

# RRS UN-CRUISER TEST



Trick, tricker, trickest. What's "trick"? By and large, trickness is a matter of opinion. Trickness can be rationalized; some guys can find reasons why any useless trinket is trick. On the other hand, some guys simply don't like anything. Some might also think the simplest is the trickiest, while others might believe true trickness is in the excessively over-engineered. To paraphrase a familiar saying, "Trick is in the eye of the beholder."

Finally released after one year of development, the RRS Un-Cruiser has impeccable credentials.

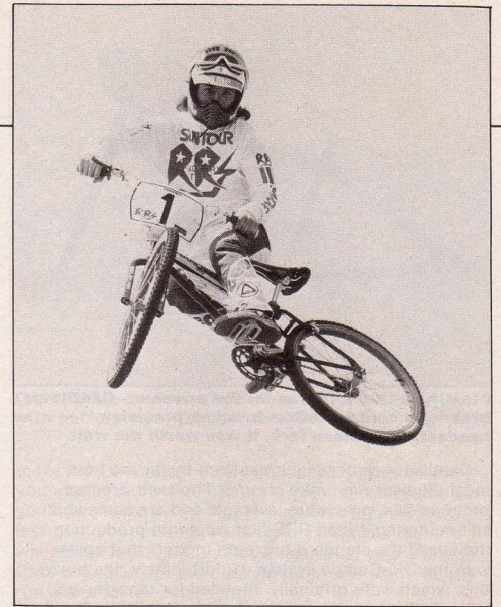
## Un-Cruiser Defined

Designated the "Un-Cruiser", the RRS twenty-four-inch racer is for those folks who sway towards the more sophisticated side of the "trick" spectrum. The RRS Un-Cruiser is to the standard bicycle as the B-1 bomber is to the Spruce Goose. If it's sophisticated trickness you want, try this: cantilever brakes instead of callipers, an adjustability in the bottom bracket rather than in the rear axle slots, and a ten-speed-size head tube to accommodate the lightest, most precision head sets.

RRS's history in twenty-fours has been one of highs and lows. They were the first to ever enter a twenty-four-inch cruiser against the big guns on twenty-sixers. That debut was highly successful, to say the least. Their rider, a virtually unknown local hot shoe named Tony McDaniels, piloted his RRS-modified twenty-four-inch Schwinn Varsity to a dramatic victory at the 1980 ABA Fall Nationals at Anaheim. Less than one month later RRS produced two real prototypes. Luckily, I got a hold of one of them and was able to enter it in the Cruiser class at the 1980 NBA/Mongoose Grands at Veterans Stadium in Long Beach. In addition, I raced it two more times, both at the Rancho downhill in San Diego, prior to returning the bike in January of '81. The proto had performed well enough to prove that twenty-fours would soon wipe out the twenty-sixers in competition. It looked good for RRS; they had a big jump on the twenty-four-inch cruiser market. No other factories had even begun a competition testing of any twenty-four-incher. From the winter of '81 until the next fall, only six more RRS Un-Cruisers were made, all of which went to team members for more testing. In the meantime, while RRS was still testing and trying to get from the proto stage to the product stage, all the other factories got their twenty-fours developed and on the market. Any jump RRS might have had was wiped out by the lag.

## Time Not Wasted

Fortunately that lag time was not wasted. Most of it was not directly devoted to the Un-Cruiser, but was spent dialing-in the most important design features on both the twenty-four and the twenty-inch models. If it were only the geometry that RRS had had to dial-in, they might've been the first to release a race-designed twenty-four-inch cruiser.



**ABA's National Number One cruiser pilot, RRS's Joe Claveau couldn't make it for this test shoot so Jim Pratt jumped in and took his place.**

The first order of business was perfecting the use of a one-piece crank in the RRS eccentric bottom bracket. Because of the limited hanger space, this was not an easy job. The goal was to offer the same adjustment range as was available with a three-piece crankset. If they could not accomplish this, they would risk losing their already spare one-and-one-half-link (three sprocket teeth) adjustment range. To accomplish this task special sealed bearings were fitted to the crank, then the eccentric was split in half to facilitate installation and final assembly into the chassis. Two through bolts put the eccentric back into one piece after final installation. After that the bottom bracket was adjusted normally. The set-up is clean and highly functional. Now RRS frames are capable of accepting standard one-piece cranks, Red Line Flight Cranks, or three-piece alloy cranks. And with three-piece alloy cranks you can either use the split eccentric with a conversion spindle (Shimano) or use the regular eccentric with a 10-speed-threaded cup-style bottom bracket. Even older RRS bikes can be updated with the new split eccentric.

## Specifications

### Dimensions

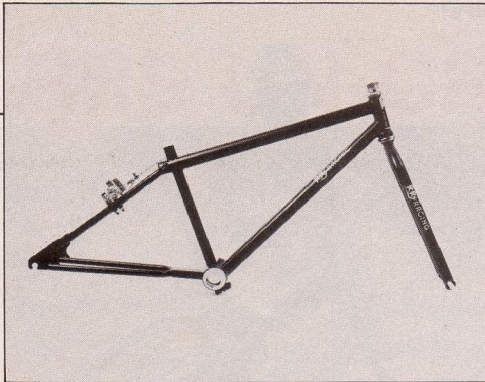
**Weight:** 26 1/2 pounds  
**Wheelbase:** 37 13/16"  
**Head Angle:** 71°  
**Seat Angle:** 68°  
**Hanger Height:** 11 1/2"  
**Hanger to Axle:** 16 1/2"  
**Top Tube Height:** 23"

### Frame Specifications

**Weight:** 4 lbs., 6 oz.  
**Material Construction:** 4130 Chrome moly/Heli-arc  
**Seat Post Diameter:** 7/8"  
**Head Tube Style:** 10-Speed  
**Hanger Style:** RRS Special

### Fork Specifications

**Weight:** 1 lb. 12 oz.  
**Material Construction:** 4130 Chrome moly/Heli-arc  
**Height:** 14.35"  
**Offset:** 1.484"

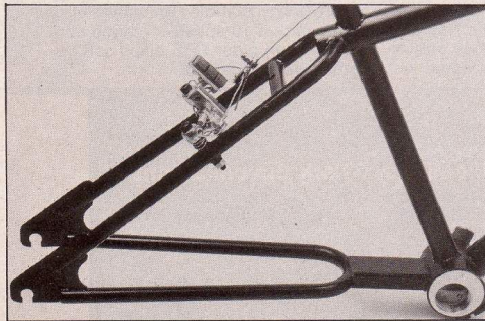


**Finally, full-factory iron for the privateer. Cantilever brakes, eccentric bottom bracket, precision headset, ultra-clean fork. It was worth the wait.**

Cantilever center pull brakes are by far the best, most efficient rim brake around. The arms are less prone to flex, give more leverage, and are somewhat self-centering. When RRS first went into production, they used the standard braze-on mounts that come with the Dia-Compe system. Unfortunately, the braze-ons, which were originally intended for tandems and heavy touring use, weren't capable of withstanding the abuse of the centerpunching techniques that are so popular in racing. Several of the units had sheered off as the result of being side-swiped. The conclusion was that any type of outboard mount would be susceptible to the same stresses. The end result is a mounting which, under virtually any circumstances, eliminates the possibility of sheering, and it's so simple it's beautiful. It works like a basic hook-and-eye hinge, with the frame itself acting as one-half of the hinge and the cantilever as the other. The pivots are precision-ground shoulder bolts which simply float between the two.

### A Point on Cantilevers

As mentioned earlier, cantilever brakes are the best. Now I'd like to clarify that statement by adding: they are, once they're adjusted correctly. Quite frankly, adjusting them can be a pain. Only one nut on each arm is responsible for locking the shoe into place. That's one nut for locking in the throw, shoe height



**Cantilever center-pull brakes are by far the best, most efficient, rim brake around. They'll stop on a dime with change left over.**

## RRS likes the precision head sets found on ten-speeds.

and toe-in. Even for experienced mechanics it takes at least two tries to get them completely dialed-in. On top of that, since both arms work independently, it's just like adjusting two sets of brakes instead of one. In operation we found the brakes worked best with about one-tenth of an inch of toe-in (i.e. when the shoe is tilted so the trailing edge of the pad is closer to the rim than the leading edge). Toeing-in eliminated any squeaking and gave the brakes a nice progressive feel. Even in wet conditions we didn't experience a total loss of stopping power as we would have from most calipers.

RRS likes the precision head sets found on ten-speeds. They've had real good success with them in racing on their twenty-inch model. The RRS team also had good success with them on the tests of the "Un-



**Duck! 'Cause here comes one of the most exotic birds in BMX—The Un-Cruiser. Frame and forkset weigh a featherweight 6 lbs. 2 oz.**

Cruiser". But long-term testing did reveal that the additional leverage that the two-inch-longer fork put on the head tube caused it to crack. The problem was that the original cruiser prototypes were made with the same thin-wall head tubes that they use on their smaller bikes. The extra fork length added about 18% more leverage to the tube, and that proved to be too much. Apparently the head tubes were just barely strong enough for the smaller bikes. The solution was simple: add more "meat." Gusseting came in the form of a heavy-duty ring welded over the bottom of the head tube. And because it's better to be safe than sorry, RRS went ahead and beefed up all their newest twenty-inchers the same way.

## All the frame tubes are 100% chrome-moly and all the welds are heli-arc.

You can see that the one year lag was well spent by RRS refining their product. A spokesman at RRS put it quite frankly. Had they released their Un-Cruiser in the beginning of 1981, which is when they had originally hoped to, they may have learned much sooner what changes to make, but they also would've had a small army of dissatisfied customers to answer to. With the new brake pivots and head modifications they feel confident about the machine's reliability. With the new eccentric they feel they have a versatile machine as well.

### Basic Structure

All the frame tubes are 100% 4130 chrome-moly and all the welds are heli-arc. RRS frames are actually manufactured in Hesperia, California, by Trackmaster.



**RRS's Jumpin' Jim Pratt unweighting the Un-Cruiser up and around our Sand Hills secret spot.**

Trackmaster also does the quality work for Red Line and Patterson, good credentials to say the least. The welds and workmanship on the RRS are virtually the same.

Although all of the RRS high technology shouts of trickness, it would have been all for naught if the bike couldn't handle turn one, or jump two, for that matter. Up on our bench the bike appears to have all the good angles: a seventy-one-degree head angle (same as the Mongoose Two/Four) and a sixty-eight-degree seat angle. Length- and height-wise the bike is short and low. Very low. The top tube tapers out to a very low-slung twenty-seven inches, which is seven full inches lower than the Mongoose 2/4. This dimension should



**The RRS Un-Cruiser—Trickness that turns heads with performance that corners the market.**

make the Un-Cruiser a very appealing mount for the younger ages. Figure that the maximum safe frame size you'll fit should be no higher than one or two inches less than your inseam. At thirty-eight inches the wheelbase is just two inches longer than your average BMX bike. Most of the other twenty-fours we've tested run about forty inches long.

### Statistically Speaking

Looking at the dimensions it's no wonder the RRS feels more like a twenty-incher than any of its contemporaries. Not that a twenty-incher has all the desired characteristics you'd want in a twenty-four; it lacks the stability of a twenty-four. What they've got is a great compromise. The Un-Cruiser has, for a twenty-four, good agility and responsiveness, which are twenty-incher traits, plus twenty-four-incher stability, smoothness, and balance. It works out to a good compromise in our book. In turns, the RRS works for the rider when he's centered or with weight slightly forward. The bike is quick off the gate; the short, compact feel helps you get off the line like you were on a twenty-incher. The bike's light weight doesn't hurt either; even with steel cranks ours still weighed under twenty-seven pounds. It's easy to see how Joe Claveau was able to capture that ABA Number One Cruiser plate aboard his Un-Cruiser. The bike is well suited for most of the tight ABA tracks where the start is vital.

### Conclusion

Do you know the type of people who can't pass by a button without pushing it to see what happens? Or the kind of kid who takes everything apart he can get his hands on just to see how it's screwed together? The kind of guy who buys a digital, all-in-one chronometer-calculator-stopwatch-space Invader wristwatch? Well, they are the types that are likely to appreciate the RRS Un-Cruiser (or any RRS for that matter). It's not for everyone. If you're not mechanically inclined, avoid this bike. Like a finely tuned race car, it requires competent maintenance to keep it in top tune. When its dialed-in it'll perform in a first class manner and stay that way as long as or longer than any other bike, but when it isn't, it can be a real bear. Sorry, it's just the nature of the beast. Again, the RRS is not the machine for the I'll-get-a-bigger-hammer-type mechanic. It was never meant to be. It was meant to be for those who have a craving for the refined □