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IBIS TANDEM

The Ibis Tandem represents a real challenge to bicycle taxonomy. Because this hybrid fat-tire tandem can change from trail riding to asphalt as quickly and easily as swapping knobbies for slicks, it defies classification as either a road bike or a mountain bike.

It's just as well that standard labels don't fit, because the Ibis performs beautifully in both worlds, thanks to an effective collaboration between Ibis' Scot Nicol and Tango Tandem's Rick Jorgensen. Jorgensen, who designs bridges for a living, contributed his trademark Uptube design that stiffens the frame significantly. Then Jorgensen and Nicol penciled in a pair of custom 30-mm oversize seatposts, which resist flex. This allows the Ibis to be sized for extra standover clearance, an essential ingredient for confident off-road riding.

The Ibis Tandem has great road manners thanks to that rigid frame and the wide profile of its 26 x 1.25 Specialized Fat Boy tires, and the puffy tires also provide an exceptionally cushy ride. But this is no boardwalk cruiser. With the Fat Boys pumped to 100 psi, the Ibis burns up the road just like a skinny-tire tandem, yet it's a pleasure to ride where road bikes fear to tread. Changing to wide, knobby tires raises the bottom brackets slightly, and automatically dials in the proper geometry for off-road shenanigans. The rigid chrome-moly stem and straight one-inch fork blades mean you don't have to wres-



tle the front end for control in the dirt. Just as important, the stoker is pampered by acres of room in which to luxuriate, and provided with a reassuringly stable platform for high-speed power generation.

Everything on this bike makes sense and adds to its total function, but the Ibis is much greater than the sum of its parts. Just as Santana redefined the state of the tandem art with its direct lateral design in 1983, Jorgensen's Uptube now makes all previous designs obsolete. It works so well, in fact, that it is already being copied by others, and soon all tandems aimed at the performance market will probably be built this way. Whether the Jorgensen/Nicol design can be successfully imitated remains to be seen; for now, though, the Ibis Tandem is as good as it gets.



SPECTRUM TITANIUM

As much as the industry has moved away from building frames with steel and toward materials like aluminum and composites, it still uses the steel frame as a model of performance. A non-ferrous frame is often reported to be lighter or stronger or more comfortable than its steel counterpart, but all too often its purported advantage is overshadowed by other shortcomings.

There is now one notable exception. The Spectrum Titanium mea-

sures up to a steel frame with every performance yardstick you'd care to use, and surpasses it with many. It has the best features of a first-class steel bike—it is stiff enough for good power transmission and crisp handling, but resilient to road shock. Road racers call a frame like this "lively." The Spectrum is lively and then some; it creates an almost organic link between the rider and the road.

Titanium blows away steel in weight: Count on a Spectrum to weigh about 25 percent less than the best double-butted steel frame. Few aluminum and carbon-fiber frames can claim that margin. A Spectrum is also bulletproof; titanium is as strong as steel, yet the straight-gauge Spectrum tubing is much more durable. Titanium is also rustproof and fatigue-hardy, so don't worry about replacing a Spectrum at the end of the season.

All this good news comes wrapped in a very attractive package. The Spectrum's tubing is only slightly oversize and its geometry is spot-on, thanks to the teamwork of fabricator Merlin Metalworks and framebuilder Tom Kellogg. Kellogg also makes sure that each frame Merlin welds is finished and painted to look as good as a lugged steel frame.

So where's the catch? There's only one: money. The Spectrum is expensive, costing a heartstopping \$1750 for the frame and Vitus aluminum fork. A better-sounding deal is the Spectrum Dura-Ace, a complete bike for only \$2600. Compared to what good steel bikes cost nowadays, that ain't bad.