

SCHWINN PREDATOR 24 Beautiful Beast

By Bob Hadley

Photos by John Ker

Schwinn's new Predator line is amazing. In dollar-for-dollar value, it's blitzing its way into the industry's fastest growing and most competitive market: midprice lightweights (mid-price bikes going for \$300 or less). We'll spell it out for you: There's a price war going on and every major manufacturer is involved. The result is a wide selection of models and brands. Wider than ever before. That's not even the best part, because not only is the selection better, but, considering the clunky thrashers you had to settle for at the same price two years ago, these bikes are extremely high in quality. The Predators are a perfect example. Of the seven current Predator models (not counting the Schwinn Sting), the top four are lightweights with freewheels, that sell for only \$290 or less (one is a twenty-four and the other three are twenties).



While punishing the Predator 24, Test Pilot Aparijo was appropriately attired for battle in one of our new designer class action suits. Pants by Max, jerseys by Garment Graphics and design by the ever-fashionable Damian.



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SCHWINN PREDATOR 24

Schwinn-Spec Components

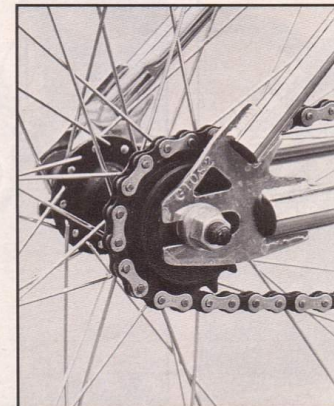
We generally don't like to quote advertisement copy in tests, but Schwinn's recent Predator ad was on target when it described the component selection on some bikes:

All too often, the parts that get bolted onto a BMX machine are decided by "bean-counting" accountants instead of BMX experts. . . . Our components are hand-picked and precisely matched to the function of each Predator.

It is true that most bikes do have a mismatched component here or there—like a short crank and a hard gear, or a tall bar with a short extension stem. Schwinn chose their components with the help of experts, namely their team. With respect to our Team 24 test bike, Schwinn spokesman Fred Teeman noted that factory rider Rob Eisenberg was involved in several points on the bike including the "designed from scratch" handlebars.

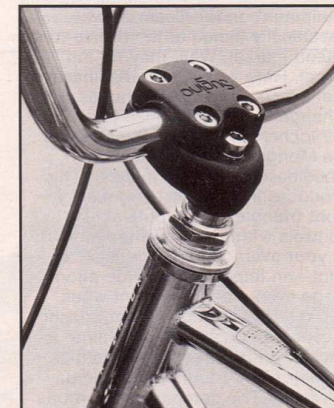
In our opinion, Schwinn lives up to their claim of precisely matched components. Those parts were chosen to fit riders in the twelve-to-fifteen-year-old age bracket. All the components and basic frame geometry are consistent in meeting that functional requirement.

The ensemble is one of familiar names. Accounting for the rotating parts, we have Araya 7X rims, Sunshine hubs, Sugino one-piece cranks and SR solid-body alloy pedals. The 7X's, which are preferred hardware in anyone's book, are laced to the hubs in a three-cross weave. This is adequate for most riders, but a four-cross weave would give heavy riders additional radial support. Curiously, the rear Sunshine is a low-flange hub while the front is a high-flange model. Not that this creates a drastic departure, but usually you either find sets to be one or the other. The Sugino cranks are distinguished by their semi-polished finish. They aren't the highly polished, shiny beauties that Sugino brands for the aftermarket. Still, they are chrome-moly and up to the same strength specifications



The Schwinn's dropouts in two words? Short and sweet. They offer just a hair over one inch of axle adjustment, helping to keep the wheelbase to a compact 38-1/2 to 39-1/2 inches—almost a full three inches shorter than the longest 24—the 'Goose 24.

as the regular Sugino chrome-moly 175mm units. According to Teeman, these cranks are short cut in the polishing process to keep the cost down. As for the SR pedals, they were featured two issues back in "In Search of Pedals for the Bigfoot" where Craig Kundig explained, "The SR looks like a skrunned-down KKT," and that their "smaller size and lighter weight make them better suited for the mid-sized BMX crowd."



Chances are, if you're twelve to fifteen years old, you'll find the Predator's compact proportions—including Sugino's short offset stem and low 6-1/2-inch-rise chrome-moly bars—to your liking.

Other Components

Other components are usually the first to fall to the axe of those "bean-counting" accountants" mentioned in Schwinn's promo copy. Although not as critical to the overall output as rotating parts are, the operational duties of items like the stem, levers, bars, and seat are critical. Bars that slip, stems that twist, or brakes that malfunction are hardly a bargain at any price. To meet the price and quality criteria, Schwinn went to Tokyo for the brakes and stem, and to Taipei for the seat, bars, and clamp.

As usual, the Dia-Compe calipers satisfy our every requirement for a brake. They feature quick-adjust and quick-release convenience systems. (The quick adjust is a Weinmann patent. We just like to see credit given where it's due.)

It took a while but Dia-Compe's long-awaited response to Shimano's highly successful DX lever is finally here. The new Tech 3 lever is a take-off on the old touring-style levers, but heavily modified and beefed up. The handle is short but a three-finger grasp is still possible. The extended housing moves the pivot farther from the bar, which increases the lever throw and the cable movement. An adjusting screw is supplied to allow you to dial-in the exact amount of reach you want. It's nice to see the Tech 3. There are a lot of riders who want a pro-style lever but don't like the DX's complexities or the unreliable performance of the counterfeit (yes, counterfeit) DX levers that have flooded the market recently.

Sugino's stem is a nice touch for this bike. It has a shorter offset but still sits about as low as a Pro-Neck stem. Clamping power is excellent—you could crush the bars if you wanted to. The binder bolt tightens firmly with an Allen wrench, yet a hammer wasn't required to loosen it.

From Taiwan come the Viscount seat clamp, seat post, and Aero saddle. The post is your standard-issue, fluted alloy type. The clamp is a cold-forged type similar to the SunTour or Tange clamps. Viscount has a decent saddle, but its nose attachment and rail lugs aren't as beefy as Kashimax's or Elina's. The seat guts, however, are sturdy, and the serrations in the tilt-lock plates are deep enough to prevent any slipping.

A Frame Up

One hundred percent chrome-moly construction is the prime feature of the Predator Team 24 frame, fork, and handlebar, all three of which are manufactured in Taiwan for



Martin's solution to a potentially dangerous and dirty combo of record rainfall, mudded-out test site, and brand-new, super-clean team uniform? Just fly around high and dry and look for a safe spot to land.



If you're a twenty-inch fan or an aspiring two-class racer, the Team 24 is a wise choice for an open-wheels class mount. If you want, you can almost duplicate the bar-to-seat dimensions of your 20 incher.

Schwinn by a company called Giant.

Surprised? You shouldn't be. Schwinn is one great American bicycle company that has long relied on producers in the Orient to supply them with bikes, though until now they have only been lightweight multi-speeds, not BMX models. Giant, as the name implies, is the number one producer of bicycles in Taiwan. The quality of their manufacturing on the Predator is similar to that of another Taiwanese-made bike, the Procraft, which we tested back in November of '82. As on the Procraft, the welding on the Predator isn't perfect.

Though the penetration appears good, the filleting is shallow in some areas. Comparatively, the beads aren't overlapped as tightly as on most American-made frames, indicating the concern for faster production. Still, the welds aren't sloppy looking. You're going to get what you pay for either way. Schwinn has enough confidence in Giant to offer a one-year warranty against a defective frame.

The Chicago Connection

The tubes and welds may be Taiwanese, but the design and cosmetics are straight out of the design division of Schwinn in Chicago. Like we said earlier, the equipment on the Team 24 was specifically aimed at the twelve-to-fifteen market. Well, they hit the target. Here we have a wheelbase that's a compact 38-3/4 inches, yet a hanger-to-axle distance that's 17-1/2 inches, or roughly the same as the Mongoose 2/4 (which has a wheelbase of over 41 inches). This produces a very short and stocky front triangle, which puts all the controls within a comfortable reach of your average junior cruiser pilot—an important consideration made even more important when you realize that most junior cruiser racers are constantly switching back and forth from their twenties to their twenty-fours all in one day of racing. The compact proportions of the Team 24 make it less likely to throw your senses off when you make the switch back and forth.

The sizing of the Predator is very similar to that of a good 20-inch

bike. For a twenty-four, it feels small. In fact, if a rider wanted to, he could almost duplicate the bar-to-crank-to-seat relationship from his little bike to the Team 24. That would mean stepping right onto the Predator without having to make any physical adjustments.

Of course, it is impossible to add two inches to the radius of each wheel and not notice it. This Predator still exhibits all the basic characteristics that are virtually inherent with bigger wheels: slower steering, better stability, and a smoother ride. In addition, the Team 24 has some handling traits that totally separate it from anything in its class. The balance characteristics are very different. The front wheel is easy to loft; that is, it's easy to tug up into a wheelie. But the loop-out point is relatively high. Most bikes with high loop-out points get that way because the front ends are heavy and difficult to loft. For the Schwinn, two factors contribute to this: the hanger height and the short front end. The hanger sits at around twelve inches, which is higher than any other twenty-four

we've ever tested. According to Schwinn's Teeman, all the first-run Predator Team 24's have this hanger height, but newer models will be lowered somewhat. Since neither the wheelbase, hanger-to-rear-axle distance, nor head angle will be altered, the only major side-effect of the change should be a slightly lower loop-out point. The lower hanger should also help make the bike even easier to balance on two-pedals starts. True, pedal clearance in turns will decrease somewhat, but this will not leave the Schwinn rider at any disadvantage.

Finally

After several days of getting used to the Predator, we found it a very easy bike to like, once we scrapped the original grips, which were killers. The 40-18 gearing was a bit too low for cruising but well suited for holeshotting at our local tracks like Orange and Ascot. Even the Maximizer tires worked well; they, like most snakebellies, favor hard-pack tracks but come up a little short on traction, especially up front, when it comes to the soft stuff.

Really, for \$290 you get one nice machine. We suggest only that you spend eight bucks on a new set of grips. From there you'll be ready to go.

Buying it, ah yes. It's a Schwinn and that means it's only available through an authorized Schwinn dealer. In spite of their wide brand-name recognition, you won't find Schwinn in any department store or garage shop; Schwinn refuses to go that route. Sure, their system of exclusive dealerships may make it harder for someone to find a Schwinn bike in some areas, but for



Produced for Schwinn by Giant, Taiwan's numero uno bike manufacturer, the Team 24 frame and fork are 100% chrome-moly and carry a confident one-year warranty against defects.



Believe it or not, what you're seeing here is a 17-1/2-inch rear end in action. Not Martin's, you dummy—the Team 24's. The Schwinn Maximizer tires, like most snakebellies, favored the hard pack over the mud and crud we put 'em through during testing.

the most part, it works to the consumer's advantage. It helps insure competent service (Schwinn is the only bicycle company that offers a service technician course for Schwinn mechanics only) as well as a line of decent-to-above-average components. We aren't saying that Schwinn dealers are the only credible places to buy bikes—not at all—there are scores of non-Schwinn shops that are both competent and trustworthy. It's just that Schwinn shops are sort of like McDonald's—you generally can feel safe about going in any one, anywhere, and not getting ripped off. And if you do have a problem, Schwinn has a staff of go-getters in their consumer relations office ready to help. What more could you ask for from a company whose president gets chauffeured on a bicycle to plug credit cards.

The Dawning of a New Age

With the exception of the Sting and the Sting Competition models, Schwinn had nothing to offer the BMX racer in 1982. If you wanted a BMX bike under \$350, you had to look elsewhere. In 1983 Schwinn did a 180-degree turnaround by bringing out the Predator line. It features nine models, all competitive in their price classes. The Predator line is divided into three classes: the Pro Series, the Team Series, and the Cr+Mo (Schwinn's designation for chrome-moly) Series.

The Pro Series features the Predator Sting and Predator Competition. The Sting, known for its brazed tri-oval (expanded tube ends at head tube and bottom bracket), double-butted (increased wall thickness at the ends) frame and fork, is still the top bike. It's the only Predator made in the States. It is set up with good components aimed at the older rider. At \$400, it is \$130 less than the '82 Sting. The Competition is a Taiwan-made bi-oval (flared only at the head tube) frame. Aimed at a slightly younger

crowd than the Sting, it has alloy cranks. Other components are comparable to the Sting. The Competition sells for \$290—that's \$50 off of last year's retail price.

The Team Series has three models; the Team 24 (which we tested), the 20" Team Alloy, and the Team Z. The Team Alloy and Z are the same bikes except for the option of alloy rims or ACS Z rims. All three feature full chrome-moly frame and fork sets with a large oval down tube. Componentry is basically the same except for the size differences in bars, wheels, and tires. The 20" models feature alloy cranks rather than steel. The 24 is \$260 and the Alloy and Z are \$240 and \$245 respectively.

The Cr+Mo Series features four models; Cr+Mo+Mag with freewheel, Cr+Mo+Mag with coaster, Cr+Mo+Free and the Cr+Mo+Pit. The three 20" models (the Cr+Mo+Pit is a 16" if you haven't guessed) feature an all-chrome-moly frame with twin-plate head gusset since no ovalized tubing is used. The forks are not chrome-moly. The componentry

By Craig Kundig

offers a race look at a thrasher price. The two Mag bikes feature Taiwanese mags and are identical except for the difference of a freewheel or coaster. The coaster is \$190 and the freewheel is \$15 more. The Cr+Mo+Free looks like a \$250 race bike at first glance. Its tinted steel rims allow it to sell for \$175. It's a hot ticket for a non-racer who wants a racing-styled bike. The Cr+Mo+Pit is a pit bike with components that are similar to its larger brothers. It is designed for an older rider, but with a few changes, it could be used by a young racer. At \$165 it is probably the least expensive true pit bike out.

All nine Predators come in chrome with new computerized decals. All bikes come in black trim. Red trim is available on the four bikes in the Cr+Mo Series. It is truly a whole new line. Even the Schwinn metal headplate is gone, replaced by a Predator sticker with Schwinn's name hidden in the design. It is the dawning of a new age for Schwinn BMX.

Bike: SCHWINN PREDATOR TEAM 24
Age Range: 10 AND OVER
Country of Origin: TAIWAN
Intended Use: HIGH PERFORMANCE
STREET/TRAIL, RACING
Frame: SCHWINN BY GIANT 4130 CHROME-MOLY HELI-ARC WELDED, CHROME PLATED FEATURING "BI-OVAL" OVAL DOWN TUBE, TOP TUBE OD 1", 3/8" O.D. SEAT/CHAIN STAYS, AMERICAN STYLE BOTTOM BRACKET, 4" HEADTUBE, HELI-ARC WELDED
Fork: SCHWINN BY GIANT 4130 CHROME-MOLY CHROME PLATED, OVALIZED LEGS W/ LEADING AXLE. RAKE 1 3/8" Wheelbase: 38 3/4" - 39 1/4" Top Tube: 20 1/2" Chainstay: 17" Bottom Bracket Height: 13" Steering Head Angle: 75° Seat Tube: 70°
Wheels: RIMS: ARAYA 24x1.75" 7x ALLOY 36 HOLE. SPOKES: 080 CAPMIUM PLATED. HUBS: SUNSHINE ALLOY HIGH FLANGE FRONT, LOW FLANGE REAR, LOOSE BALL. TIRES: SCHWINN MAXIMIZER SKINWALLS 24x1.75" FRONT AND REAR (35-40 PSI)
Drive Train: CRANKS: SUGINO CR-MO ONE PIECE 180 MM W/ RETAINER BEARINGS. PEDALS: SR MODEL SP468 ONE PIECE ALLOY BODY W/ 1/2" CHROME MOLY SHAFTS. CHAIN: TYC 1/2" x 1/8" BLACK/CHROME. FRONT SPROCKET: SUGINO 40T QUICK CHANGE ALLOY W/ SUGINO CHROME-MOLY EPIDER. FREEWHEEL: SUNTOUR 18T. Brakes: DIA COMPE MX-900 CALIPERS/CABLES / TECH 3 LEVERS FRONT/REAR ETC. HEADSET: TANGE MX-2 TYPE STEEL. STEM: SUGINO ALLOY 4 BOLT CLAMP W/ CRO-MOLY HELI-ARC WELDED HANDLEBARS: SCHWINN BY GIANT 4130 CRO-MOLY HELI-ARC WELDED CHROME PLATED -6 1/2" RISE X 26" W. GRIPS: VINYL CAM SHAPE ALLOY FLE PATTERN. SEATING: VISICOUNT AERO PLASTIC W/ 7/8" FLUTED ALLOY POST. SAFETY STYLE SEAT CLAMP AND SUNTOUR TYPE ALLOY POST CLAMP.
 OVERALL WEIGHT: 26 1/2 LBS.
 SUGGESTED RETAIL: \$250-270.
 FOR MORE INFO CONTACT: SCHWINN BICYCLE CO.

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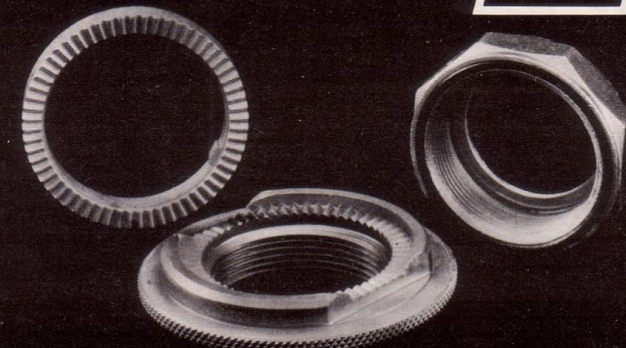
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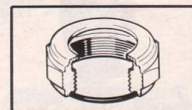


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