

# SLING SHOT

A look at BMX's high-sprung, high-strung high-techster

□ Some months back, Editor Ker walked in on a Monday morning after covering a race that weekend and began to tell some mighty tall tales. Now this in itself is nothing out of the ordinary, as Ker routinely returns with wild and



**It's a bird! It's a plane! It's BMX's most exotic flying machine, the Sling Shot! Up until now we thought we'd seen it all. The Sling Shot quickly changed all that.**



There's no doubt that the futuristic folks of Greendale Bicycle Company march to a different drummer when it comes to BMX. There's also no doubt that the high-tech, high-strung Sling Shot must be taken seriously. Is this tomorrow's bike today? Only time will tell.

woolly race tales that would make any self-respecting BMXer blush. But this time was different. Ker, who's a rider statistic nut, was rambling on and on about this bicycle. Not just any bicycle, but a bike that had "cables and springs and things, but no down tube." Now, we've run across some truly bizarre bikes out there, some that would have made better boat anchors than bikes, but Ker contended that maybe this thing called a Sling Shot was really legit.

In fact, shortly thereafter, an up-and-coming AA Pro, Brent Walk, actually

rode this Sling Shot contraption to a win at the Toledo Super Bowl of BMX. Now, you don't just go out and win a national-caliber race on a boat anchor. Especially the AA Pro class! Curiosity was killing us. We had to get our hands on one of these Sling Shots.

## WHAT IS A SLING SHOT?

Since that time Walk rode to glory, the folks behind the bizarre Sling Shot, Greendale Bicycle Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, have begun production on these frames and have even begun to advertise them. Maybe you've seen these ads. Maybe you haven't. If

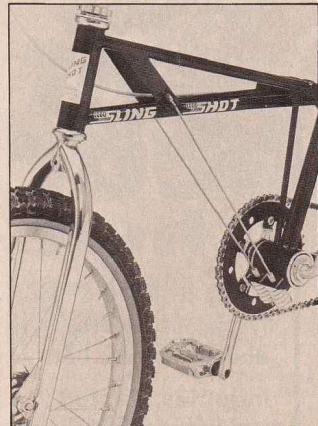
you haven't, here are a few of the claimed advantages of the Sling Shot frame:

- Improves your acceleration by increasing your power stroke to get you out of the hole quicker.
- Helps eliminate shock and jarring to the body, so more energy is used on the pedals.
- Sling Shot's features make it one of the strongest constructed frames being ridden today.

Some pretty heavy claims indeed. But could the unique new Sling Shot really live up to them? We were admittedly skeptical.

## A CLOSE LOOK INTO THE FRAME

First off, the Sling Shot is offered in a frame only. No complete bike as of yet. Greendale recommends the use of



Look, Mom, no down tube! The key behind the Sling Shot's unique action is these two stainless-steel cables, complete with their super-stiff springs.

**BMX PLUS!**  
**IMPRESSION!**



The Sling Shot's "spring plate member," or hinge, is made from a space-age composite called Kevlar, which is the same type of material used in bulletproof vests! High tech.

Bottema forks with the frame, just as we outfitted ours; however, any quality fork that will work with a larger five-inch head tube will do.

The entire Sling Shot frame is constructed of 4130 chromoly. To oversimplify a bit, the rear triangle of the bike is like what you'd find on many of today's popular 20-inchers; but, in front of the seat tube, things start to get kinda complicated. Obviously, the first thing you notice is the lack of a standard down tube. In its place you'll find two stainless-steel cables running from either side of the twin top tubes down to the bottom-bracket shell. Don't be afraid to raise your eyebrows. We did. These twin cables have a claimed breaking strength of 1760 pounds each and attach to the twin top tubes much like the end of a brake cable seats into a lever. On the bottom-bracket shell the cables run through two brackets, attach to two separate springs, and are fastened by means of a simple nut and washer. Got that? If you're having problems following this, check out some of the photos.

But the key to the Sling Shot frame is its so-called "spring plate member" integrated into its top tube. Actually, the spring plate is made from a block of space-age material known as Kevlar 49, which is the same material used in today's modern bulletproof vests. If you're still having a hard time understanding what's going on here, try to think of this Kevlar block in the top tube as a hinge. When the frame is stressed, the cables give. The springs absorb any slack while the Kevlar hinge allows the front triangle to gently pivot and absorb the shock.

## THE SLING SHOT RIDE

If you stand off to the side of the Sling Shot, put the pedal nearest you

in the six o'clock position and all your weight on that pedal, the Sling Shot feels no different than any 20-inch chassis. It's stiff with a lack of noticeable frame flex at the bottom bracket. And that's good. Flex at the bottom bracket is lost power.

In fact, the overall feel of the Sling Shot is quite stiff. If, like us, you thought that the Sling Shot would spring up and down like the mono-shocks of yesteryear, forget it. In fact, the only time you'll feel any action at all out of the Sling Shot is when you're loaded in the starting gate, fully weighting the pedals and torquing on the bars. Even then it's hard to trace. The cables don't noticeably flex or go slack.

Perhaps the most noticeable action is when landing hard after jumps or riding through particularly rough washboard-like sections. Here the Sling Shot feels "softer" than conventional race chassis. There's also less vibration and greater shock absorption.

Greendale offers assorted coil springs to accommodate individual riding styles, weights, etc. It might be a good idea when you order your particular frame to specify your weight and request that the appropriate springs be shipped along with the frame.

## DOES THE SLING SHOT LIVE UP TO ITS CLAIMS?

Yes and no. First off, the Sling Shot frame will retail for right around \$170. Add forks in there and you're over \$200. Next, the standard-sized model hits the scales at a healthy five pounds, five ounces, while the Pro model weighs three to four ounces more. Let's face it, that's heavy in any racer's book. In fact, our tester, which was graciously assembled for us by Rob Lynch's Peddlepower Bike Shop, hit, and we mean *hit*, the scales at a whopping 28½ pounds equipped with

While we won't claim that the Sling Shot will roost all over a standard 20-inch bike, we can't deny it's a kick in the pants to ride.



The Sling Shot did feel "softer" over jumps and down rough washboard straights. As for actually increasing acceleration over conventional 20-inchers, well . . .

an average *gruppo* of today's race-ready components.

On the plus side, however, the Sling Shot emerges as one of BMX's most exotic and unique framesets. Wherever ours went, it attracted crowds of on-lookers. Think of the psych value when you pull up on the line! There's no doubt the Sling Shot is an eye-catcher.

As far as performance, we did find that the combination Kevlar spring plate and dual stainless-steel cables and spring did help to better absorb off-road shock, and soften brutal landings off jumps. However, as far as the Sling Shot improving acceleration over standard 20-inchers, we failed to find any actual advantage. Maybe in our heads, but not on the stopwatch! Regardless, all who rode the Sling Shot enjoyed it. It's a fun frame and a refreshing departure from today's standard diamond frames. A tip of the helmet to the adventurous folks at Greendale! □

