the main, let alone win it. You've really got to have an on day to win. It's really tough."

CLINT'S FACTORY KUWAHARA

FRAME: Custom Kuwahara Lazer Lite, chrome-moly.

FORK: GHP, chrome-moly. (Shhh. Don't tell Kuwahara, okay?)

HANDLEBAR: Galindo, chrome-moly with plastic crossbar and extruded aluminum clamps.

HANDLEBAR STEM: Flying W ESP, aluminum and chrome-moly.

HEADSET: ("It's a cheapie.") He also uses a B.S. Dirt Skirt.

RIMS: Araya 7X, aluminum.

SPOKES: 36, .080, with aluminum nipples.

HUBS: SunTour Superbe, aluminum.

TIRES: Tioga Comp IV, 1.75 front and rear.

TUBES: Tioga SuperLite.

BRAKE: Dia-Compe MX caliper, aluminum, rear only.

BRAKE LEVER: Dia-Compe Tech 3. (Bent out slightly for more leverage.)

BRAKE CABLE: Dia-Compe.

BRAKE PADS: Kool-Stop.

GRIPS: A'me Unitron.

PEDALS: SunTour XC-I with bolt-on LRP cages.

CRANK: Red Line Flights, three-piece tubular chrome-moly, 180mm.

SPIDER: Sugino, aluminum.

BOTTOM BRACKET SET: Hadley, sealed-bearing.

FRONT SPROCKET: Pete's Precision Products, 45 teeth.

FREEWHEEL: SunTour, 17 teeth.

CHAIN: Sedisport, 3/32".

SEAT: CyclePro Shotgun II.

SEAT POST: Kuwahara chrome-moly.

SEAT POST CLAMP: SR, aluminum.

SAFETY PADS: Kuwahara.

NUMBER PLATE: Haro Series One.

EXTRAS: California Racing Designs brake guard. ■

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AKRON SADDLES

A NEW ANGLE ON BMX SADDLES...

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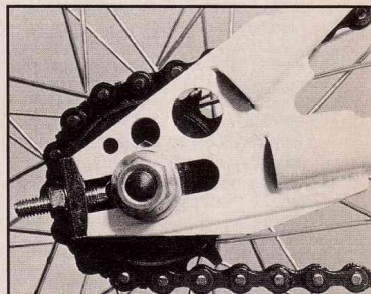
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There are tons of details on the Nova that you wouldn't EVEN expect on a bike that goes for \$240. Like the Kuwahara logos that are stamped into the frame, fork, and bars. We counted no less than eight places where either the Kuwahara K or the word Kuwahara has been pounded into them. The die maker over at the Kuwahara factory must be a very happy (and busy) man.

The frame dropouts are also pretty slick. In the past a few companies have radiused the bottom edge of the rear dropouts to make them stiff-



We're talkin' slick for the dropouts — both front and rear. Note the stamped-in Kuwahara K, serrations for the axle nuts, and the stamped-in ridge that makes the dropout stiffer. Cool.

er, but Kuwahara has taken a slightly different approach. Instead of just putting an angle into the bottom edge of the dropouts, a raised ridge is stamped length-wise along the bottom half when the dropouts are die-cut

Kuwahara then took one step further by adding this ridge to the newly designed dropouts on the forks. And then, to make them even stiffer, they extend under the bottom of the fork leg so that the weld beads run down the front AND along the bottom. That makes them way less prone to flex than dropouts that are only welded to the front of the fork legs. These are some exceptionally stiff fork dropouts, folks.

Oh yes, one more dropout note. The rear dropouts have also been graced with serrated areas for the axle nuts to grab. Nice touch.

The overall sizing of the Nova is a tad larger than most econo crit crafts. R.L., Buff, and Gibey all fit on it easily without banging their knees into several new shades of purple.

The only gripes as far as sizing came from the seating arrangement. The seat on the Nova is an Eliina UL

seat/tube seat post combo. The seat tube angle of the Nova is a steep 74 degrees — an angle more suited to a bike that would be using a lay-back seat post. This combination makes for a few missed seats. Our test crew would sit down where they expected to find the seat — only to do a bun-buzzer on the rear tire. A lay-back seat post and a different seat are definite requirements.

The Kuwahara bars are cool. Plenty wide, and they have a good power bend, which provides scads of pull.

Quite a few qual components have found a happy home on the Nova. Let's see, in the wheels there're SunTour low-flange hubs, Ukai rims, and IRC tires.

The tire setup is little different to say the least. There's a snakebilly type pattern in the rear, and a... well, we don't exactly know how to describe the front one except to say that it works good.

If you've ever got a break between motos or it's raining outside, you can kill a little time by reading the explanation that's printed on the side-walls of the specifics that each tire is designed for.

Back to the components we find KKT SMX pedals (which are totally cool), and either Takagi or Sugino (depending on availability) heat-treated one-piece cranks. The cranks are the higher qual polished variety. Both Takagi and Sugino make a lower priced unpolished version, but you won't find them on here.

A WIN handlebar stem does the bar clamping chores with great success.

Braking is accomplished with a Dia-Compe standard caliper and a Tech 3 lever. This is the same brake setup that was found on the Red Line 200a that we tested last month. On the Red Line it worked great (for a standard caliper) but for some reason it didn't work as well this time. Perhaps if we'd have spent a bit more time dialin' it in...

Other miscellanea included a SunTour Arrow aluminum seat post clamp, Hatta headset and bottom bracket set, and the chain adjuster on the drive side of the rear wheel. Good stuff all.

GRIPES AND MOAN DEPT.

If you're a big-size hombre, the seat and seat post should absolutely be on your list of stuff to change. We kept sitting where it felt like a seat

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should be, and we kept missing it completely.

The vinyl O.G.K. grips weren't absolutely horrible, but they would definitely be on our list of stuff to replace in a hurry.

Actually Kuwahara is going to cure that problem pretty soon. The O.G.K.'s are going to be replaced with a Kuwahara grip made from a soft rubbery vinyl.

The back rim bent just a hair, and it was the ONLY thing that bent. Amazing. This made the Nerd Herd real nervous — thinking that they were losing their touch when it came to pounding bikes, so they stayed out extra long and even bombarded it with some extra-hard landings just to make sure it was the bike and not them.

It was the bike. It's strong!

OFF THE WALL COMMENTS

"When you first sit on it, it doesn't feel like it's gonna be as good as it is. When I first got on it it felt awkward 'cause you'd turn the bars and the grips would hit the seat. Then when you ride it, it feels great."

"Off jumps it doesn't want to loop or endo. It's real controllable."

"No problem getting used to it."

"It slides real good, and the tires work good. I had a few washouts but nothing major. Honda Hills was totally slippery."

"Speed jumping? No problem."

"The bars feel good — the grips (BEEP!). They aren't bad if the ridge is in the perfect place and you have gloves on. But if they're not..."

"Nothing bent. The cranks didn't even bend and I landed HARD."

"I don't know how much it weighs, but it didn't feel heavy at all."

"It's not a bike for national class experts, but novices and local experts could easily race it."

"Changing the seat and seat post is a major. It NEEDS a lay-back seat post."

"It felt short, but stable."

"It handled real good. An excellent bike."

"It had a real good power position."

"The brakes need some dialing."

"When the tires were pumped up and hard, they worked great. But if you let just a little air out, they get real soft. It's really strange rubber."

"The best of the guys could race this bike without changing too much."

'Nuff said. ■

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Finishing: Model TA with c-p frame + fork; model TW with white frame + fork.

Weight: 25 lb 10 oz.

Accessories: CPSC equipments and 3-pc safety pads (both not shown in picture).

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