



YETI

MOUNTAIN & CITY BIKING Magazine
takes a look at a very specialized
mountain bike from one of
Southern California's hottest builders!

In the early years of mountain bike racing, it was easy to tell the teams apart. Specialized had the famed "pink" Team Stumpjumpers. You could see them a mile away. The Fisher team wore the unmistakable yellow and red. And Ritchey's team was always in red, white and blue. There is one other team that many remember, Wilderness Trail Bikes. Here was a bunch of guys who didn't have much backing. They were bright, funny guys who traveled in packs. You could always tell it was them, by the high tech gadgetry on their bikes, by the stark white jerseys, and by the Wilderness Trail Bikes team car (a big, convertible power cruiser which had obviously seen better days.)

Though they won their fair share of races, most people remember them from just being at events. It was sort of a grass roots team. They seemed to enjoy the races the way so few others did. As the bigger, factory sponsored teams have taken over the pro end of the sport, the heyday of that WTB race team is long gone. They're still around, but it's not like the good old days.

A new team has taken on this sort of cult following. They travel in packs, just as WTB used to. They also have a lot of fun, cruising from race to race in their team wagon. Their jerseys are unmistakable, as well, though they're not white.

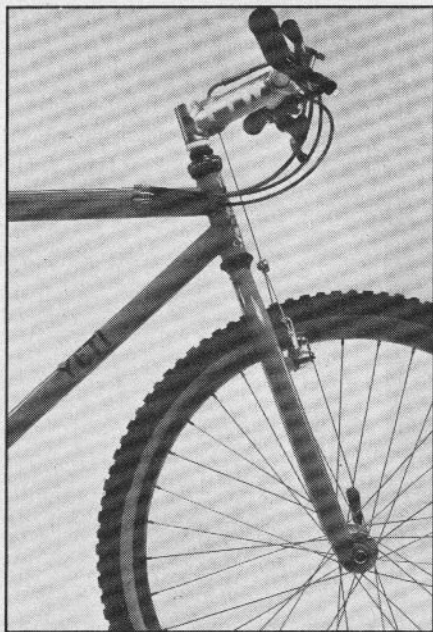
Their "Desert Turquoise" bikes are equally unmistakable. The bikes don't have tons of strange looking prototype components. Everything you see is straight forward, high efficiency, go fast stuff. Who is this? Schwinn? Raleigh? Diamond Back? Nope. This is the Yeti Team. And why are they called the Yeti Team? Because they're riding Southern California's hottest new racing mountain bike, the Yeti Team!

THE YETI IS DISCOVERED!

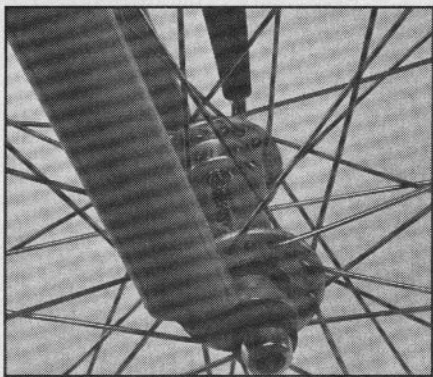
Back in 1981, a group of young fabricators from Los Angeles caught wind of the mountain bike craze going on to the north. The bikes being built up in Marin were hard to come by, so these enterprising guys decided to build their own.

Their bikes worked surprisingly well.

**FOR
RACING
ONLY**



Unique Yeti Cross cable routing keeps cables up and out of harm's way.



Beefy straight blade forks with a small offset give the frame its characteristic quickness.

"The key to the Yeti's performance, according to John and his riders, is the blade design."

In time, they were building bikes for other people. As a company, though, they had some problems. When it looked like the end was near, John Parker took ownership of the company. John had been working as a welder and fabricator for motion picture studios. While it doesn't sound like much of a background for building bikes, he has also been actively involved in virtually every kind of mechanized racing imaginable.

An old hippy he knew sold custom-made sleeping bags under the name of Yeti. Liking the sound of it, he decided to re-name the company, and Yeti Cycles Inc. was born.

Yeti specializes in *racing mountain bikes*. They don't build road bikes. They don't build touring bikes. They build *racing mountain bikes*. And, by the way, they've been selling the last four years, they're doing a pretty good job of it! The closest thing to a touring bike you'll get is a Yeti frame with eyelets brazed on for pannier racks!

"I'm a racing fool," quips John. "If all we had were shopping carts, I'd race those!" (We bet he'd have a pretty trick one, too!)

John uses a blend of fabricating and welding experience, racing experience, and a long list of aircraft quality suppliers to reach his ends. Though he respects and uses certain accepted bicycle building practices, he doesn't feel restricted by them at all. This is evident in the Yeti design as well as its tubing and construction.

THE YETI FRAME

To say the Yeti uses chromoly tubing is an understatement. It is chromoly, but it's not your average, run-of-the-mill bicycle tubing. John uses straight gauge "4130 seamless aircraft schedule tubing" throughout the Yeti frame. Though it costs 2-4 times as much as standard bicycle tubing sets, the quality control is much higher. Every lot comes with a detailed metallurgist report. It chronicles the lot's hardness and purity.

You might be asking yourself why someone would go to such an extreme. We were curious, so we asked John. With the Yeti's unique design, state-of-the-art construction is a must. Because the cost of high-tech construction is very high, spending more in the beginning means less waste and less scrap later on. We can buy that.

The most unique design feature of the Yeti is its rear triangle. In fact, rear triangle may not be applicable as a term. Rather than a typical four piece rear section, the Yeti uses a single tube. That's right, just one. Special software was designed to use a unique computerized fabricating machine. This machine takes a tube and bends it to conform to the rear section specifications. The tube begins at the top of the seat tube, extends to the rear dropout, bends forward as a chainstay, hangs a U-turn back as the other chainstay, and bends back up as the other seatstay.

Another innovation which Yeti has adopted is the use of an oval top tube. Though some builders have added these four-sided tubes for stiffness and strength, Yeti's motivations were otherwise (though they do believe it makes for "crisper" handling). The oval top tube allows Yeti to route all of the cables up high. Yeti Cross Cable Routing is the official term, taking their cue from the similar cyclocross style.

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The For Racing Only frame, as the name would indicate, comes in a pretty sanitary state. There are two down tube water bottle braze-ons, as well as cantilever studs front and rear. There aren't any others. No rack mounts, no eyelets, not even a seatpost clamp. A BMX style removable collar is utilized. Their thinking: braze-ons are often subject to fatigue at an accelerated rate. Yeti's are built to last, and anything less than bullet proof isn't good enough. (As stated before, braze-ons for rack mounts front and rear are available, but they don't come cheap.)

Describing the Yeti frame would be incomplete without referring to their forks. In many parts of the country, they're known more than the frame themselves. In John Parker's opinion, if a frame builder leaves the fork design up to a different manufacturer, say, of the big oriental fork companies, he's setting himself up for handling problems. By building his own forks, John keeps a handle on all of the bike's handling characteristics.

The Yeti forks start with an aircraft grade chromoly steer tube. The original ones were narrow, and typically required BMX headsets. The current ones are standard diameter. Then two oversized tubes are bent on the same computerized fabricator that bends the rear section. John then uses Campy or Shimano track dropouts.

The key to the Yeti forks' performance, according to John and his riders, is the blade design. The fork blades are straight, which a lot of people are going to this year. The difference between Yeti and most straight bladed forks is where the offset occurs. Yeti places a tight 1-1/4" of offset at the dropout, rather than at the base of the steer tube fork crown juncture. John did this, ascribing to the leading-link theory of motorcycle and automobile. The belief is that it provides more suspension than offset higher up. After testing a number of different straight bladed forks this year, we'd have to agree.



A special computerized tube bender is used to form Yeti's one-piece rear triangle.

GETTING SET

The Yeti comes from the factory only as a frameset. Most dealers are building them up, so the chances are you won't have to.

For test purposes, we chose to build our new Yeti frame up with the same componentry as the Yeti team uses. This begins with Bullseye cranks and hubs. Shimano Deore XT II finishes off the rest of the drivetrain as well as the brake system. Up at the control center we used an Answer Easton aluminum bulge bar and a custom "Frank The Welder" alumi-

num stem. Deore XT II shifters and two-finger levers as well as A'ME grips finished it off.

Built up with these pieces, our Yeti hit the scales at about 27 lbs.

TRACKING THE YETI

To judge this bike appropriately, we're eliminating the novice point of view. This bike is geared for high performance riding, so you won't find our usually bal-

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anced review. We went out and hammered this thing!

We can summarize the handling of the Yeti in just a few words. It's stiff, and it's quick!

The Yeti feels stiff without being too bone jarring. You can hammer down on the pedals as much as you want and feel that all the power is getting to the ground. Likewise, the "crispness" mentioned before is quite evident. The bike seems to "snap" when you direct it. For example, if you get a little loose in a corner and correct, the Yeti just "snaps" back into place.

This snap is as much a function of the Yeti's quickness as it is its sturdy feel. It's a classic case of "thinking the bike where you want it to go." The Yeti is so quick, thanks in great part to the forks, that one can't really recommend it to novice riders.

Even some of our better riders needed time to adjust to the ultra-quick front end. Being so used to muscling slower handling

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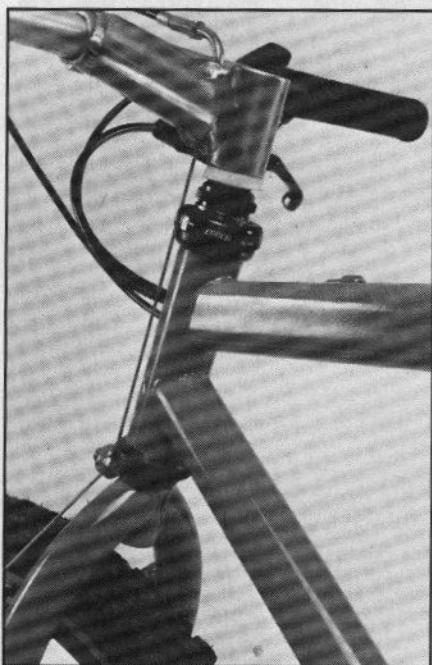
SUMMARY

Though the Yeti is not an entirely new bike, the fact that they're selling like hot cakes indicates that there's definitely a market for this level of bike. Yeti is working a lot of hours right now to keep up with the demand.

This also indicates that they must be doing something right. After all, racers don't keep things that don't work. And they'll let everybody know it. On the other hand, they don't always advertise when something *does* work, which may account for Yeti's low public profile. Afterall, why give any secrets to your fellow competitors?

For high performance riding, the Yeti offers a unique alternative to the traditional style of a mountain bike. It's fast. It's responsive. *And it works!*

What would we change? We're glad the new version has a standard steer tube size. This makes headset interchangeability much nicer. We'd like to see the seat post collar fastened, or at least given stops to seat at the same place every time you ad-



4130 chromoly certified seamless aircraft tubing is used throughout, including hard-to-find ovalized tubing for the top tube.

just the saddle. We'll admit, these are minor things. In terms of frame design, we wouldn't really do much. The bike handles pretty darn well as a full blown race bike. The looks take a little getting used to. Yeti doesn't have to fear being mistaken for just any old bike!

Who should buy this bike? This bike is for racers. Sport and expert class racers would benefit mostly from a bike like this. It almost forces you to work at your riding, thereby making you concentrate and go faster. John Parker has said he built the Yeti for the privateer, as they're the ones who could use a high performance, low upkeep bike like the Yeti.

While the approximate \$900 price tag (frame and forks) seems steep, these bikes are built to last. One pro has spent three full seasons on a Yeti frame with no failures. And it's still being raced! So if you amortize the cost over a couple of seasons, it's not really that high.

If you're into very high performance riding or racing, a Yeti is definitely worth finding!

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