



MAJOR FREESTYLE MACHINERY FROM THE WINDY CITY

SCHWINN

FREE- Z FORM

Style
& air from the all-
American bike company

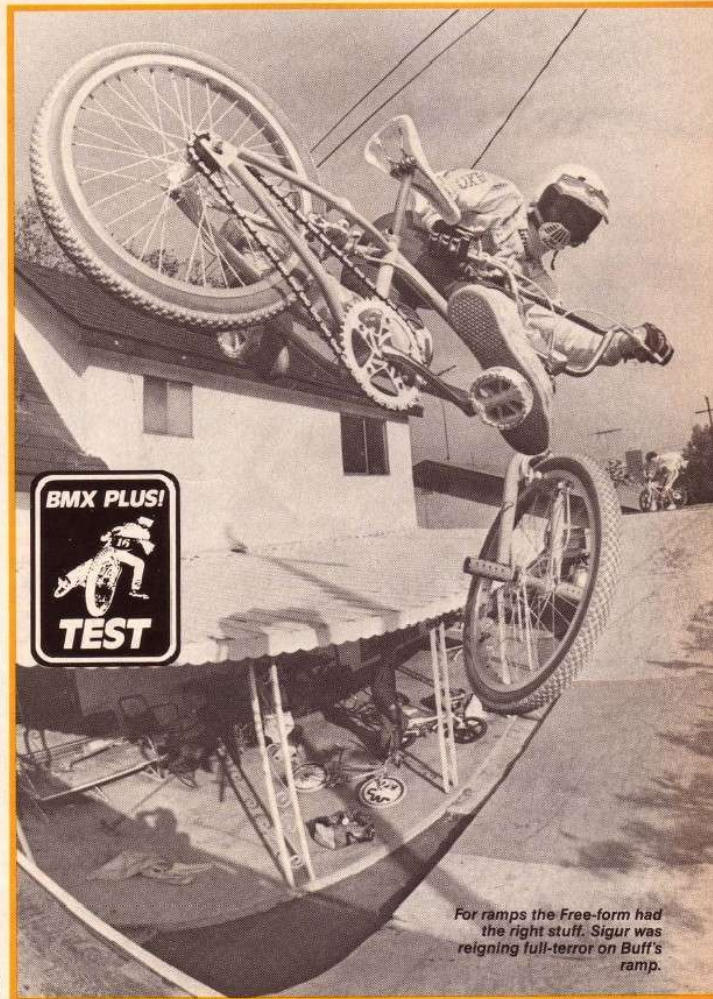
□ Schwinn Bicycle Company—the name is practically synonymous with bicycles in America. Nearly every all-American town has a Schwinn dealership within its boundaries. The very first BMX bikes were modified Schwinn Sting Rays. Over the past year or so, Schwinn's BMX program has evolved from racing into freestyle. The Schwinn freestyle bike lineup consists of two bikes: The Free-form EX and the Free-form Z. *Plus!* tested the EX a while back, so this time we're going for the Z.

SUCH A DEAL!

The Free-form Z is available at Schwinn dealerships for \$199.95. What kind of bike can you expect for the bucks? One that is contest-ready right out the door, that's what kind. Not only does the Z have a Potts modification for the front brakes, it also has a Rotor mod for the rear. For a bike in this price range, that's incredible! Our test bike had a light-blue finish, which, along with the white components, made the bike look great! Our test bike also had Araya 7X rims and Dia-Compe centerpull brakes. For \$199.95, the Z screams, "Buy me!"

A HOP, WHIP, AND A JUMP

The Test Force crew was briefed on the specifics of the Schwinn, such as price, availability, etc., and then headed out to Huntington Beach for some flatland



For ramps the Free-form had the right stuff. Sigur was reigning full-terror on Buff's ramp.

riding. Test Force members in attendance for this one were Rich Sigur and Randy Tischmann.

It's seldom that a test bike receives instant raves from our riders, but the Z was such a bike. The steering was *perfect* for ground tricks, thanks to the steep 75-degree head angle. Our crew found they could do almost every ground trick in the world on this bike, without even having to think about getting used to it. The Z was perfect for up-rock footwork, as well

as for spinning tricks, such as boomerangs, tail whips and jump-ropes.

When asked if the bike had any major problems, both guys had the same answer—NO! The brakes worked great; the handling worked out fine, and everything about the bike was solid and working perfectly. The only criticism the guys had about the Z was the fact that it didn't come with axle pegs. We added some in order to make the test more interesting. The addition of footpegs



Within ten minutes, Randy was pulling off moves like this. According to Randy, "The second I stepped on the bike, I was pulling off tricks. It usually takes me a while to get used to a bike."

makes the bike one of the most competitive flatland freestyle bikes out there. And what's even more attractive is the fact that it's such an inexpensive bike. Even if you're not a bit interested in entering freestyle contests, the Z can provide you with a slick way around town. If, however, the desire arises, it's nice to know that you can always hit the streets and style your brains out. Additionally, the Rotor as original equipment is an excellent touch, and the recessed brake bolt keeps the brakes out of the way. Finally, the cable routing is first-rate; instead of routing the cable through brazed-on cable guides, the Z routes them through the inside of the tubes. We were repeatedly amazed at Schwinn's attention to detail on such a low-priced bike. It is like they designed a three or four hundred dollar bike and made a mistake in the pricing.

What about ramps? Well, after we were through with flatland at Huntington Beach, we jammed over to Mike Buff's house to clock some office time on his monster halfpipe. Rich was the first to start blasting airs on the Free-form. He found the front end of the bike a bit longer than what he was used to (a Haro Sport), but this had its advantages. As a result, the bike felt more stable, meaning that when you go for five feet of air, you don't get something you didn't bargain for. Within a matter of minutes, Rich was maxin' out at about six feet of

air. His look-backs were excellent, his inverts were way past flat. Everything he wanted the bike to do, it did—and when he wanted it to. Randy (who is used to a smaller frame design and smaller bars) had to lower the seat considerably so it would fit him. He also needed to lower the bars but wasn't able to do so, because of the Rotor. As a result, he really wasn't able to hit his full potential on the bike. For Randy the Rotor ended up being a trade-off—because of it, he was able to pull off killer ground moves, but it was at the expense of his aeriels. Which you'd prefer giving up is your decision if you have to lower the stem.

WHAT ELSE?

Well, the Free-form Z has incredible potential to pilot any beginning freestyler to the big leagues. All the right ingredients are there: proper angles, up-to-the-minute brake modifications, exceptional looks, and a price tag that won't compel your parents to tax your allowance for the rest of your life. In fact, this bike may be the best buy in freestyle today. Everything about the bike proved first-rate. The brakes worked great from start to finish. The cranks never tweaked. The pedals stayed straight. The stem held. The only evidence that we had even ridden the bike was that two large-scale hang-ups on the halfpipe made it necessary to perform a little minor rim truing on the wheels. If your aeriels are in the six-foot category like Sigur's, and



Little things make a big difference. We liked the placement of the seat in relation to the handlebars. The Schwinn folks did their homework on this one.

you have a tendency to hang up on your reentries, you might want to try some Tuff Wheels, but otherwise, we think anybody would be more than happy with the kind of performance we found with the Z.

A MILITARY ENDING

Yes, that's right. We subjected the Free-form Z to CORPORAL punishment, and it stood up to it. The GENERAL impression was that the Z is the best deal in freestyle—all things considered. Finally, the Schwinn made a MAJOR impression on the staff (on both technical and performance fronts). But hey, don't tell anyone—it's PRIVATE! □



Thickness abounds on the Z. Note the centerpull rear brake—it worked great. The cable goes through the Rotor and then through the inside of the bike's top tube. The only thing we didn't like was the choice of pedals—that is, until we tried them. They looked cheap, but they worked fine.

◀ This is NOT the kind of move you want to try with a bad-handling bike. Rich was highly impressed with the Free-form Z's handling.

BMX PLUS!



1. Bike: Schwinn Free-form Z.
2. Age range: 12 years and up.
3. Country of origin: Taiwan.
4. Intended use: Freestyle/street.
5. Wheelbase: 36" to 37".
6. Bottom-bracket height: 11-3/8" (center to ground).
7. Chain stay length: 15-1/2" (center of bottom bracket to midpoint of rear dropout).
8. Steering head angle: 75°.
9. Seat tube angle: 68.5°.
10. Frame: Schwinn Free-form, 100-percent chromoly, 4-1/2" head tube, 1-1/8" O.D. top tube, 1-1/8" O.D. down tube, 3/4" O.D. chain stays.
11. Fork: Schwinn Free-form, leading-axle, chromoly.
12. Rims: Araya 7X, 36-hole, silver.
13. Spokes: Chun-Nan, 14-gauge, painted white.
14. Hubs: Jou/Yu, 36-hole, alloy, painted white, chromoly axle.
15. Tires: Cheng Shin skinwall, 20" x 1.75", front and rear.
16. Cranks: Sugino, 175mm, chromoly, chrome-plated.
17. Pedals: Heliang TA, 1/2" chromoly shaft.
18. Chain: KMC, 1/2" x 1/8".
19. Bottom bracket: Tein Hsin, steel.
20. Front sprocket: Sugino, steel, 44T, Sugino steel spider.
21. Rear sprocket or freewheel: Sunfour freewheel, 16T, 1/2" x 3/32", chromoly.
22. Brakes: Dia-Compe FIS 880, sidepull (front) levers, Tech-5.
23. Headset: YST, HP-02 steel, retainered ball.
24. Stem: ACS Polygon, alloy clamping head, chromoly, 27.5" width x 8" rise (center line of clamp area to center line of grip).
25. Handlebars: Schwinn freestyle, chromoly, chrome-plated, 27.5" width x 8" rise (center line of grip).
26. Grips: Generic, mushroom type, rubber, blue.
27. Seating: Viscount Dominator, white plastic, steel undercarriage.
28. Miscellaneous: ACS Rotor Modification, safety pads, CPSC equipment.
29. Overall weight: 26-34 lbs. (minus C.P.S.C. equipment and numberplate).
30. Approximate retail price: \$199.95.
31. For additional information contact: Schwinn Bicycle Company, 1856 Kostner Ave., Chicago, IL 60639; (312)292-2900.

The Free-form Z is one of the best buys in freestyle. For \$199.95 you get Potts and Rotor mods, as well as genuine Dia-Compe brakes and a host of other class compenetry. We don't want to give Schwinn any ideas, but they could get a lot more for this pup!