

ALL-CITY SPACE HORSE

An all-rounder ready for a century or a couple of weeks on the road

by Patrick O'Grady

In the fall of 2011, *Adventure Cyclist* editor Mike Deme and I were stalking the halls of the Interbike trade show in Las Vegas, hunting machinery for review purposes, when we happened across the Space Horse in the All-City Cycles booth. How could we not check out a bike called Space Horse? Especially once we learned that Anna Schwinn (yes, of that storied American cycling family) had at least one hand in its design? Like many

of you, I straddled a succession of Schwinn in my mis-spent youth. Varsitys and Continentals took me to classes in high school and college, and to janitorial and home-improvement jobs as a college dropout.

Like me, the Schwinn Bicycle Company was embarking on a patch of rough road. Ignaz Schwinn, who founded the outfit in 1895, certainly wouldn't recognize his namesake in its modern-day manifestation as a minor cog in the multinational machinery of Dorel Industries Inc., which hawks everything from car seats to computer carts.

Still, flesh-and-blood Schwinn remain in the bicycle business. Ignaz's grandson Richard Schwinn cofounded Waterford Precision Cycles in 1993, taking over the Schwinn Paramount Design Group R&D facility in Wisconsin. And Richard's daughter Anna is a player at All-City in Minneapolis, which brings us back via the scenic route to Las Vegas, Interbike, and the Space Horse.

My 58-centimeter review model looks like a Creamsicle, all sparkly orange and white, plus black accents (the 2013 edition comes in Elven Blue). And it weighed in at 24.9 pounds without pedals, which isn't bad for a steel all-rounder.

And an all-rounder it is. You wouldn't want to race the Space Horse unless everyone else in your category was on



steel bikes, too, and while it might not be the ideal choice for a self-supported trek across Mongolia, it will serve admirably in any number of less dramatic roles.

Straight out of the box, you have a comfortable, durable machine suitable for exercise, commuting, and off-pavement adventures. The Space Horse's double-butted 4130 chromoly frame and flat-crowned, lugged fork, paired with some portly tires — as big as 700C x 42 without fenders — really soak up the bumps.

Mine came wearing 700C x 37 Continental Sport Contacts, but, after three flats in less than 80 miles, I replaced them with a pair of 700C x 32 Vittoria Randonneur Cross Pros. (Next year's Space Horse will trot along on 700C x 35 Freedom Ryders.) I also swapped the stock 110-millimeter stem for a 90-millimeter one to accommodate personal infirmities.

There is no shortage of reasonably

priced steel bikes these days — I own a few and have ridden several others — and it can be difficult to tell one from another without a catalog. Little touches that set the Space Horse apart from the herd include that three-tone paint job (most steel bikes in its retail neighborhood seem to be monochromatic); a pump peg; an internally routed rear brake cable, which would be enhanced by a barrel adjuster; and semi-horizontal rear dropouts with tabs and adjustment

screws that accommodate your choice of derailleurs or single-speeding (should you envision a tour of the Bonneville Salt Flats).

All-City being headquartered in Minneapolis, where winter has been known to make an occasional appearance, the Space Horse also sports mounting points for fenders fore and aft, and you can still fit 700C x 38 rubber even with the mudguards on. Plus if you go the single-speed route, the semi-horizontal dropouts save you from having to remove the rear fender to fix a flat.

It has all the usual rack mounts, too, along with recommended cargo limits — the folks at All-City say they had maximum loads of 20 pounds up front and 30 behind in mind when they selected its tubaset.

After a few unencumbered outings to get a feel for the basic bike, I

installed SKS fenders, a Jandd low-rider rack, and a Tubus Logo rear rack, then stuffed a few bits of this and that into bags, starting light with 10.5 pounds up front in a pair of Arkel B-26 panniers and 5.2 pounds behind in an Arkel Tail Rider rack trunk. After riding that for a while, I traded the Tail Rider for two Arkel B-40 bags containing a total of 10.5 pounds and buckled on a 1-pound Jandd saddlebag holding spare tubes, tire irons, and a multitool.

The 13-mile circuit I used for most of my rides includes a gradual, half-hour climb that tops out near the Garden of the Gods, a 35-MPH descent, some lumpy old chip-seal, and plenty of hard-packed dirt. The Space Horse embraced it all with equanimity, whether loaded or unloaded.

The bike would be a comfortable all-day ride by itself, but I actually came to prefer the feel of a loaded Space Horse. It reminded me of a 1983 Toyota 4WD pickup I once owned that would handle like a passenger car if it had a half-cord of firewood stacked in the bed.

Even the stock All-City Gonzo saddle proved surprisingly comfortable for a guy who is particular about where he parks his posterior. (Bonus Space Horse joke, gleaned from — where else? — the Internet: What kind of saddle do you put on a space horse? A saddle-light.)

The Tiagra STI-controlled drivetrain performed flawlessly, and its 50/34 chainrings and 12-30 cassette bore up under light loads and gradual ascents. I should trot out the usual rant here about needing a low gear of 20 to 25 inches for long days, heavy loads, and weary legs, but let's give it a miss this time around because the Space Horse is designed to be more of an all-rounder.

This is the Curse of the Product Manager: Bicycle touring is a niche, rich in savvy

customers who have developed their own ideas of what constitutes proper specs, so product managers trying to throw a loop over our crowd without losing their shirts have been known to hedge their bets, outfitting bikes with readily available, mainstream components better suited to

Specifications: All-City Space Horse

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Price: \$1,450 (complete bike); \$575 (frame and fork).

Sizes available: 46 cm, 49 cm, 52 cm, 55 cm, 58 cm, 61 cm

Size tested: 58cm (22 7/8 inches)
Weight: 24.9 pounds (without pedals)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

Seat tube: 22 inches (center to center)

Top tube: 22 7/16 inches

Head tube angle: 72.2°

Seat tube angle: 72.5°

Chainstays: 17 3/4 inches

Bottom bracket drop: 3 inches

Crank spindle height above ground: 10 3/4 inches

Fork offset: 1 3/4 inches

Wheelbase: 41 1/2 inches

Standover height: 33 inches

Frame: 612 Select chromoly (All-City's name for its proprietary blend of 4130 tubing). Double-butted down, top and seat tubes; externally tapered, ovalized, and dimpled chainstays; tapered seat stays; pump peg; internally routed rear brake cable; bosses for racks, fenders, and two bottle cages.

Fork: 4130 chromoly. Flat-lugged crown with matching dropout, tapered blades, and eyelets for low-rider rack and fenders.

Rims: Alex DA16 Silver, 32 hole

Hubs: Shimano Tiagra (130mm rear spacing)

Tires: Continental Sport Contact, 700C x 37

Bottom bracket: Shimano Tiagra

Crankset: Shimano Tiagra, 175mm, 50/34 chainrings

Cassette: Shimano Tiagra SH-3542 10-speed 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 24, 27, 30

Chain: SRAM PC-1031

Brake-shift levers: Shimano Tiagra

Front/rear derailleurs: Shimano Tiagra

Brakes: Tektro R520 cantilevers

Pedals: None

Seat post: Kalloy, silver, 27.2 mm

Stem: Kalloy, silver, 110 mm

Handlebar: Kalloy, silver, 44 cm (center to center)

Headset: FSA

Saddle: All-City Gonzo, black

Gearing in inches:

	50	34
12	113.2	77.0
13	104.5	71.1
14	97.0	66.0
15	90.6	61.6
17	79.9	54.3
19	71.5	48.6
21	64.7	44.0
24	56.6	38.5
27	50.3	34.2
30	45.3	30.8

Contact: All-City Cycles, 6400 W. 105th St., Minneapolis, MN 55438; 888-422-2453; allcitycycles.com

commuting, which is a larger market segment.

Thus my 2012 Space Horse came with only two sets of bottle bosses; Tiagra STI in a fairly traditional compact road configuration; some generic-looking silver Kalloy

bits (stem, bars, and seat post); and matching silver Tektro R520 cantilevers.

The 2013 edition will upgrade the cockpit to Salsa

Pro Road Medium bars with a Salsa Pro Moto stem, and the brakes to match the black Tektro R720 cantilevers. The idea is both to improve the specs of the bike "and to butch it up a little with the black accents," explained Jeffrey Frane, All-City Cycles sales and marketing manager.

Why the name "Space Horse?"

Jeffrey Frane, All-City Cycles sales and marketing manager, took the name from a story by Tyler Stoddard Smith, *Space Oddity: My Weird Year With NASA*, in which the author described his "many late nights with engineers and systems managers and astronauts and every thoroughbred space-horse around." Says Frane: "I liked it. It worked for the bike, and it's funny and memorable."

However, if that fails to set your mind at ease about the Space Horse's utility as a touring bike, take heart — All-City has also anticipated and preempted any grousing about component selection by making it available as a frame and fork for \$575, thereby liberating buyers to indulge their wildest fantasies.

Having cobbled together more than a few Frankenbikes over the years, that's how I'd buy it, though given my fondness for nifty items from Paul Component Engineering, Chris King, L.H. Thomson, Rivendell, and the like, I'd wind up spending more — much more — than the \$1,450 an off-the-rack model will set you back.

But then I'd have a Space Horse of a different color, wouldn't I? **AC**

Patrick O'Grady has written and cartooned about cycling since 1989 for VeloNews, Bicycle Retailer and Industry News, and a variety of other publications. To read more from Patrick, visit maddogmedia.word press.com.