



SENTINEL AX EXPLODER



BMX PLUS!

The crash was spectacularly hilarious...

Red and yellow. That's the first thing your brain says when you initially see the Sentinel Scorpion AX. Throw a leg over the slick Kashimax MX saddle, and grab the Scorpion V-bars, and you'll find everything fits naturally, comfortably. A quick ride about the block indicates nothing outstanding, nothing bad anyway. The crank position, seat angle and weight bias all seem pretty mellow. Definitely a taller gear than the stock 44/19 is in order. But, no matter. As soon as the test gets underway, we'll really see how this machine works.

A quick once over with the tool kit readied the Scorpion for our first photo test session at Saddleback Park in Irvine. The first run down the Pro track proved that Bendix Coaster brakes haven't changed much over the past few years, if anything, they're worse. The brakes are so touchy that the only way they respond is either all brake, or coast, no progressive action in between. Bendix hubs usually take a good three to six months of normal use to break in and wear out all the rough action. The back pedal throw is fairly normal for CPSC approved brakes, a bit more than a Shimano or Suntour Coaster brake, but not much. Most of our test riders are used to free wheels, so it took a while to get the hang of the coaster brake again.

Laps two and three didn't provide surprises. The Scorpion felt right at home on the cobbley surface and fast down hills. The Sentinel 37 inch wheel base is about the standard length for most of the good handling bikes of similar diminutive proportions. About this time, John was ready to start shooting the photos. The first turn provided a good back drop for some fast slides which

the AX handled no sweat. The first time anyway (photo). Run number two provided one big surprise for our "man in the saddle." As he laid the bike down for the drift, he shifted his weight on to the seat to break the rear wheel loose. The second his butt hit the saddle, the seat post said "bye" and dumped our iron man's derriere right off the seat and into the dirt. The crash was spectacularly hilarious. As he got up (down the track about 50 feet), he dusted himself off and shouted various obscenities at the seat post. The post, as it turns out, is just a crummy piece of pot metal with the usual CPSC junk stamped on it. It's a standard 7/8 inch seat post (ala Red Line) size, so replacements are easy to find, but out in the sticks at Saddleback, no dice. The mishap brought our photo session to an abrupt halt, at least with the Scorpion. Fortunately, we had two other bikes to test the same day.

Back at the office, John had a field day telling everyone how great the crash was, and eventually we got around to discussing the test session. Outside of the bumper seat post, the overall bike felt pretty solid, handled well, and responded smoothly, even with the "heavier than thou" ACS Stroker mags. We robbed the seat post out of our resident Red Line to replace the tweaked stocker, and took off to "Tradondo" Park to finish shooting the photos.

As we motored out to the test site with a new seat post and 44/16 gearing, we expected all the bad traits to show up. Frankly, we expected the bars to slip, the wheels to wobble, and the frame to flex. A real rough day of riding, BMX PLUS! style, can bring out the worst in a bike. Know what? We were stunned. The Scorpion

really surprised us. The frame is stiff, rigid, tough, fairly light, and good looking. All the good things you want in a frame, plus some extras that we'll discuss later. The Sentinel V-bars did not slip in the black Ashtabula gooseneck, and in our opinion, they offer a glimmer of hope to all the millions of Ashtabula gooseneck owners who have chronic bar slipping problems. Like we said, the ACS mags are heavy, but they are considerably thrashable, except for the front axle which bent fairly easily (it shouldn't have bent at all). Only one other problem came up during the test, that was with the stock pedals which (suspiciously) look like Union pedals painted black. These were about as good as the pedals that we tested on the Schwinn SX-2000 in the May 1980 BMX PLUS!, which lasted about two days before they decided that they'd like to live in the trash instead of on the bike.

After all the photos were shot with the bike in the stock configuration, we took off the ACS rear wheel and replaced it with a free wheel and caliper hand brake. We wanted to see if the bike could be easily converted to a free wheel race set up with no hassle. The free wheel slipped right in with no frame stretching or off the wall wheel spacing. The Dia-Compe calipers we installed also had no problem reaching the rim throughout the length of the wheel adjustment. With alloy wheel, the weight of the Scorpion is brought down to a very competitive 25 pounds. Handling is also improved. Where it was good before, (with the ACS wheels), it was superb with the alloy wheels. The free wheel offered the mobility and agility that we wanted. With it, the inner qualities of the bike came through.

(continued)



The first turn at Saddleback, a loamy sweeper, with a slight Daytona bank, gets ripped up by the AX.

Sentinel's distinctive name plate and clean lug work, are representative of the thorough workmanship.



Lots of room for riders of all sizes, is a big advantage in a thrasher. You can grow into a Scorpion easily.



Nothing especially outrageous happening here, the Scorpion is a reliable (with some changes), versatile machine.

By far, the most demanding part of the whole test came during a fire road run with L.A. Hot Shoe Mike Ireland (Dad's) and Mike Bush (Factory Red Line). Our editor (he thinks), took the two for a training run down a four mile stretch of fire road that is one of the fastest, gnarliest, and longest sustained runs in the L.A. area. The guys spent over an hour and a half hiking up the trail to make the run down, but it was well worth it. The Scorpion handled the numerous turns, rough straightaways, and off cambers with no sweat and earned our BMX PLUS! Triple Star award for handling flawlessly in almost every situation. Jumps, bumps, off cambers, shoulder high berms and drop away turns were all easy pickings for the Scorpion.

DETAILS

FRAME: The most outstanding feature of the Scorpion frame is its use of lugs to join the tubing at critical stress areas. If you don't know what a lug is, check out the Sentinel Scorpion ad, it's one of

the most informative ads to come along (even outside the funny picture of the geek with no visor!). Nice things that most folks take for granted, are smooth fitting head and bottom bracket cups, close tolerances in the seat post and sharp chain alignment. The Scorpion is spot on in all these areas.

FORK: Sentinel's Tange fork follows along the tradition of Red Line's Pro Line fork, which revolutionized forks, twice. Tange's drop outs are thicker than Red Line's, which could eliminate any breakage problems. Tolerances are tight, so goosenecks don't get the wobbles, and the threads on the stem are clean and burr free. The ends are capped off with chrome plated furniture plugs (like Pro Line's), and we had no problems with them popping out. The fork is drilled for a front brake if you want one. We never installed one, so we can't tell you if it's positioned right or not.

HANDLEBARS: Sentinel V-bars are shaped as perfectly as they

could be, and they work like the devil, in standard stems. Sentinel also makes a bar without the expanded center section for those who want that shape for double clamp stems.

MISC: All the Sentinel parts are furnished with electrostatically applied paint, which provides one of the most durable coatings around. The AX also comes with a complete set of Scorpion high quality safety pads. The Kenda Tires 2.125 front, and rear 1.75 are great rubber for all around use.

SUMMARY: Paul Hinkston is basically the man behind the Sentinel MX effort. Paul resigned from Shimano in 1977 to take a position in the higher ups at Sentinel, which is a Chatsworth, CA based operation. At the time we expected to see fast new changes to hit the market. Instead, Paul and the Scorpion people have kept us waiting, patiently, for his creations to be unleashed. Believe it, the wait was well worth it!

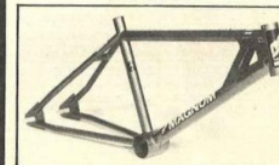


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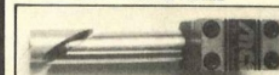
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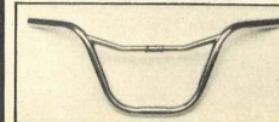
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