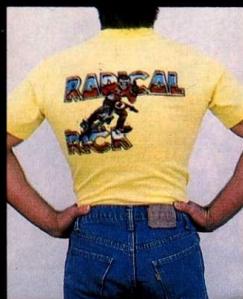


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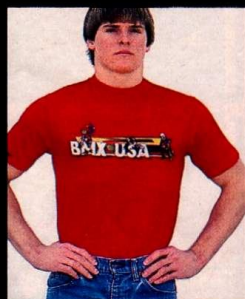
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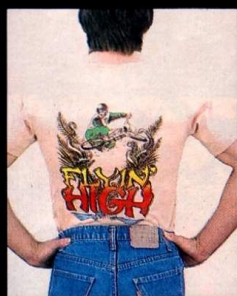
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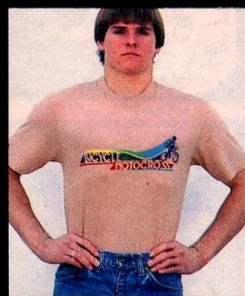
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SIXTEEN-INCH PIT BIKE

Story by Dean Bradley

Sixteen-inch pit bikes are the latest rage. We found out why when we tested Gary Littlejohn's version.



Before: Tester Tim Eells and the sweet sixteen on their first date—calm, cool, clean, but no smile.



After: Happy as a mudlark. Testing bikes is a dirty job. Check out page 72 to catch Eells cuttin' loose in the juice.

Everybody needs at least one. They're functional, they're fun and they're BMX's latest rage—they're pit bikes: sixteen inches of pit-racin', rabbit-chasin', low-ridin' fun. Not surprisingly, these teenie meanies are popping up everywhere: cruisin' the boulevard or boardwalk, in school bike racks, at local riding areas and in the pits. Why, they're even starting to race 'em! Just 'cause they're small doesn't mean they can't haul. Of course, sixteen inchers feel most at home tooling around the pits at the BMX races, but these small wonders are also proving themselves versatile little vehicles. BMXers are rapidly finding that these small wheelers offer big thrills, so this month we decided to literally get down and test the Littlejohn sixteen. Why a Littlejohn, you ask? They aren't a gigantic manufacturer with mega-buck ad programs, race teams, and big name Pros; and, other than their legendary side-hacks, Littlejohn's not a real big name in BMX. So what? The fact is they manufacture some pretty cool bikes—the latest and possibly the greatest being their primo, new sixteen pit machine.

Typical Littlejohn

When it comes to building bikes, Gary Littlejohn, Hollywood stuntman and head honcho over at Littlejohn, Inc., has always marched to a different drummer. Way back when, Gary L. started out making monoshocks; and he still produces side hacks and beach cruiser tandems—not normal everyday stuff. Today's top-selling models include his popular twenty- and twenty-six-inch BMX frames and forks, in addition to his new, sweet little sixteen. Littlejohn's designs and executions are nothing fancy. No frills, no gimmicks or trendy departures here, just enough to get the job done. No brag, just fact—typical Littlejohn. Everywhere we took the Littlejohn sixteen, people fell in love with it. The strikingly styled and scaled-down sixteen-inch-wheel profile, complete with Tuff Wheel mini mags, demanded a second look. The bike produced more than its share of double takes. Big guys couldn't wait to ride it, while the little guys just mumbled and drooled. Even around the office, the typewriter—riding editors couldn't keep their eyes off it—only

LITTLEJOHN 16"

Gary Littlejohn
7337 Varna Ave.
N. Hollywood,
Ca. 91605
(213) 982-1855

This report was compiled by:

Dean Bradley



DIMENSIONS

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Weight | (A) Wheelbase | (B) Head Angle | (C) Seat Angle |
| 24 1/4 lbs. | 31" | 73° | 64° |
| (D) Hanger Height | (E) Hanger to Axle | (F) Top Tube Height | (G) Trail |
| 9 1/2" | 13 1/2" | 16 1/2" | 1 1/2" |

FRAME SPECIFICATIONS

| | | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Weight | Material/Construction | Seat Post Diameter | Head Tube Style | Hanger Style |
| 3 lbs 8 oz. | 4130 chrome-moly/heli arc | 7/8 inch | Standard | Large |

FORK SPECIFICATIONS

| | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Weight | Material/Construction | Height | Offset |
| 1 lbs 6 oz. | 4130 chrome-moly/heli-arc | 10 1/2" | 1 1/4" |

BIKE COMPONENTS

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Cranks Sugino Maxy 152mm alloy | Chain 1/2" X 1/8" | Pedals Skyway Tuff Pedals |
| Gearing 44/16 | Wheels/Hubs Skyway Tuff Wheels | Seat/Seat Pillar Moto One plastic/Alloy |
| Stem Tuff Neck | Bars/Grips Alloy V-type/Oakley III | This bike set-up by Custom Bicycle Sales Tarzana, California |
| Brakes Dia-Compe 1880 | Tires I.R.C. 16 X 2.125 | |

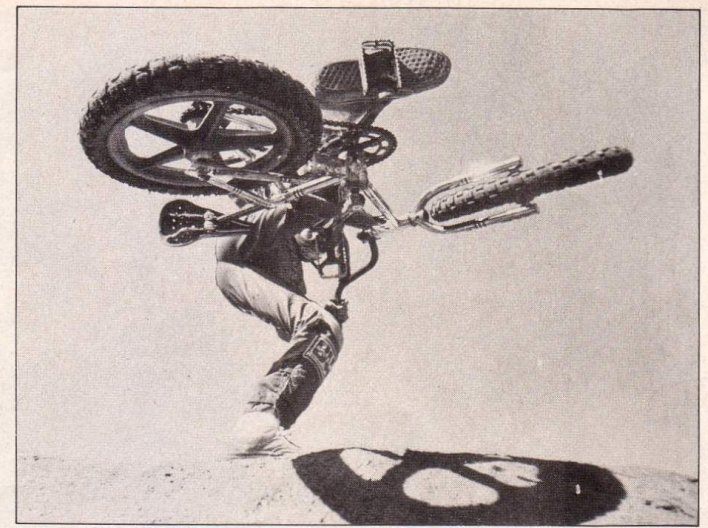
'cause the secretaries wanted to take it home with them. The Littlejohn was everything from "cute" to "a totally tough lookin' little bike." Normally BMX bikes aren't supposed to be "cute", but, in the sweet sixteen's case, we'll let it slide. Just this one time. What we wanted to find out was if its tough looks were only skin deep, so a sound thrashing was scheduled.

Everybody wants it

For the test session everybody wanted to be a test rider. Kids barely big enough to ride a bike promised us moto miracles—anything—to ride that cute little sucker. "Here, take a picture of me! Hey, I could get soooooo rad, I'll bet I could bunny hop fifty midgets." Tall tales and short bikes. We heard it all. Even the secretaries made claims of their photogenic pedaling prowess, sheesh! The tough lil' wheeler either inspired confidence or dared to be defied. We never quite figured out which. Time was rapidly running out as it always does in the magazine biz, so we called up *BMX Plus!* test rider and eleven-year-old terror, Tim Ells. At a hair under five feet tall and about ninety pounds, Timmy was just about the perfect size for the Littlejohn. Test riding is a dirty job, but somebody's gotta do it, and Ells was the man for this one. What we neglected to tell Ells was that this particular test and shoot would be an especially dirty job, as usually sunny Southern California had not been so sunny. In fact, it had rained for about a week straight. When the storm finally cleared, the air was clean, the dirt was mud, and our test track was history—a winter wasteland. The berms looked more like lakes. Mud and crud were everywhere. Would dirty disaster loom ahead for good-guy-in-white Ells and the shiny, new Littlejohn? Yup. Ells got dirty, wet and wild, but, for the most part, the sixteen submarine emerged with a clean bill of health. However, Timmy's health and well being were in serious question once his mom took a look at his previously freshly laundered riding gear and the shape it was now in. Mud city. After the test, both Ells and the Littlejohn found themselves in the Biz bag.

Littlejohn's doing his homework

At first glance, the Littlejohn sixteen appears to be just a scaled-



Pit bikes are a kick in the pants to ride—your every wish is their command. Tim E. plants his foot and gets his wish.

down version of their twenty incher. Everything just seems shorter (31" wheelbase compared to 35" on the twenty) and lower (16 1/2" top tube height to about 21 1/2" on the twenty). But Littlejohn did his homework on this one. A four-inch, 73-degree head angle tames down what would otherwise be a grabby sixteen-inch front wheel while a laid-back 64 degree seat-tube angle gives room where it's most needed on sixteens—in the seat-to-bar distance department. The leg room's there for those who need it on the Littlejohn. Big guys (over about 5'5") need only install taller rear bars and a longer seat post to feel comfy. Some guys are even going to laid-back seat posts like the Cook Bros. unit.

Frame and fork are both 4130 chrome-moly. The forks are standard one-inch tubulars with leading axle and are drilled for a front caliper. The sixteen's frame is a standard Littlejohn affair with large bottom bracket, 5/8" rear stays, and one-inch tubing and triangular head gusset up front. The rear end is a two-piece set-up. The chain stays attach to the bottom bracket by means of a rectangular hanger block while the seat stays miter into the seat tube. It all comes together back near the rear axle with crude, beefy dropout plates. "Crude" 'cause they're not very pretty. They are strong and

functional, though—again typical Littlejohn. The rear caliper, a Dia-Compe 1880, bolts onto the seat-stay cross brace about three inches down from the seat tube. The chrome finish on our test bike was excellent while welding was so-so. Once we got the Littlejohn sixteen out of the studio and into the dirt, it became apparent this thing not only looked sharp, it handled sharp, too. Once Tim was aboard the sixteen, it became apparent this thing not only looked sharp, it handled sharp, too. Once Tim was aboard the sixteen, it became apparent this thing not only looked sharp, it handled sharp, too. Once Tim was aboard the sixteen, it became apparent this thing not only looked sharp, it handled sharp, too. Once Tim was aboard the sixteen, it became apparent this thing not only looked sharp, it handled sharp, too.

So, how's it handle?

We found the sixteen's low center of gravity great through turns whether squaring or sliding. In the air the flight patterns were predictable. Just lift gently on the bars and let her fly. For Ells the power position was pretty good, but that is as good as it gets with 152mm cranks. You can only crank so much power out of cranks that short. Still, the Littlejohn moves out, accelerates well, jumps and turns predictably. No brag, just fact. Right now Littlejohn doesn't offer a complete sixteen-inch bike—you buy the frame and forkset and take it from there. That's where the fun



Ells exceeding Mud City speed limits. The sixteen submarined thru the wet and wild, no problem. Mom, break out the Tide!

comes in. The people who got to have all the fun setting up our test bike were the fine folks at Custom Bicycle Sales in Tarzana, California. Check the spec page for the details, but let it suffice to say those guys did a pretty cool job choosing components and setting up the bike. The sixteen-inch Tuff Wheels made the bike—Skyway's done it again. Ours had a rear freewheel, but if you're into coastin', coaster-brake models are available.

The only thing we'd change on our tester would be the cranks. The 152mm Sugino Maxy three-piece alloys are great for styling around,

but jumping and thrashing will soon require a changeover to a one-piece set-up. One other thing, we'd definitely add a front brake for curb endos and those fast-breaking situations. Oh yeah, and maybe we'd . . . See, that's the best part about pit bikes—they're built to suit you. Dig through your garage, sift through that ol' parts bin, cannibalize those old bikes and bolt anything you want onto your pitter. However, horns, bells, streamers, and luggage racks are not recommended. Other than that, almost anything or anybody goes on a pit bike. They're custom,

tricked-out, and personalized play bikes. Stylish too.

So don't thrash your high-dollar racer; park it during the week, let it rest between motos, and putt the pits or tool to school on a sixteen. Whether you want to stay warm between races or keep cool on the way to school, whether you're out in the boonies with your buddies chasin' rabbits or racin' your compo to the porta-can, the sixteen scene is well worth checking into. So save your bucks, wish real hard, and this little dream—the Littlejohn sixteen—might just come true for you. □

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