



Bike Thrones

King of the Alpes



Bike Thrones are a new Australian company making saddles for people who want something a little bit special on their bikes. Their motto is "Saddles are for little guys with squeaky voices who ride horses and need a whip to get it moving. Saddles aren't for bikes." With that in mind they have created six distinctive designs, the Daredevil with an Evel Knievel design, The Old Boy, with World Cup stripes, King of the Cobbles, which has the Lion of Flanders, Beer Bike, which has a lager label, Fighter Pilot, with a kamikaze and the one on test here, the King of the Alpes.

This saddle is done in a polka dot jersey design with 21 of the dots numbered to represent the 21 hairpins of L'Alpe d'Huez. It is also why it is called Alpes instead of Alps. I must admit to thinking twice about choosing this saddle when working out the details for this test. Polka dots are one of those things you simply don't do unless you can back them up. You wouldn't turn up to a club race with a polka dot jersey on would you? Not unless you wanted to get laughed at. However my bike is black, red and white and as I actually rode up the famous hairpins last year I figure I can get away with it. It was a close thing though.

The measurements for this little beastie are 29cm in length and 13cm at the widest point. It weighed in at 217g which is more than respectable. Keeping the weight down is its construction with hollow titanium rails and carbon reinforced nylon shell. Despite the generous amount of padding this saddle is quite firm. Actually, it's very firm. Doing the old push your thumb into it test, it isn't so bad, but it would be enough to make your non cycling friends raise their eyebrows and say "How can you ride on that, man?" The lack of flex in the shell also won't suit everybody. If you're a singlespeeder getting round the city in cut off jeans you might want to look elsewhere.

Once on the bike and in the saddle, so to speak, I found that the Throne was actually quite comfortable. There's a lot of support and despite the lack of any sort of love channel, there was no sign of numbness, even on long rides. Another pleasing aspect was the lack of cant, or how quickly the saddle falls away from the centre. One of my pet hates is saddles that do this too sharply. You find your bum cheeks gradually moving further apart and then every kilometre or so you have to stand up on the pedals and rearrange yourself. There was none of that here, the top of the Throne being flat almost right to the edge.

This is a quality Australian designed product that should do well. It is definitely racer orientated, but I'm told there are other designs in the pipeline. If the Bike Thrones people continue as they have begun, we may see their saddles under overseas riders in the not too distant future.

Price: \$159

For more info: www.bikethrones.com



Chasing Legends

DVD



Chasing Legends is a new DVD which follows the Tour de France through the eyes of Team Columbia HTC during the 2009 Tour de France. Similar to the popular movie Hell on Wheels, this documentary seeks to portray the spectacle, the suffering and the glory of the Tour de France.

There's plenty for Aussie fans, or indeed any cycling fans in this movie. It shows, amongst other things, the super tight team time trial, Jens Voigt's terrible crash and Heinrich Haussler's victory in the rain on stage 13. Some of the action sequences are excellent, including the helicopter shots and most particularly the bike cam shots which show just what it's like to be in a sprint with the fastest men in the world. I would love to see the organisers of the Tour de France put these cameras on the riders. Surely with the technology we have now it would be possible without inconveniencing the riders?

The movie also includes interviews with notables such as Phil Liggett, Rolf Aldag and others. And it also gives people an insight to people such as Graham Watson and Tim de Waele, whose names you often see, but don't necessarily know what they look like. It also shows some interesting and relevant historical footage, particularly of crashes in the sprint. It took me about half an hour to get into this film, because at times it is a bit heavy. But it does pick up when we see George Hincapie miss out on the Yellow Jersey by a few seconds. This is a poignant moment for any cycling fan because you can't help but like George.

Chasing Legends is a much better production than many of the cycling DVD's out there which come and go with little more than a murmur. This is big budget filmmaking in high definition. However, one problem I have with kind of movie is that I tend to compare them with Hell on Wheels, which for me is the standard. While chasing legends is well made, it doesn't have the intimacy that Hell on Wheels achieves with Eric Zabel. Some of the interviews feel forced and you can see during the team meetings and so on that the riders are very aware that they're being filmed. It's almost as if the film team, instead of spending weeks with the team prior to the big race, getting to know the riders, making them feel relaxed and comfortable, turned up the day before the prologue and started filming. This is particularly stark with Rolf Aldag, when you compare his relaxed attitude in winning the Polka Dot Jersey in Hell on Wheels with his forced comedy with Brian Holm in Chasing Legends.

Another criticism I have is in some of the text used when people are being interviewed. It's too small and just like when they changed the ABC weather maps, you simply can't read it. This is probably because the people who design this sort of thing all have enormous plasma televisions, blue ray and high definition and don't realise that some people still have a tube television. How passé! Additionally, the soundtrack owes a lot to the Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter and can be a bit heavy and overbearing at times, unlike the Hell on Wheels soundtrack, which you can actually listen to as a stand alone cd.

Don't get me wrong, Chasing Legends is still a good watch. It runs for approximately 90 minutes and there's plenty in there to keep you interested, especially as it is very recent and relevant. It also gives a pretty good insight to what it would be like to race the three weeks of the Tour de France. But it ain't quite Hell on Wheels.

Price: \$49.95

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www.bagear.com.au