

FREE
FORM
EX

The prettiest bike in freestyle



instead of Skyway's all-nylon construction. Unfortunately, the Red Stone wheels aren't up to par with Skyway's in the rim trueness department; the EX's both had slight wobbles and caused frowns by dragging on the brake shoes.

THE FRAME GAME

The frame, forks, bars and seatpost of the EX are the same as the Free Form Pro's, with the exception of the top-tube platform. The Pro has a large, loop-style platform, and the EX has only a small semi-circle on the seat stays where the brake bridge usually is. The brakes on both the Pro and EX are mounted underneath the chain stays. This has proven to be the most out-of-the-way arrangement, but the brakes are more exposed to dirt and slime than in the normal position. Most freestylers don't ride in dirt and slime, though, so that shouldn't present much of a problem. The tubing used on the top and down tubes is "Bi-oval" (normal, round tubing up to about three inches before the head tube, where it becomes oval, larger in diameter and thicker). The entire frame, as well as the forks, bars, cranks and seatpost are chromoly. Platforms? The EX has 'em; some good, some not so good. We already mentioned the top-tube platform, plus, there's a "center step" (between the seat and down tubes), rear dropout platforms and a trick little bend in the left chain stay that gives a bit more footing behind the bottom bracket when you stop there before, during or after sweet ground moves—a Schwinn innovation. There are no fork platforms of any kind.

■ "Oh, that sure is a pretty bike!" Kaye the receptionist exclaimed as she passed through the office. Geez, a pretty bike? The bad part is, Kaye is right. The Free Form EX is pretty—prettier than any bike (by far) we've seen and probably more beautiful than a scenic mountain-top forest stream, sprinkled with fresh daisies and butterflies fluttering gaily about. Don't get the wrong idea, though. The EX is pretty, but it fits right into today's world of bright, cheery, "new wave"-type colors and graphics.

LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING
Bold, multi-hued graphics, white paint (with chrome stays and forks) and purple parts. It looks spiffy, if that's your scene. If not, you can "Euro" your bike in any color you desire with a can of spray paint. However, bright colors and cool graphics don't matter on your backyard ramp or when you're goin' for a fresh new ground trick. The bike has to perform.

The Free Form EX was designed for the average, intermediate-level 'styler. At \$280, it suits his budget, but to meet the high standards of a potential pro, it has to be freestyle-ready. The components list reads like those of many bikes in this price range: ACS Rotor, Dia-Compe brakes, chromoly cranks and Cheng Shin tires. The wheels, however, are a different story. They're made in Taiwan by a company called Red Stone and look similar to Skyway Tuff IIs, but have steel hub flanges

If the Schwinn didn't handle great, Gabe Marroquin wouldn't be doing a no-handed fakie—that's a fact. But with the rear platforms, you won't see him doing any rocket airs—a fact also. ▶



We wouldn't have signed 'em unless we designed 'em.

There's a lot riding on a name. Especially when it's R.L. Osborn or Fred Blood. They've put their names on some great bikes they've designed for General. As they say "we wouldn't put our good names on anything less."

Here's R.L. doing the "rubber ride". He makes it look easy on his Osborn Pro from General - nobody does it any better. R.L. designed the bike for General, to his specifications; chromoly frame, fork and bars, Peregrine 48s, tubular 3-piece cranks, Dia-Compe 990 brake system - and priced around \$550. The Osborn Pro is also available in frame and fork separately for under \$200.

R.L. hasn't forgotten you guys on tighter budgets, either. He and General

built the R.L. Signature Hustler Pro, with you in mind. Its got chromoly main tubes and crank, ACS rotor and Dia-Compe alloy brakes. You know R.L. believes in it - he's put his signature on it. Retail for around \$265.

Here's Fred Blood gettin' rad! He has his own ideas when it comes to designing a bike with his name on it! He calls his bike the Blood Pro. Its got a chromoly fork, frame and crank and Dia-Compe 990 brake system and priced around \$375.

Check out your General dealer's lineup of Blood and Osborn signature bikes.

Chances are you'll find a bike there with your name all over it.

Do you want Fred and R.L. looking aggro in your room? Your General dealer has a free 18" x 24" poster of them, for you. See your nearest General dealer - if you don't know where he is, contact us and we'll tell you - and, be sure to ask him about our "free style" co-sponsorship program.



R.L. Signature Hustler Pro

GENERAL

THE LOWDOWN

The geometry is dual-purpose—ground or ramps. The 76-degree head angle and 70-degree seat tube angle, combined with a roomy front triangle, make it handle quick on the ground but give air men enough space and control to contort. Bone-stock, the seven-inch-high bars, combined with the Rotor, balance out to a comfortable size for most guys, but a few complained that they were too low. If you're over five feet, ten inches or so, taller bars might be in order. The lowered, flattened crossbar is cool, but the bend of the grip area is straighter than normal and requires some getting used to. The Yo! seat is as comfortable as a regular Viscount, and it has finger notches in the nose and a nylon wheel in the back for seat grinder antics—nice concept, but the wheel is too narrow and rounded, making those tricks difficult. We also bent the rails. The front MX-900 calipers and rear MX-750 centerpull brakes worked absolutely great after they were dialed in. The wheels held up fine, despite their slight wobbles, but flexed a lot under small-ramp Miami hoppers and the

like. The Cheng Shin tires gripped and rolled as they usually do—great. And the Dice valve caps add a nice touch and help build confidence in those who believe in luck. The plastic HTI pedals held up but were a bit slick. The seat-stay platform works well, is out of the way, and doesn't add a lot of weight, but a top-tube platform is needed for framestand

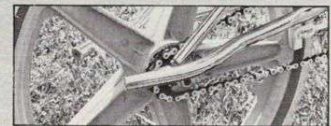
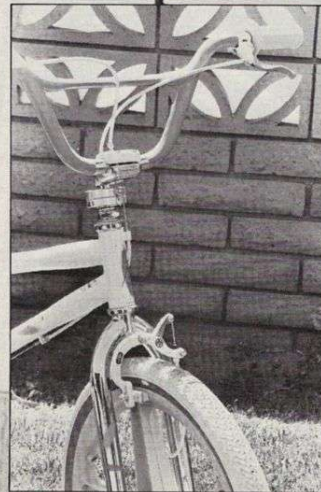
FREE FORM



Kuwahara's Mike Loveridge, Chris Obermeyer and Gabe Marroquin helped us test the Schwinn. Gabe was blazing his intense variations (this lookdown, for example) in a matter of minutes—the Schwinn is controllable and stable in the air.



◀ The Yo! seat holds up, but the roller wheel needs to be wider and flatter to make seat grinders easier. Loveridge in control.



The bad part of the bike. See how the too-narrow platform extends over the axle? That doesn't leave enough room for an axle peg. The Red Stone mags aren't the worst, but they don't compare with Skyway or Peregrine mags. On the other hand, the Dia-Compe centerpulls worked great.

◀ Rotor? Great. Lowrider bars? Great for average-sized guys but too low for basketball types. ACS stem? Not their top stem, but it held firmly and held up. Bi-Oval top and down tubes? They add strength without much weight. All-chromoly tubes? Great. Dia-Compe brakes and levers? Great. Cheng Shin tires? Great. Fake Mushroom grips? Not the worst, but far from the best.



With the exception of the not-so-great rear pegs and the nonexistent front pegs, the EX is a great-handling bike. Loveridge doing the ten-day trick, a.k.a. a decade.

