

the new breed

Back in the early days, and by that I mean the early 90's gold rush, the number of different bike brands around was massive. We already had the big ones like GT, Cannondale, Trek and Giant, but there were also a massive number of smaller companies battling it out too. Sadly a huge number of those either fell by the wayside, or as in the case of brands like Klein, Bontrager and Gary Fisher, got swallowed up by the bigger fish. To be fair I think that most of those that fell by the wayside probably deserved to, although the rise of the full susser undoubtedly played a big part, as a load of those smaller guys either couldn't get their heads around them, or they simply didn't have the capabilities to make one. Like any gold rush though the number of prospectors substantially outnumbered the demand, and so it was always going to turn out like that, things eventually have to settle down.

Anyway, losing some of those 'cool' small brands was a bit gutting, but since then things have calmed down, the mad rush is over, and now that the sport's in what seems to be a more settled period of gradual growth it's proving to be a great time for new small brands to emerge. We can never quite put our finger on what makes these smaller brands so appealing, because on price alone it's often difficult for them to compete against the big boys, but whatever it is the likes of Last, Transition and NS Bikes seem to have got it. We heard a lot of chat over the years about 'rider owned' brands, but companies like these really seem to live up to that, and maybe that's what makes this new breed of bike company so exciting. It's fresh blood I suppose, and because these rider owned brands remain relatively small the owners are still working at the 'coalface' so to speak, which can only be a good thing in our eyes. When your company grows big it's often hard to get that same amount of effort and enthusiasm as you get out of a small team, and that's got to be part of why these new companies are impressing us so much. It seems that when it comes to innovation it's now these new small brands that we're often looking to, rather than the bigger guns. Whatever the case though, we just hope this new breed continues, as we're loving the stuff they're producing.

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