

American Bicycle Manufacturing Corp. isn't a new company that just crawled out of the woodwork—quite the contrary! Although it has built frames under its own name for the last few years, it is best known for the tandem frames it built for Specialized and Rodriguez, and solo frames for Sofride. American's knowledge of materials, and its willingness to experiment, really showed when it developed the first beryllium mountain bike, which it unveiled at last year's Anaheim bike show. The beryllium frameset retailed for \$25,000. Although no one in the world should realistically have this much money to lay down on a bicycle frame (American did sell the bike to a collector), it shows American's unrivaled willingness to experiment with new materials.

Exotic metals, wild tandems and private-label jobs aside, aluminum frames have been American's main focus. The American Comp-Lite is one of three aluminum mountain bikes in its personal product line and here's what it's about.

#### PLEASING TO THE EYE

The Comp-Lite's appearance is startling. The pink graphics look really good against the purple anodized finish. *MBA* test riders have always pushed aluminum builders to go with the natural alloy look, but American's purple tint is really cool. The American Comp-Lite's welds add to the beauty of the bike with their neat and orderly fish scales.

#### WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF IT?

Instead of the standard-issue oversized, thin-walled, aluminum tubes of its com-

petitors, American prefers to use standard-diameter, 6061 T-6 aluminum tubes throughout the frame. The small-diameter tubes are thicker, but American claims that there isn't much of a weight penalty, and they are more resistant to denting.

The Comp-Lite has three top-mounted cables which run along the right side of the top tube. A 2"x4" gusset is used under the down tube for added strength, while a breakaway (and replaceable) rear derailleur hanger is held in place by a pair of screws. In a crash the hanger is designed to break off, resulting in no damage to the frame. Tire clearance is good enough to accommodate any 2.5-inch tire. Adding to the mud clearance are the chainstays, which are crimped near the bottom bracket, and the lack of a chainstay bridge. The American Comp-Lite is a straightforward racing frame with lots of good touches.

With the help of an XTR gruppo and an SRP titanium bolt kit, our test bike weighed in at 24 lb. 6 oz.

#### CHECKING OUT THE GEOMETRY

Modern frame design leans towards radically sloped top tubes, but American's top tube is almost completely flat. Our 19-inch Comp-Lite had a 22.75-inch top tube, 16.5-inch chainstays, 12.25-inch bottom bracket height and 41.6-inch wheelbase.

#### SO HOW WAS IT?

The American Comp-Lite is a good all-around handler. Test riders reported that the bike was predictable, stable, responsive and nimble in the corners. The light weight and straightforward 71/73

head/seat angle produced one sweet ride. What more could we want? A shorter stem. The 5.5-inch American Comp stem is long for the medium-sized, 19-inch frame. The front end had a slight tendency to flop over and wander on steep climbs. The Comp-Lite excelled in bottom bracket stiffness. To suit your custom needs, American offers 12 different-sized stems which retail for \$99 with polished finish, or \$109 with an anodized finish.

Speaking of the stem, no matter how hard we tightened the 6mm Allen bolt the stem would still turn inside the Rock Shox steerer tube. We scuffed the wedge with a belt sander to remove what appeared to be some sort of nickel coating. We tried retightening the bolt with a long Allen wrench. This helped, but we never fully solved the problem.

The final word on the American Comp-Lite is a positive one. If not for the problem with the stem, the bike would have left a little better taste in our mouths. Overall though, the taste was as good as American apple pie.

The American Comp-Lite frame retails for \$775 polished and \$1025 anodized. Frames are offered in 15-, 17-, 19- and 21-inch sizes. For more information contact American Bicycles at P.O. Box 1245, St. Cloud, MN 56302, or call (612) 251-1641. □

Not-so-new  
player in the  
aluminum frame  
game

AMERICAN COMP-LITE

