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JONES PLUS SWB

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

→ There's definitely something happening here, and Mister Jones knows what it is. It's a cardboard box. With a bike inside. Oh, sure, you can get a bike in a box just about anywhere these days, even a bike shop. But this is a Jones bike. Used to be you'd drop three-four large for one of those, and that was just for openers. Twice that and more is not unheard of.

But it just so happens that you can get this one for less than two thou'. "I've always been trying to make the best bike," Jones told me this summer before announcing his bike in a box (the only prepackaged complete bike he offers), the \$1,799 Jones Plus SWB. "I've always had customers asking for the best."

Customers who ask for the best also require a degree of personal service. When money is no object, there will be a lot of back and forth about the details, mostly on the phone because Jones doesn't much like email.

But not everyone wants or needs to dive so deeply into the weeds when buying a bike. And thus, the SWB. Made in Taiwan, assembled in China, and delivered to you (or your friendly neighborhood mechanic). Jones has done the legwork — have you seen his YouTube channel? — so you don't have to. And he thinks he's still making the best bike, no matter where, why, or how you ride, because it's comfortable to ride.

JONES PLUS SWB
Price: \$1,799
Sizes available: S, M, L
Size tested: M
Weight: 33.8 lbs. (without pedals)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS
• **Stack:** 610mm
• **Reach:** 389mm
• **Head tube length:** 130.5mm
• **Head tube angle:** 69°
• **Seat tube:** 455mm (center to top)
• **Seat tube angle:** 72° (effective)
• **Top tube:** 389mm (effective)
• **Chainstays:** 449mm
• **Bottom bracket drop:** 76mm
• **Bottom bracket height:** 292.1mm
• **Fork Offset:** 55mm
• **Wheelbase:** 1091.7mm
• **Standover height:** 781mm

SPECIFICATIONS
• **Frame:** 4130 butted chromoly, rack and fender mounts, triple mounts on each side of down tube, mounts on top tube, replaceable derailleur hanger
• **Fork:** 4130 unicrown, fender mounts, triple mounts
• **Handlebar:** Jones SG Aluminum Loop H-Bar, 710mm, with Jones H-Grip and Jones H-Bar tape
• **Stem:** Zoom, 31.8mm clamp, 80mm, 17°
• **Brake levers:** Tektro MT 2.1 with adjustable cable position
• **Shift lever:** Shimano Deore
• **Rear derailleur:** Shimano Deore Shadow RD+ with clutch
• **Brake calipers:** Tektro MD-M300 mechanical discs

• **Rotors:** Tektro, 200mm front, 180mm rear
• **Crankset:** Samox, 32T chainring, 170mm
• **Cassette:** Sunrace 10spd, 11–42T
• **Chain:** KMC X10 with MissingLink
• **Bottom bracket:** Samox sealed cartridge, threaded
• **Seatpost:** Zoom, 27.2mm
• **Saddle:** Velo
• **Headset:** Jones caged ball bearing
• **Hubs:** JY, sealed cartridge bearings, thru-axles, 150 x 15mm front, 148 x 12mm rear
• **Rims:** Shining DB-X50, 32h
• **Tires:** Maxxis Chronicle, 27.5 x 3.0in., tubeless ready, folding bead

GEARING RANGE		
	32	
11	84.4	
13	71.4	
15	61.9	
18	51.6	
21	44.2	
24	38.7	
28	33.1	
32	29.0	
36	25.8	
42	22.1	

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"Comfort is performance," Jones said. "If you're comfortable, you're happy." I own a Jones, acquired after I reviewed it in the Oct./Nov. 2013 issue of *Adventure Cyclist*. I nicknamed it Steppenwolf for its looking-for-adventure, born-to-be-wild, magic carpet ride.

As you may have guessed, I'm comfortable and I'm happy, so much so that I rarely ride my old titanium hardtail with its 26in. wheels, which are so 15 minutes ago. My Jones is a 29er running 2.4in. Maxxis Ardents, and you can go that route with the SWB too. But it comes with 27.5in. wheels and 3.0in. Maxxis Chronicles.

This 27.5+ setup may look monster-truckish to anyone who spends a lot of time riding 700c wheels with "fat" 40mm tires. Heck, the rims on the Jones Plus SWB are 10mm wider than that. But it will open up vistas a traditional road wheel just can't show you — not comfortably, anyway. "I was able to ride it up trails I couldn't ride on the previous version," said Jones. "This has way more traction, is way smoother, more forgiving."

At 12–15 PSI, the Chronicles bite nicely into loose stuff and float like dirigibles over rock gardens. Pump them much higher than that and you'll find yourself ricocheting off obstacles instead of oozing over them. "Nobody goes over 15 PSI unless they're really slamming rocks," said Jones, who doesn't recommend higher pressure even for road rides. "Even though it feels kind of soft, just watch your speedometer. I'm usually running 12 PSI or so."

If you think in binary terms — skinny tires = road, fat tires = trails — you may feel a bit out of bounds plying the streets aboard a Jones SWB, at first, anyway.

“Road bikes are actually road-racing bikes that are great for a sprint finish,” said Jones. “You’re accidentally on a racing bike. This is a good bike for riding on the road.”

Indeed, if your roads are anything like the ones I ride around Albuquerque, you’ll find that those low-pressure fatties make heavy-gauge chip seal crosshatched with indifferently tarred cracks feel like freshly laid asphalt. Plus you’ll never stuff one into a seam or a sewer grate. Not without a crowbar.

Speaking of tools, the SWB uses a few you might not recognize right off the bat. While my Jones sports a Shimano XT triple drivetrain, Thomson stem and seatpost, and Avid BB7 mechanical discs, for the SWB Doctor Jones has prescribed generics — Samox single-ring crank, Zoom seatpost and stem, Shimano Deore shifter and derailier, and Tektro mechanical discs.

Aficionados may snicker, but I run garden-variety Deore on two bikes and it hasn’t set me afoot yet. As for the anonymous, unbranded parts, Jones said he kept the SWB’s price competitive by

choosing components that he feels are as good as the marquee items because their manufacturers “are the ones who make the brand-name parts.”

Loaded touring? Jones has you covered with scads of mounts for this, that, and the other.

You’ll find three bosses by each rear dropout for the rack and fender of your choice, and three more on each fork blade, which means you can plug in a Tubus Duo low-rider and carry both bags and bottles up front. Or you can skip the racks and sacks and go with cargo cages. You can do cargo cages on both sides of the down tube too, or stick with bottles. Five bottles should get you from here to there, even in a New Mexican summer.

Traveling light and fast? Squeeze a large Ortlieb Frame Pack into the main triangle and plug a Jones H-Bar Pack into the broad handlebar’s center loop to hold the stuff you want to keep within easy reach.

The 1x10 drivetrain, with its 32T crank, 11-42T cassette, and low end of 22.1 gear inches, made me work a little

harder than I do on my own Jones. But I never felt as though I struggled on the SWB, on pavement or off. Climbing a long, steep hill in a too-tall gear hurt, but in a good way, like eating really hot salsa.

I did feel a bit slower on the Jones than on some dropbar touring bikes, but not by much, and my training log bore me out. For instance, the SWB was no pokier over a 20-mile paved loop with 1,400 feet of climbing than the Co-op Cycles ADV 1.1 (see my review in the Aug./Sept. 2018 issue).

The 84.4 gear-inch top end wasn’t tall enough to keep pedaling on one long, gradual descent, but that’s fine. I like to coast and watch the world whirl by.

And that’s a real possibility with a bike like this. Though SWB stands for “short wheelbase,” Jones has actually slackened the head angle by 1° and lengthened the frame — 11mm up front and 11mm out back — to relax the handling a bit without affecting rider positioning.

“The whole thing is 22mm longer, but you’re in the same place,” said Jones. “Now you have a little more room for panniers, bigger bags. Even

though this one is a short wheelbase, it’s longer than most touring bikes.”

This upright position and those tractor tires combine to help even the most confident rider feel more versatile and less vulnerable. If the cars are a little too close for comfort, you can just move over onto the gravel shoulder and keep on keepin’ on.

Or you can get even deeper into the actual weeds, as I did in late August. I was riding the SWB on one of my usual circuits when I decided on a whim to hang a hard right — a very hard right — onto a rocky stretch of Foothills Trail 365 that tops out at a water tank just above the Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway’s launch pad.

I’ve never tried to ride this entire segment of trail before, partly due to a lack of skill and partly because, when it comes to bike selection, I have a bad habit of bringing a knife to a gunfight.


But when approaching a technical section aboard the SWB with those Falstaffian tires, I was able to slow to a contemplative crawl, achieve balance, and then choose the best path forward. Sometimes that meant walking, but it wasn’t the bike’s fault.

Descending from the water tank to the tramway base, I slalomed around a dozing rattlesnake and onto the asphalt, tucked my thumbs into the outer edges of the H-bar’s loop, and time-trialed back to the house, taking a couple off-road detours just ‘cause they were there, and I could.

On one short stretch of dirt linking two neighborhoods, I yielded trail to a young jogger with a child in one of those all-terrain strollers.

“Say ‘Nice bike,’” he told the toddler.

“Nice bike,” said the kid.

“Thank you,” I replied. “I think so too.” 

Patrick O’Grady is a contributing writer for Adventure Cyclist and a cartoonist for Bicycle Retailer & Industry News. He blogs at maddogmedia.com.

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