INTO THE RIDE #7

MAKING A HOT ROD V-REX

By Randy Schlitter

For those of us who can't resist the urge to tinker, tweak, and manipulate things from one state to the next, taking an already great bike and making it better should prove irresistible. To make the stock V-Rex actually better would be the bigger part of the challenge, since it is already a top of the line. However, never being happy with leaving well enough alone, I decided to venture into souping up a demo V-Rex.

The two main goals were to reduce rolling resistance and weight. If we can make significant reductions in these areas then you will feel the difference from the first crank up, and zoom zoom will be your mantra for at least a week afterwards, at least until the effect of having a hot bike starts to mellow.

I can't say enough about light, smooth wheels with high-pressure tires. It is like an instant tailwind. To make a hotter hot rod from the V-Rex we selected Velocity recumbent wheels and Schwalbe tires. For the cassette we chose the 9 gear 12-25 Shimano Ultegra. This slight change in gearing did not require taking out any chain.

The seat received the Formula treatment, carbon pan, light cushion, and new mesh. This shaves a full 1.5 pounds and can be done on most RANS models. You can adapt a carbon pan to your frame, but don't attempt this unless you are handy with drilling out and setting very hefty stainless steel rivets.

More grams came off by cutting the seat rail in half. Think about, you really only need half, unless your perfect setting is smack dab on the middle screw. To fit others out of your range, simply flip around.

Shave a few grams by downsizing the seat rail.

The biggest and most exciting change is what happened to the bars. I took the stock riser cut it off 2.5". To remove the cable stops just place the lower end of the riser on a solid surface and firmly tap on the cable stops with a hammer, then file off the remaining weld. Slot the bottom end for the clamp. Save the cut off end of the riser. It will be used as a shim to retain the fork. Note: Shorter risers will require both cable stops to be removed.

The next modification required: a paradigm shift. The Flip-it had to go. The main purpose of the Flip-it is to allow easy entry into the cockpit. With the bar forward position, the cockpit is now open. I can step into the V-Rex and stand between the seat and the bars.

Even with a missing flip-it the bike will be easy to mount

To omit the Flip-it required creating a new way to retain the thread less fork, since there would be a stem coming out of the top. Rather than using a threaded fork, a simple solution using a clamp was contrived, but first the star nut had to go. To remove the star nut, use a cut off broom handle or similar as a driver and hammer it out the bottom.

To retain the fork I slipped a riser clamp with a shim made from the cut off riser, over the top of the fork and tightened it a little then tapped it down until all play was out of the headset. Check for play side to side and up and down, tap lightly until play free. Tighten securely. Remember this retains the fork. Note: In most cases the clamp will be taller than the portion of the fork protruding above the headset; if not, cutting down the fork may be required.

Next I took a 1" stem, cut it off 2" and stuffed it into the fork and tightened it very snuggly. Note: I used an aluminum fork for an extra saving of .25 pounds, it required turning down the stem and stem nut. You may not want to cut off the stem or the riser. I had to test ride the bike with the stock length before determining the height of the bars. The measurements given will most likely work for the average sized rider. With another clamp I secured the riser locking it down with the curve of the riser facing forward.

Use cut off from riser for a shim between clamp and fork tube.

Snug clamp and tap to take up slack.

Stem is snug and ready for the riser, if you don't need the height, cut off stem 2" to shave more weight. Test ride first!

Which bar to use is easy. This set up will need something wide and with some reach to bring the hand back past the headset. I found the B-37 works perfectly. The width is just enough to clear my skinny knees, but the fact the handgrip segment is canted out, really helps with eliminating hitting the knees in turns.

Re-cabling will require new housings; you should be able to reuse your cables if you are careful taking them apart. A little trick I use is to bend out all the kinks in the cables before inserting them into the housing. Remember we tore off the cable stops, so the new cable housing is sized to run from the lower stops to the shifter and brake levers.

To retain the bundle of cables, our sew shop fabricated a neat little neoprene jacket. Take care to route the cables and capture them neatly in the neoprene jacket. We will have these in a variety of colors, since we found some neoprene on sale.

The neoprene jacket retains all the cable housings and can add a dash of color.

After all is said and done the hot rod V-Rex weighed in at 27.2 (less the pedals). Test riding my new hot rod ride proved as much fun as the wrench time. You notice it in the climbs, plus the wheels are really smooth and seem to coast forever.

The new riser bar combo proved very roadworthy. The steering is responsive but dampened, a natural feel. I like the solid feel when climbing on and off the bike. Overall it is the open cockpit that gains my favor on this bar riser combo, because of the ease in mount and dismount.
List of Parts
1- Set of Velocity Wheels 20/26
1- 26 x 1 Schwalbe Tire
1-20 x 1 1/8 Schwalbe Tire
1- Shimano Utlegra 12-25 Cassette
1- Carbon Seat Pan
1- Light Foam Cushion
2- 1.125 Clamps
1- 1" Stem
1- 03' Seat Mesh
1- B-37 Handlebar
1- Neoprene Jacket

The total conversion may not be for everyone, like I said the V-Rex is one sweet ride to start with. You could do any or all of the changes discussed, considering your taste and budget, whatever it takes to get "into the ride"!

INTO THE RIDE