

**BMX ACTION**  
OFFICIAL TEST

# MONGOOSE

# Californian

**VASTLY  
IMPROVED, AND  
STILL HANGIN'  
IN AT RIGHT  
AROUND TWO  
HUNDRED  
SMACKERS**

"Okay, let me see if I've got this straight. The last time we tested the Mongoose Californian it was AL-READY a totally boss econo-qual scoot, and it only cost \$199.95, right? Now Mongoose has improved it a BUNCH, and the cost only creeped up a measly ten frogskins? That's nuts! Lemme at it! This I gotta see!"

#### WHAT'S UP DOC?

Mongoose has just made an already good package even better. Step right this way folks, as we tear the Californian apart to see what makes it tick. First indications point in the direction of it being one of THE

hot econo-qual rides of this year.

#### UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Last time we got our paws on a Californian, the frame had a chrome-moly front triangle and a high-tensile steel rear end. Now it's chrome-moly from nose to tail! All right! That mod alone would easily be worth the price increase. But wait, there's even more!

The Mongoose high-tensile steel handlebars are the same as before, like last time, but their width has been increased from 25 to 25 1/2 inches. It doesn't sound like a lot, but believe us, you can FEEL the difference.

The SR stem is also new. It's a model MS-423, a more aerodynamic dude that, like all of SR's stems, has

gobs of clamping power.

Brakes are much improved from last time, with much smoother operation and way more feel to them. They've been upgraded with better bushings at the friction points on the calipers and high-zoot teflon-lined cables.

Next item on the list of changes

is the crank. Last time around, the Californian was equipped with a set of hardened steel 6 1/2's, but this time it's equipped with some considerably longer SR Cosmo-Lite 175mm jobbers that are heat-treated AND constructed with boron in 'em. The reason the boron is used is to make the cranks stronger and light-

*Blast-off! That's R.L. blithely gliding over a couple of Van Nuys locals, and Robby Rupe, Mike Miranda, and Mark Pippin. If the Californian's handling had not been completely perfect, these dudes would have been in deep dookie. We never did figure out if that guy behind Robby was tying his shoe or if he was just plain chicken.*



wheel bolt holes so you can use Sugino, Shimano, Takagi, or any brand of commonly used chain-wheel without having to worry about whether or not the particular pattern will fit. With the precision slotted bolt holes, the spider instantly and automatically lines 'em up for action.

The final change here is the seat. It's a Mongoose M-1 design that's pretty unique. It's an aero style, but it doesn't look like ANY other seat out there. Some thought it looked like a seagull's beak — kinda funky; others thought it looked totally hot. One thing's for sure — the seat's

comfortable. It's got a little softer than normal plastic compound that's not totally tough on your buns, and at the same time it's got an almost grippy quality to it that's nice. It sticks enough that you won't slide off, but still allows you to move around on it. It's just right.

### THINGS THAT HAVEN'T CHANGED BUT DESERVE MENTIONING ANYWAYS

Are the ultra-light Mongoose Pro Class rims still in place? You bet. And they're as feather-light and bullet-proof as always. After repeated high altitude aerial attacks from

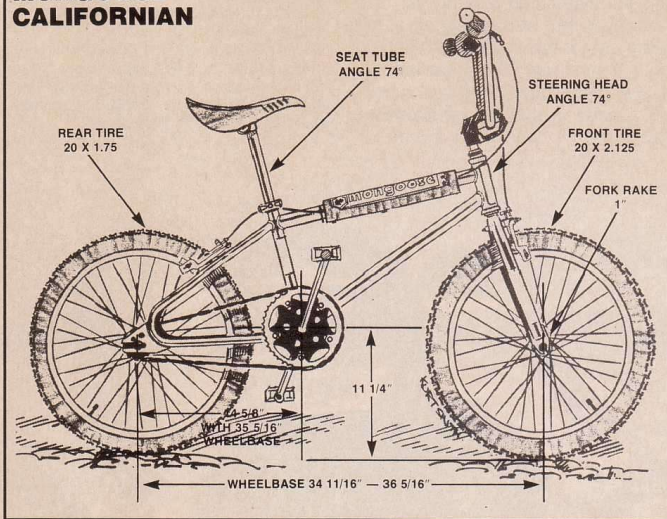
Capt. Kirk, R.L., and Buff, they were just like everything else on the bike — still straight and true. Just about every one of our testers commented on the solid feel of the Californian. A nice compliment from our incredibly biased and highly opinionated test crew.

*Tuckin' and truckin' at Warp 4. The Mighty BMXA test crew was most impressed with the solid feel of the Californian. Oops, make that Californians. Mongoose flowed a matched pair of these puppies over to us for the amazingly brutal testing sessions. This is a slightly over \$200 bike that feels more like a \$275 or \$300 racer.*



Photo by Steve Giberson

## MONGOOSE CALIFORNIAN



## Price & Specs

**COMPLETE BIKE PRICE:** \$209.95.  
**FINISHES AVAILABLE:** Chrome with black, blue, or red components.  
**COMPLETE BIKE WEIGHT (without pads or plate):** 25 pounds, 12 ounces.  
**FRAME WEIGHT:** 4 pounds, 14 1/2 ounces.  
**FORK WEIGHT:** 1 pound, 13 ounces.  
**STEERING HEAD TUBE LENGTH:** 4 inches.  
**HANDLEBAR RISE:** 8 inches.  
**HANDLEBAR WIDTH:** 25 1/2 inches.  
**TOP TUBE O.D.:** 1 1/8 inches.  
**DOWN TUBE O.D.:** 1 1/8 inches.  
**FORK LEG O.D.:** 1 inch.

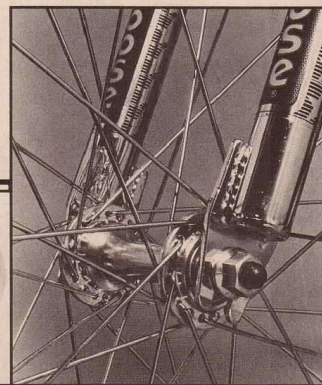
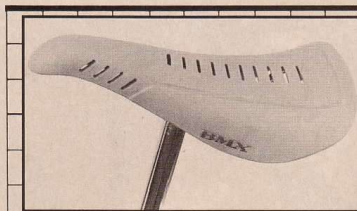
## Components

**FRAME:** Mongoose, chrome-moly.  
**FORK:** Mongoose, hi-tensile steel.  
**HANDLEBAR:** Mongoose, hi-tensile steel.  
**HANDLEBAR STEM:** SR MS-423, aluminum and hi-tensile steel.  
**GRIPS:** Mongoose, vinyl.  
**HEADSET:** Mongoose, approved by Tange.  
**RIMS:** Mongoose Pro Class, pierced aluminum.  
**SPOKES:** 36, .080, with brass nipples.  
**HUBS:** SR or Suzue depending on availability, low-flange, aluminum.  
**TIRES:** Cheng Shin.  
**TUBES:** Cheng Shin ultra-light.  
**BRAKE:** Mongoose Pro Class calipers, front and rear.  
**BRAKE PADS:** Lee Chi.  
**BRAKE LEVER:** Lee Chi.  
**BRAKE CABLE:** Lee Chi, teflon-lined.  
**PEDALS:** SR P-468, aluminum and chrome-moly.

**CRANK:** SR Cosmo-Lite, heat-treated, one-piece forged steel, 175mm.  
**BOTTOM BRACKET SET:** Mongoose, approved by Tange.  
**FRONT SPROCKET:** Takagi aluminum chainwheel, 44 teeth.  
**SPIDER:** Mongoose Pro Class Power Plate, aluminum.  
**FREEWHEEL:** SunTour, 16 teeth.  
**CHAIN:** TYC, 1/8 inch.  
**SEAT:** Mongoose M-1.  
**SEAT POST:** High-tensile steel.  
**SEAT POST CLAMP:** Hinged aluminum.  
**ACCESSORIES:** Mongoose pad set.

## Performance Evaluation

**PURPOSE:** Racing (up to and including low level expert), radibolically cool and econo-qual street thrasher.  
**AGE RANGE:** 11 to 14 racing, 10 to 15 street.  
**QUALITY OF FINISH:** Very good to excellent. The chrome is VERY nice — even at the dropout ends where it sometimes gets a little thin on some frames. The only complaint was a weld turd or two that didn't get buffed off before chroming.  
**QUALITY OF WELDING:** Excellent. Nice



even heads with apparent good penetration.  
**GEOMETRY:** Excellent. Responsive but not too quick. Somewhat forgiving to input errors. A very confidence-inspiring bike.  
**HANDLING:** "It rode really good, but it's sized more for a smaller rider." . . . "The handling's really good." . . . "It handled great for me. Hot in the corners." . . . "It felt good in the air." . . . "Good handling, good jumping. It'll probably last a long time." . . . "It was like I was already used to it when I got on it." . . . "I had a little problem with it looping 'cause it was kind of short, and the bars were back a little far, and the chain was short."  
**MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS:** "The pedals kept rolling under your feet 'cause they were so short. A wider platform pedal would help. The rider wouldn't make so many mistakes. Maybe switch to SR's, SunTour's, Hutch's, Shimano's, MKS's — something like that." . . . "It felt sturdy." . . . "The gearing felt kind of hard." . . . "It's a great bike for the money." . . . "The seat's comfortable. I think the looks are pretty cool. It's the first seat that looks a little different." . . . "At first the handlebars felt small, but then after I started riding, I completely forgot about 'em. They felt fine." . . . "The grips were fine." . . . "The brakes worked great. It seems like every time we get a Mongoose the brakes work really good." . . . "Nothing bent. I kept looking at the cranks, but they stayed straight." . . . "The tires worked good." . . . "I never dragged a pedal. The bottom bracket height was good." . . . "For freestyle for a little dude it'd be great." . . . "I did some front wheel hops on it and the steering geometry was good for freestyle. It was real easy." . . . "Just put on a coaster brake for freestyle. Actually, you could even use the freewheel. Fiola, Dominguez, and Aparijo all use freewheels for freestyle." . . . "It's a great thrasher."

**TEST INPUT:** Eric Rupe, Mike Buff, R.L. Osborn, Steve Giberson, Bob Osborn, and Kirk Chrisco.  
**MANUFACTURER:** BMX Products, Inc.  
 5152 North Commerce Avenue  
 Moorpark, California  
 93021-1797  
 Tel: (805) 529-7000



The Nerd Herd plus one, ol' NBL Pro Numero Uno Eric Rupe, kickin' into overdrive over the first jump at Van Nuys. The Gooses were very confidence-inspiring whether you were sailin' in the air or wallin' on the ground.

opinionated test crew.  
 The fork is made of high-tensile steel and it's incredibly strong.  
 The freewheel comes from SunTour and it has a chrome-moly body that's extremely tough.  
 And last, but certainly not least, you even get a set of good lookin' Mongoose pads to top the critter off.

### FIRST CLASS DETAILS

The seat post clamp and spokes are chromed. Small details to be sure, but definitely not items you'd expect to find on a bike that sells for just a little over \$200. The same can be said for the ball-bearing retainers in the bottom bracket set that contain twelve bearings instead of the far more common nine.

The Mongoose Power bolts for the spider are totally cool. Instead

of nuts on the back side of the spider that require one of those special tools (which you can never find in your gear bag when you need it), they're built with a nut you can fit a wrench on. Will wonders never cease?

Innertubes are ultra-light puppies from Cheng Shin. The trickery goes on and on.

### NOT-SO-NEAT DETAILS

Very minor deals here, so don't get worried, radsters.

Keep an eye on the brake shoes. After our testing, they were starting to show some pretty heavy wear. A couple sets of accessory shoes might be a good idea when the stockers start to wear thin.

The stock pedals tend to roll under your feet or start slippin' a lot if you

kick into a serious power mode. Much less slippage will be found with a larger platform style.

That's it. No more gripes.

### BEHIND THE BARS

We hoisted the cage containing our testers into the back of the van, being very careful not to get our fingers too close to the barred windows. We dragged them and a pair of soon-to-be-thrashed-'n-bashed Californians out to the Van Nuys track where we were to meet Eric Rupe for the photo portion of the test.

When we got there we found not only Eric, but Robby Rupe, Mark Pippin, Mike Miranda, and Bobby Woods, all assembled for their daily practice session.

As soon as we opened up the

## MOTO-NOTES

### JAWIN' WITH ERIC RUPE

Eric: "You want to know my new training secret?"

BMXA: "Um, well, if you want to twist our arms, okay."

Eric: "It's right over there on the other side of those railroad tracks. It's the Encino Velodrome. I do sprints on it. It's the best place in the world to do 'em. You keep goin' around. It's not like rippin' down the street full-bore. We'll go for lap times."

"It's rad. We push HARD! We all use the same gear, and don't raise our seats or nothin', and just go for a full sprint through the gnarly banked corners. I mean, you put on a 45 and you're just spinnin' like crazy."

"I was over there last week with a 39-16 and I was just totally spun out, but I kept goin' for it the whole way. It's a gnarly workout."

BMXA: "Who do you work out with?"

Eric: "My brother, Woods, and Mark Pippin."

"At the beginning of the year, I mentioned to you that I was starting a new training thing with gears, but that I couldn't let you know what it was. Well, that was goin' through the gears. You talk to almost anybody, and they'll say, 'Yeah, I ride with this gear all the time.' I ride with three different gears every day — a 39, 43 and 45."

"43 or 42 is the gear I usually race with, but I work out with a 45 and a 39 to develop power pushing and spinning. It works. You do that every day, and do a certain amount of sprints, pushing it really hard."

"I do five to ten full-out laps here at the Van Nuys track with each gear, but when I'm on the velodrome I only use the 45 — just go for top end speed."

"I'm good friends with a guy who is a European 10-speed racer and he was fifth in line for this year's Olympic Games. He didn't make the team, but he's really good. He was national amateur champion for a couple years, and he's the one who told my brother and I about the gears. He said that running one gear is almost the worst



thing you can do because your body gets so used to it and then it burns out on it. You have to develop the different skills of sprinting and the power pushing. It's really worked."

BMXA: "Do you like the idea of going to the grands with the points lead this year?"

Eric: "This year I do, I really do. Because I'm not afraid of losing it because I know what it's gonna take to hold onto it. I'm not afraid at all."

BMXA: "How are you building up to it?"

Eric: "I've been working out harder and harder each day for the last three weeks, but I still give myself rest days where I totally don't do anything."

BMXA: "How would you describe your year so far?"

Eric: "I think it's been my best ever 'cause I've had so many consistent top three finishes. I think that's why I am where I am in the points. I've had

a couple wins, but I've had a lot of seconds and thirds. I have fifteen top three finishes. Compared to everyone else, that's really good. That's what's doing it for me."

BMXA: "Which is more important to you? The wins or being consistent?"

Eric: "The consistency is by far more important because right now I know all I have to do is go to a race, make the main and finish in the top three and that's all it's gonna take at the grands. If I do that, I'll be able to get number one again. Last year my year was really hot and cold. It was like going into the grandnational. I knew I had to do good, and I know I have to do good this year, but now it's like more expected for me to do good."

"Being consistent is easier, because once you get into a groove, you just keep flowing along. If you can get that going, it's great because you don't have to go to the grandnational and say you haven't done good in the last five races and you've got to pull it out at the grandnationals. It hasn't been like that for me. In the last 14 nationals, I've had about 11 top three finishes."

"It's weird 'cause this year has been like a really inconsistent year for EVERYONE else. There are so many guys on the NBL list who have won nationals, and last year there were probably ten guys, and each guy had won three, four, five, and Brian had won eight of 'em — like that."

BMXA: "Do you feel like the pressure is on you this year?"

Eric: "Not as much as it was at the beginning of the year. Now that I've done good, it doesn't feel like there's that much pressure."

BMXA: "Did you feel like you had to prove it at the beginning of the year?"

Eric: "Yeah, because after I got the number one plate last year, I was thinking people were gonna think that I didn't deserve it because I didn't dominate like, say, Brian did last year."

"So I was kind of scared thinkin' that people would think I didn't deserve it and the pressure was on me to do good to show that I was good enough to be number one."

BMXA: "Tell us about the new bike you've been working on — the Eric Rupe Signature Edition. I know you've been riding this frame all year, and Mongoose is busy toolin' up to produce it. So what's the scoop? How did you design this guy?"

Eric: "I designed it mostly from what I thought felt good. Last year, I was on the Profile, and that felt good, but it needed changes. I kept that bike in mind, but I also made some changes that I thought were needed and I put that all together into this bike."

"Compared to the old Pro Class, the head angle on this bike is kicked out more — it's much slower. The front end is at least 3/4 of an inch longer, and the bottom bracket is at least 3/4 of an inch higher. The back triangle is identical to the old Pro Class triangle. There's been nothing changed there. The top tube and down tube are also larger. On the newer one that I have at my house, the top tube is even bigger — it's 1 1/4 inches."

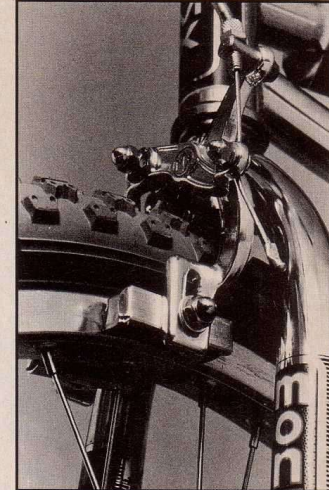
"I had the new one together yesterday, but it's a whole 'nother bike that I was riding. I was gonna take all my parts and switch it over and ride it at the grands, but I thought, 'That would be really stupid.' Even though there's hardly any difference in the bikes, I don't want to do that, you know? This is the frame that I've been riding for the last two months and I just want to stay on it for two more weeks and then I can get the other one going."

BMXA: "Did you have total control over the design of the Eric Rupe Signature bike?"

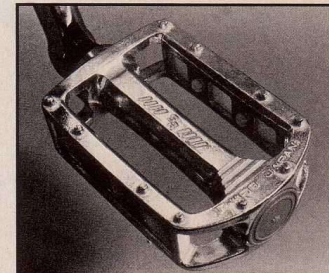
Eric: "TOTAL. I had those guys mad at me 'cause I was tellin' 'em, 'You've got to do it this way. I need this like this, and this like this.' They were goin', 'Yeah, but...' I said, 'Nope. This is the way it has to be.'"

"Skip Hess (president of BMX Products) told them that they had to make me whatever I wanted. And whatever my name goes on has to be exactly what I'm riding. So I made it the way I wanted."

"They didn't like it 'cause they had to spend thousands of dollars to switch their jigs. But that's the way it had to be. I don't think they're gonna be sorry for it."



There are lots of impressive goodies here, moto-fanatics. Like the high-tensile Mongoose forks that refused to bend, and the ultra-strong aluminum Pro Class rims that are pierced with lightening holes. The Comp III repli-knobs from Cheng Shin really worked well. Finally, there are the Pro Class calipers that have been VASTLY improved since our last test (September '83 BMXA) with upgraded bushings in the caliper and teflon-lined cables for slicker than spit operation.



You'll roll a lot less pedals if you substitute the stock SR P-458 pedals for a set of pedals with a larger platform area. The stockers have plenty of traction and the size is cool for little guys, but they're too small for Bozo-sized feet.

is lookin' for a bike that's more of an investment. Something that's gonna last, that he can race if he wants."

"It's a totally good bike for that kind of money. You get a name, you get quality parts, and you get something that's gonna hold up."

And that, sports fans, tells the whole story of the Californian. It's got the right price, the looks, the equipment, and most of all, it functions. ■

back of the van and let our kowabonically crazed test crew out of there, they grabbed the bikes and all we could see was a cloud of dust. Good thing our Nikons shoot at a 2,000th of a second, otherwise we never would have gotten any photos.

After the testers were worn out

and acting a little less crazed, we started asking them for comments on the handling. They had to seriously think about it — which is hot, 'cause if there'd been anything majorly wrong, we would have heard about it *instantly*.

Of course they mentioned that the

Californian's are sized more for younger riders, which made the bikes want to loop a little over jumps, but that was the only complaint.

To put it in a nutshell, the handling is classic Mongoose. Not too quick in the steering department, but not too slow either. Just comfort-

ably responsive. Just hook it in and hang on.

#### HAVIN' FUN AIN'T NO CRIME

But it almost is with the Californian. If you don't have fun with this bike, you're either a zombie or completely incapable of a good time.

Besides, you'll be havin' a jammin' good time without spending cubic dollars.

We asked our thoroughly pooped-out test wobblers what kind of dude they thought should buy a Californian. "Someone about 14 or 15 years old or under, maybe a kid who