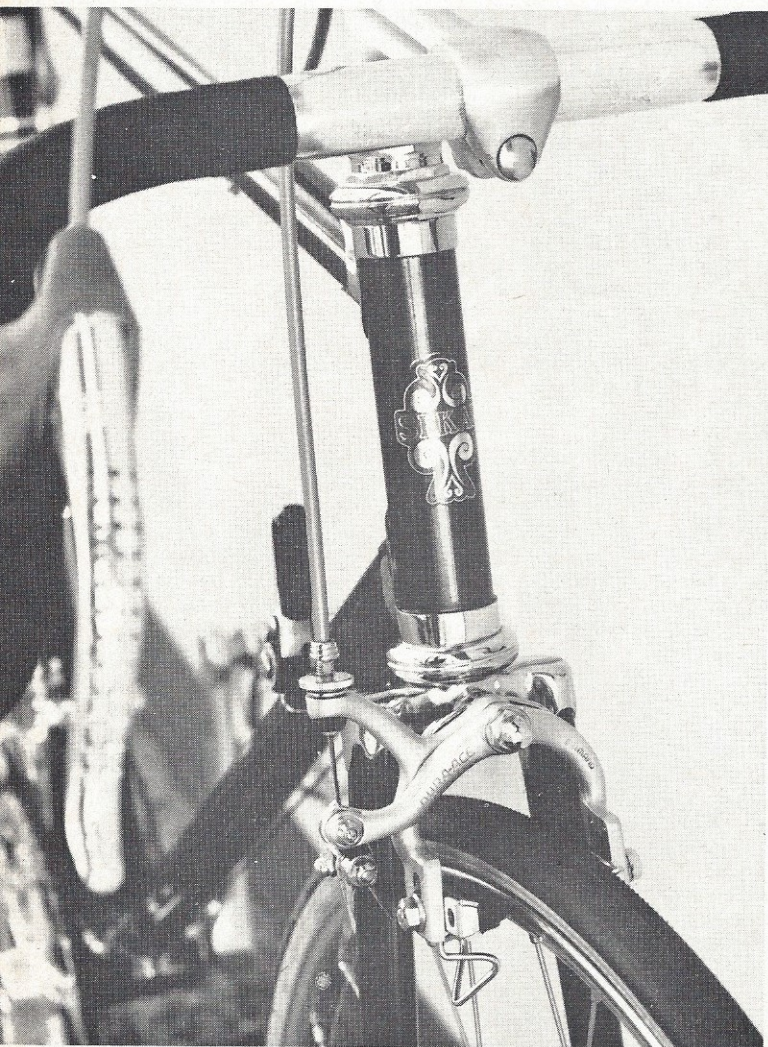


SEKAI

Custom Criterium 4000

R/T

by LARRY BURKE



This bike has pizzaz! Chromed lugs against a blue-black background, and fabulous precision-made super-stoppers: Shimano Dura-Ace sidepulls.

The Velocipede Company is located in Seattle, Washington and markets an extensive line of Japanese and European bicycle components. They also feature the Sekai line of 10-speed bicycles. These are built to their own specifications and range from the Sprint 1000 for general riding through the Criterium 4000 designed especially for the serious enthusiast.

The Sekai Custom Criterium 4000 frame, fitted with the finest of components, is Velocipede's attempt at an outright racing machine. With this specification in mind, the machine was tested as near as possible to time trial and criterium-type racing.

The time trial racing, like the name indicates, is racing against the clock, usually on a flat course with few corners. Minimum rolling friction and maximum efficiency is a must for a machine used for this type of racing.

Criterium racing usually takes place on a very short course with lots of corners, which is lapped several times. A very light and responsive machine with a high bottom bracket and superior braking is required to enable you to slow down quickly for the corners, keep pedaling through the corners and accelerate rapidly out of the corners.

When training on my own machine for trials-type racing, I normally accelerate through the gears to an 81 (48 chainwheel x 16 freewheel) and then just sit there and pound away as fast as I can for the distance. To my pleasant surprise, I found that I could pull an 88 (52 chainwheel x 16 freewheel) on the Sekai at the same cranks revs for the same distance under similar wind conditions. I rode this route each day and obtained about the same results over a four-week period. I could consistently pull a higher gear on the Sekai 4000 than I could on my own machine.

By making tire-to-road rolling friction tests and putting the Soyo 60 tires on my own machine, I discovered that most of that speed came from about a 10 percent reduction in tire rolling friction. The rest of the speed increase resulted from a precision-constructed frame that allowed most of my energy to be directed to the road and not wasted by slight frame misalignments and twisting during heavy pedaling.

SEKAI CUSTOM CRITERIUM 4000 SPECIFICATIONS

FRAME: Ishiwata .022 double-budded throughout w/ES (Eisho) lugs and Tange competition headset

top tube: 22"	wheel base: 39½"
seat tube: 23"	head tube angle: 74°
chain stay: 17"	seat tube angle: 74°
fork rake: 1¾"	weight: 22 lbs.
bottom bracket height: 11-1/8"	

CHAINSET: Sugino Custom Compe w/170 mm. cranks and 42x52 chainwheels.

DERAILLEURS: Front: Suntour SL
Rear: Suntour V-Luxe
Suntour Compe down tube controls

WHEELS: Hub: Campagnolo Record w/36 hole drillings
Rim: Fiamme red label
Tires: Soyo 60 8.8 oz. (250 grams)
Spokes: Chrome DB

BRAKES: Shimano Dura-Ace sidepulls w/hooded levers

PEDALS: MKS unique w/toe clips and straps

FREEWHEEL: ST pro-compe 5 speed - 14-24 tooth

BAR, STEM and SEATPOST: SR Custom Royal

SADDLE: YFC Super Suede

CHAIN: HHK ½ x 3/32

COST: \$389.95

The frame is light and constructed from a high chrome-moly double-butted tubing of .022" wall thickness. A lighter frame of .017" wall thickness tubing is available; it should produce a bike that weighs less than 21 pounds.

The high bottom bracket allows pedaling through the corners at a lean angle that would cause the pedals to scrape on other machines. The combination of the bike's fast response and Dura-Ace sidepulls allow you to wait a tad longer than you normally would before braking and zinging around a right-angle corner.

The 74-degree head and seat-tube angles make the bike responsive to small changes in road surface. Both hands on the handlebar are recommended. On one lap I reached up to scratch my nose just as I was crossing a bumpy portion of my "trials" course and almost collected a case of roadrash as the bike leaped to the side with just my one hand on the handlebar.

The Criterium frames are painted a midnight blue color, a finely finished and contrasting background for the chromed frame lugs. Excellent taste is shown in the use of spot chrome on the rim of the seat tube and top of the seat stays.

I operated the Soyos at 90 to 110 psi pressure. They are a light (250 grams) low-profile cotton tire and, as the tests showed, gave amazing performance considering their cost as compared to silk tires of similar performance.

The Suntour competition down-tube shifters are ratcheted and easy to move when shifting to lower gears and friction-damped when shifting to higher gears. Shifting is very positive with the Suntour V Luxe derailleurs, enabling you to shift into a lower gear even under considerable pedal pressure.

As an added plus to the prospective buyer of this quality of machine, the 4000 frame has successfully passed the stringent Japanese Bicycle Inspection Institute's two-hour vibration test.

Considering its performance and appearance, I think that this machine is an excellent buy for the price of \$389.95.

For more information on the Sekai, contact Velocipede Inc., 611 East Pine, Seattle, Washington 98122.

Road Test: Sekai Custom Criterium 4000

Finish:

Paint	1
Chrome	1
Lug work	1
Dropout and fork tip joining	2
Detailing	2
Overall finish and workmanship	2

Handling:

Steering (to hold a straight line)	3
Cornering (response in cornering)	1
Undesirable frame whip	1
Ride	3
Overall handling	2

1. Excellent; 2. very good; 3. good; 4. acceptable; 5. not acceptable.

