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BMX PLUS!

E.T.TM

*The Inside
Story:
BMX Behind the
Scenes and on
the Set*

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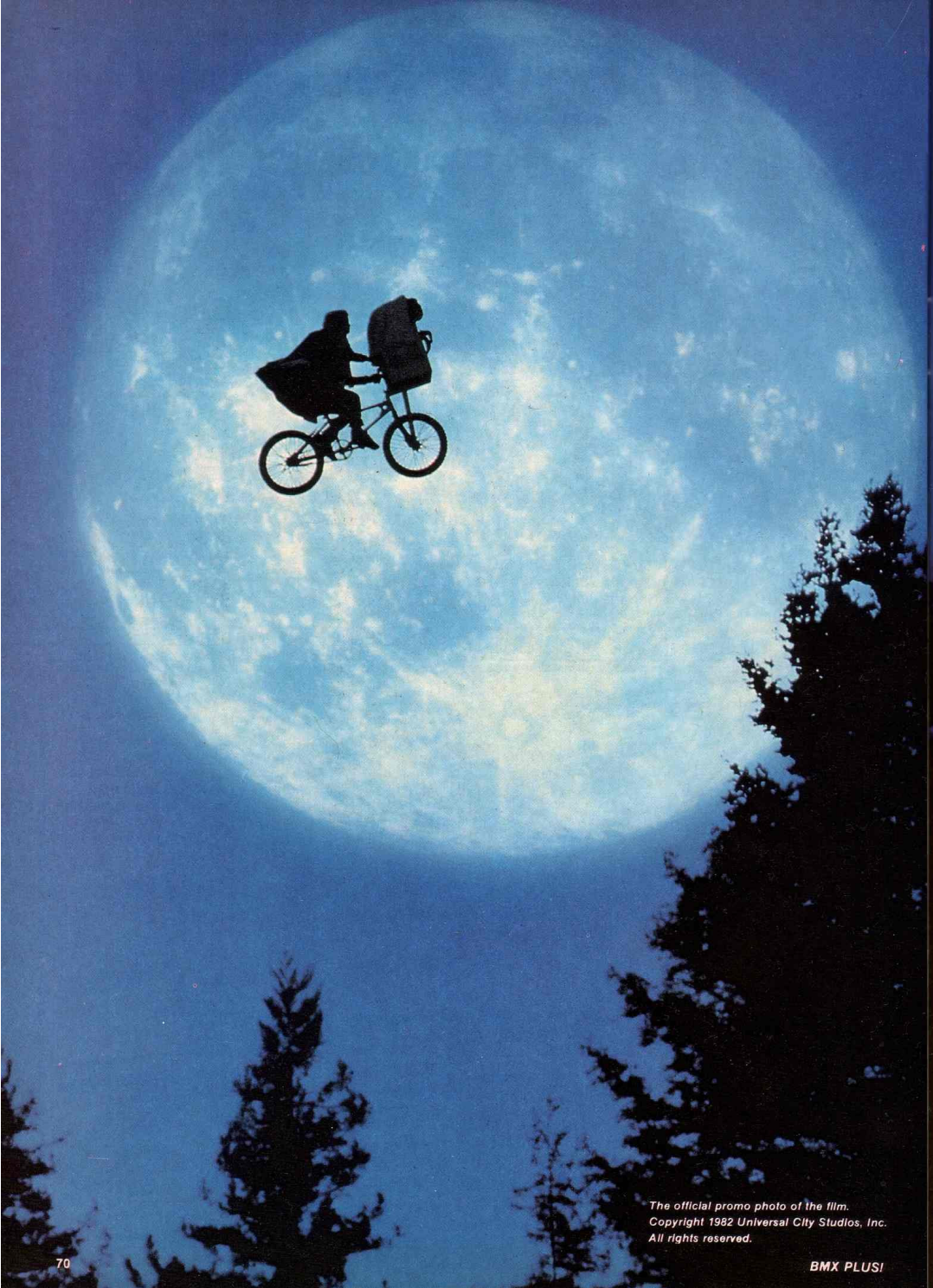
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The official promo photo of the film.
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E.T.^{TM*}

The inside story — behind
the scenes and on the set.



Since the lines are finally starting to get more manageable at the movie theatres around the country, it would probably be safe to say that a large percentage of our readership has by now seen Steven Spielberg's blockbuster film "E.T." In our interview with Bob Haro in our March 1982 issue, Bob talked fairly extensively about his special stunt work in the movie. Because of the incredible success of the film still shattering box office records around the country, we asked Bob to write a feature article for us about the BMX stunt work he and seven other previously unidentified BMXers performed in the film. You won't find their names in the film's credits (probably due to the fact that none of these guys are in the stuntmen's union), but if you've seen the film you know what an important part they play in the climactic bike-chase sequence at the end of the film. It's impossible to predict at this stage how much this movie is going to affect the popularity of BMX in the world (roughly four minutes of exciting BMX-type riding is captured on film). One thing is sure. It won't hurt.

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E.T.

THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL

The Inside Story by Bob Haro

If your girl's bummed at you lately, saying you haven't taken her anywhere, here's your chance to win her heart and see an unreal film, all in one swoop. For those of you who have been in hibernation lately, the movie is called *E.T.*, a Steven Spielberg production. Essentially, the film is about an alien visitor who gets left behind and is being protected from the Feds by a group of kids on BMX bicycles. *E.T.*, you see, is a creature with a face only his mother could love, but once you see the movie, you'll wish you could trade in your little brother for him.

My connection with the movie resulted from a combination of luck and being in the right place at the right time. I remember one day Casey (my secretary) telling me that a producer had called and wanted to know if I was interested in being in the movies. Naturally, I first reacted with a bit of apprehension, but I gave the guy a call. His name was Jerram Swartz, who, incidentally, had worked on directing the movie *The Blues Brothers*. After a short conversation, I was convinced to give it a shot and agreed to meet him on location a few days later.

My first visit with Jerram and the *E.T.* crew wasn't exactly what I expected. We were told to meet at a certain area in the hills in Northridge, California, on the outskirts of Los Angeles. When I arrived, there were already several people there. Including myself, there was a total of eight riders who would serve as doubles for the principle characters. The other riders turned out to be Scot Raceway locals who were selected to do stunt riding. There was David Lee who rode as Taylor, Grant Meyers as Steve, Greg "Ceppie" Maes as Elliott, Duke Brickenton who also rode as Elliott, Robert Cardoza who rode as Greg, Steve Williby also as Taylor, and myself.

Robert Cardoza and I also helped in the design of some of the stunts—building lips before the drop-offs, and in many cases suggesting (successfully) the use of the more radical stunts than what had originally been planned. By coincidence, all of us who chanced



Robert MacNaughton as Michael. The principal actors in the film did the easier riding scenes themselves. It was only for the really tough things that they used the special stunt riders.

to be in the film happened to be from the Torrance, California area, but I had never met any of the others before.

The area in which we met was where the chase sequences were filmed: a hilly terrain with a steep downhill street and terraces cut in the hillside for new homes. We filled out release forms, and the parents of the riders who were not quite eighteen gave their permission for them to do the work.

We then were told about what we were going to be doing and what we would be paid. With all the minor details out of the way, we were shown to a trailer where all the bicycles and bike equipment were stored. The bikes were Kuwahara Z-1's with a fancy fade-type paint job. (Naturally, I had to convert my bike from a freewheel to a coaster brake, because I freak out on freewheels.) After that we were given a piece of paper listing the time and location of our first day of work.

Well, on the way back to the office, my thoughts were rushin' about what an opportunity and an experience this was going to be. As for myself, I was fully stoked, and when I arrived at the shop, my excitement wasn't easily contained. I must have told everyone I talked to about the work I'd been contacted to do. Hollywood, here comes BMX!

Since we were doing stunts as doubles for the cast, we worked out

the second unit. The first unit was made up of the principal characters, and we would meet up with them later in the week. We were told very little about the film itself. I suppose in the motion picture industry that most things, such as the plot and what the movie is to be called, are highly confidential. The reason I say this is because the entire time the other riders and I worked on the picture it was called *A Boy's Life*, which, if you remember, we talked about in an earlier article in *BMX Plus! Oh, well!* (Bob Haro interview, *BMX Plus!* March 1982)

Days on the job were begun by 5:00 a.m. After a brisk shower, some bacon and eggs, and a cup of coffee, my blood was flowing smoothly. One hour later I was pulling up to the set area. This time it was much different from our first encounter. This day there were trucks everywhere, with camera and sound equipment, with wires and cables laid out from the street to the back of the house where the cameras and crew were.

Ironically enough, that portion of the movie was shot in ninety-degree-plus temperatures, and we all had endless clothes on. It was more like Army basic training than Hollywood glamour. Anyone out there that thinks that the job was a cakewalk is wrong. You see, as any photographer or cameraman will tell you, it takes many, many shots to come up with what you finally

see on the screen. For instance, the four-minute chase sequence in which the government officials are after us and *E.T.*, took five twelve-to fourteen-hour days of shooting. But once it was all edited and spliced together it was truly the high point of the movie. And they must have filmed the sequence of the riders going down the terraces a dozen times or more before they were totally happy with it. With the many different scenes that we did for the terrace sequence, it's a wonder to me how in the world they keep track of what goes where in the film. The days were long in actual hours, but it was truly a super time. The director who was in

whole thing was carried in a standard milk carton strapped onto Elliott's bike. One thing that didn't make it into the film was a scene in which another stuntman and I fly off of the second story of a house on our bikes and land on stack of lumber. What was supposed to happen was that Elliott, *E.T.*, and another kid get chased by the Feds up these wood ramps that carpenters use and are trapped and forced into jumping out a window. Well, as luck would have it, the big scene got round filed, but in doing that scene several humorous things happened.

While they were setting up this shot, I built a little lip on the end of



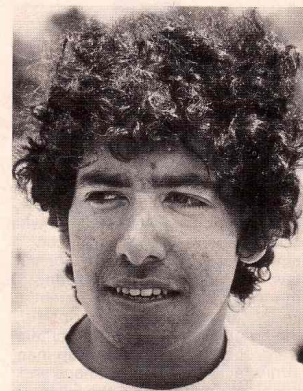
Ceppie Maes (left) and Robert Cardoza. The BMX stunt riders were well paid. Most made about a thousand dollars each.

charge of the second unit, Glen Randall, was a fairly stern man, but still he was good to all of us. Incidentally, Glen was the director responsible for the stunt coordination in "Raiders of the Lost Ark," also a Steven Spielberg movie.

All of my days on the film were spent on location, while some of the other guys had the big opportunity of going to the studio for some extra shooting.

To kinda bounce around a bit, what you saw and what actually happened are two separate things. What, for instance, appeared to be the "Extra-Terrestrial" in most of the bike riding scenes was actually just a large piece of foam rubber cut up in the shape of *E.T.* with a white blanket pinned to it. The

balcony which would give us some extra lift. Well, instead of having David do the shot with me in the first place, they had this 31-year-old midget who does stunts for kids. See, if you're not eighteen then stunt work is a no go. Well, the guy didn't know much about BMX, or riding a bike for that matter, so I tried to tell him how to jump off the second story. His bike, remember, had twenty or so extra pounds on the bars (*E.T.*) which made his bike handle like a refrigerator. So here I am going through the motions of showing this guy how to jump a bike. Well, he was cool but I think he was a bit light, and the extra weight on the bars caused the bike to endo a bit. So as we got ready to go for it, the stunt men and the "grips", who are



Robert Cardoza, 20, a racer of nine years experience, was first hired as the mechanic for the bikes, but later helped talk the film company into hiring real BMX racers to do the tougher scenes.

guys who do anything that is needed, set up a couple of layers of cardboard boxes to land on. Meanwhile I'm still briefing my copilot in this scene. Things looked as if they were going to go smoothly until I misinterpreted what the director said. On the second story we barely had any room for a run, so we each had someone push us. This is where the misunderstanding part came in. Our cue was actually on "three", and my human rocket launcher behind me, and I both thought it was on "run." So the directors said, "Quiet please, cameras, action, one," and we thought he said "run," so I started cranking and he gave me the boot. Upon hearing the word "two", I jammed on the binders and stopped just short of bailing one flight, thanks to my trusty coaster brakes. Well, the midget stunt dude comes blazing by me not under his own power and did the full-on endo onto the boxes; and because he was so light, the boxes didn't even break his fall. The entire crew was rolling in laughter. He wasn't hurt but his pride was. After several unsuccessful attempts and several successful endos, they decided to get David Lee to do the dirty work. David pulled it off like any red-blooded BMXer would have, with no flaws. Anyway, after all that, they bailed on the scene. That's

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Hollywood for you!

With the many different scenes that we did for the terrace sequence, it's a wonder to me how in the world they keep track of what goes where in the film. You'd be amazed at the crew and equipment involved just to shoot something: there's all the camera equipment, a couple of cameramen, a script girl, the lighting crew, grips, carpenters, wardrobe people, the makeup man, audio technicians—just heaps and heaps of people—plus the killer catering trucks which were at each location. Scheesh, I'd hate to have their payroll problems. But with the success "E.T." has turned out to be, I guess they won't have any problems paying their bills.

One day during the five days of shooting, we met up with the first unit, which was being directed by



Part one of a two shot sequence. Robert Cardoza (center) and Bob Haro (right) launch towards a government agent.



Haro goes for air off the drop-off as Grant Meyers and David Lee come into the scene.

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Five key members of the E.T. stunt team. Left to right: Grant Meyers (13), Duke Britton (14), David Lee (top, 20), Ceppie Maes (bottom, 15), and Robert Cardoza (20).

Steven Spielberg. I remember that the size of the crew was awesome when I arrived on location this particular morning. The street from top to bottom was covered with equipment and people. The principal characters were present filming a scene where Elliott and E.T. get chased into the house, one of the parts that was edited out. We were shooting some other angles and doing the scene where the kids get chased down the terraces and then ride off the hoods of the police cars. (I was the guy who knocked the light off the car.)

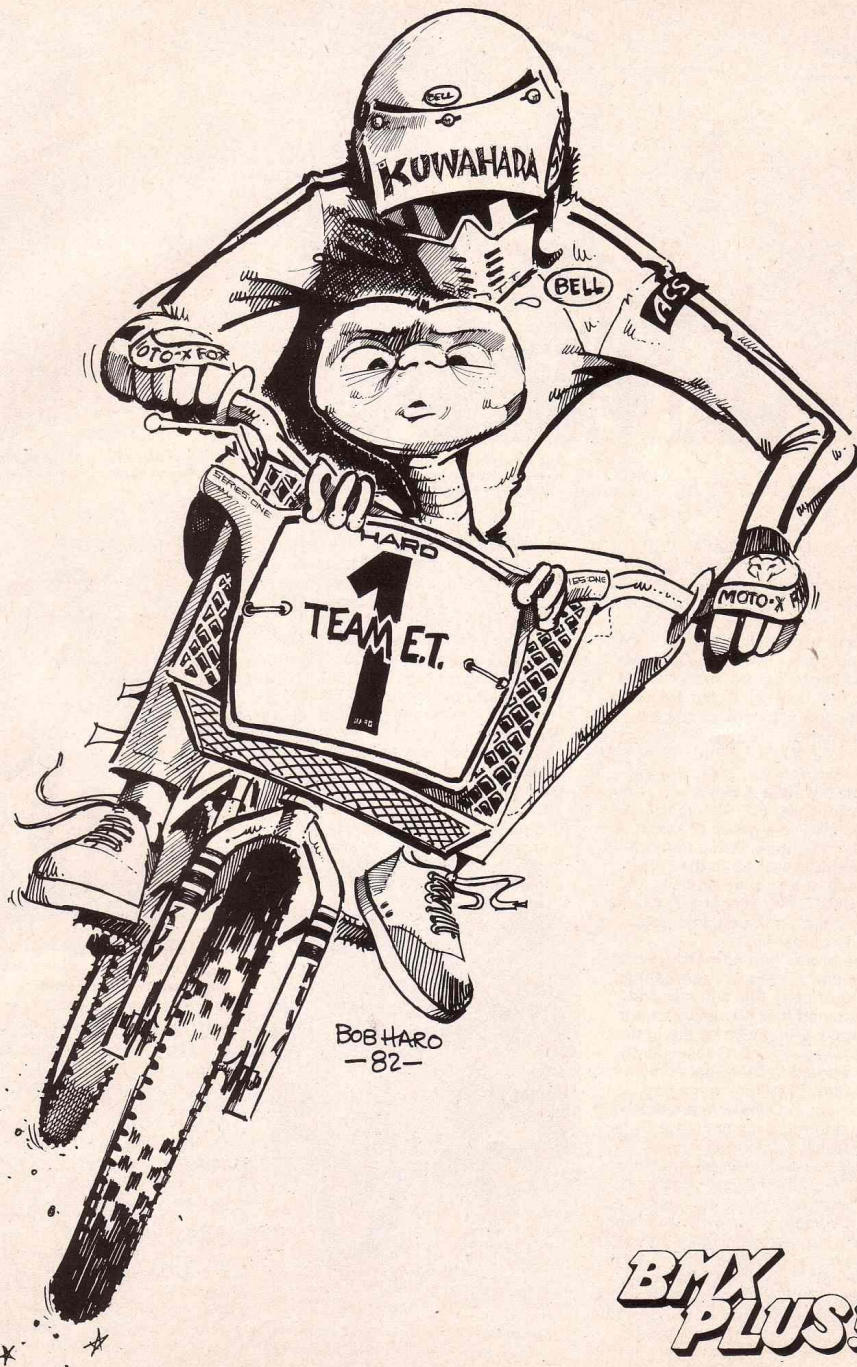
The day that Spielberg was on the set, it was like having E.F. Hutton there, because when he spoke people listened. Anytime he wanted something changed or redone, the crew totally jumped. Spielberg also came out and directed the shooting for the bicycle/police car scene. That shot was done by backing the cars up against a steep dirt bank and building ramps for launching us onto the cars. We bike riders were held by a couple of crewmen each and let loose on the word "Action", a fairly simple stunt.

I could continue this forever, but the main purpose of this article was to convey an insider's view of what it was like working on the movie E.T. It was an experience I'll

remember for a long, long time.

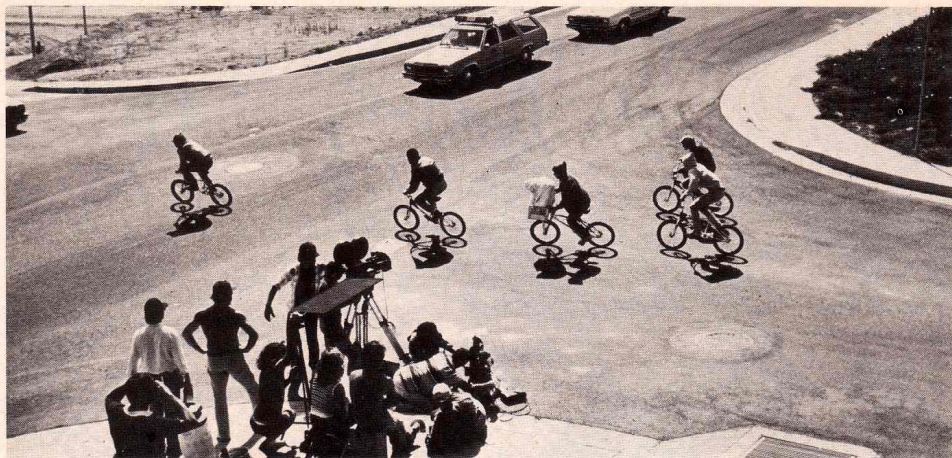
What this film will do for BMX is hard to say, but for sure it won't hurt in the least. This is the first true exposure any major motion picture has given BMX, and hopefully, it will not be the last. The sport of BMX is fortunate to get this boost from a director as good as Spielberg, who was willing to use BMX to its best advantage. For my part, I get totally jazzed when I pass the old movie house with a line out front just waiting to see E.T. It makes me proud to know I helped in making this movie a box office success.

You may have wondered why none of the BMX riders' names were listed in the credits. It was because none of us guys who rode as doubles were members of the Screen Actors Guild, apparently a requirement to be listed. Oh well, at least we know we did it.



BOB HARO
-82-

BMX PLUS!



The filming of *E.T.* required a total of twenty Kuwaharas, even though only five appeared on the screen at any one time. Stuntriders in action, left to right: Robert Cardoza, Bob Haro, Duke Britton (with *E.T.*), David Lee, and Grant Meyers.

The Bikes in *E.T.* by John Ker

Before directing the film *E.T.*, Steven Spielberg directed *Jaws*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Howie Cohen, however, the American distributor of Kuwahara bicycles, and no great movie fan, had never heard of him before. Not until last year, that is, when Spielberg's production company contacted Howie to see if they could get some bikes to use in a new movie they were about to film, a project then tentatively titled *A Boy's Life*, later to be renamed *E.T.* The movie would involve a group of kids and an alien creature. While harboring this extra-terrestrial in their custody, the kids would have to ride BMX bicycles over some fairly rugged terrain in certain crucial scenes of the film.

The production company made a quick poll of twenty kids late that spring or early that summer and ascertained that Kuwaharas were generally thought to be the hottest BMX bikes around. Consequently, they wanted to try to get some for their film. They first contacted Kuwahara in Osaka, Japan, but were referred back to Howie Cohen in Torrance, California. Howie agreed to supply the bikes for the film. Later, the bicycle company and the movie company negotiated an agreement: Kuwahara would get certain promotional rights—those being, primarily, the right to use the name "E.T." on a new line of Kuwahara bikes to be released at about the same time as the film; the movie company, in turn, would receive the bikes needed for the film as well as a royalty for each

"E.T." bike later sold.

Since it was requested that the bikes have a unique and distinctive look for the film, Howie decided to hire an auto paint shop for a full day to create the special paint jobs. Howie also hired a silkscreen shop for a full day in order to come up with all new decals for the bikes.

Howie oversaw the preparation of the bikes and on September 8, 1981, delivered twenty of the specially designed Kuwaharas to the studios of Universal Pictures.

It's still a little early to predict at this point how successful the *E.T.* line of bikes will be. However, the first order of 2,000 sold out immediately, and Howie is



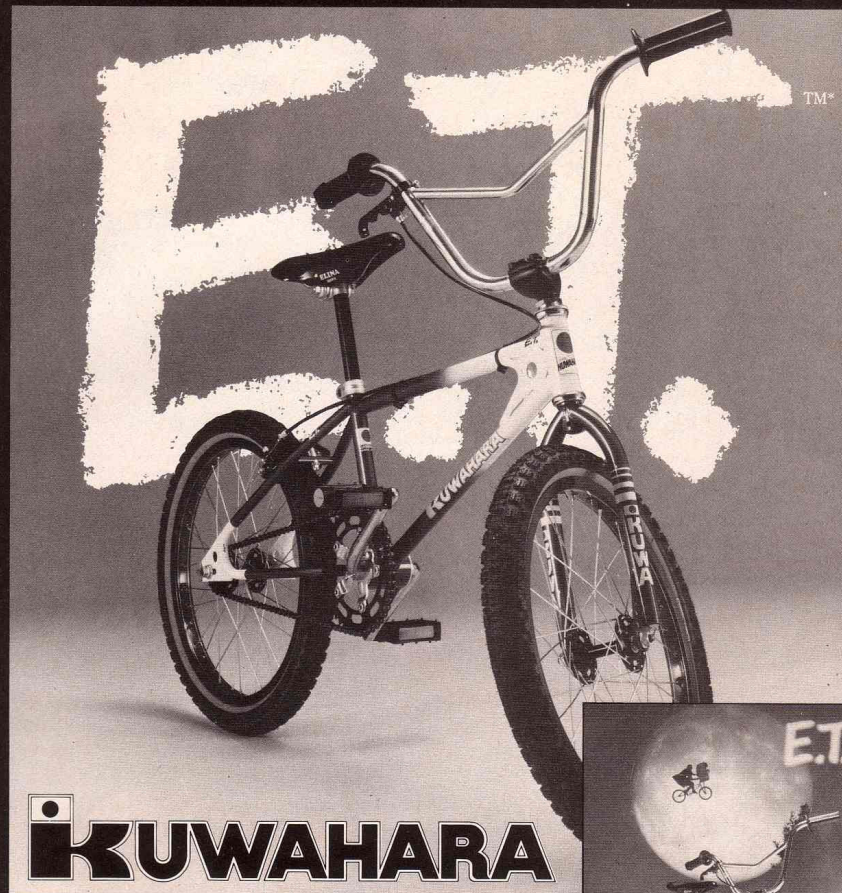
The Kuwahara *E.T.* Your basic KZ frame (not chrome-moly, though) nice components and a trick paint job. Time will tell if it'll sell.



Everything Bicycles tycoon Howie Cohen shows off the Kuwahara *E.T.* with optional bike basket for friendly aliens.

understandably optimistic. *E.T.* is breaking theatre attendance records everywhere and seems likely to surpass even *Star Wars* (to date, the highest-grossing movie in history) in total box-office draw, so the implications for the sales of the so-prominently featured and identically named bike are not hard to figure.

Howie Cohen is delighted with the way everything has turned out. He saw a special preview of *E.T.* in May and loved it. He is obviously proud to have been a part of it. Still, he keeps the whole thing in perspective. "People think I was smart to be connected with this," says Howie, "but I was just lucky."



AS SEEN IN THE MOVIE.

Experience the thrill of *E.T.* with an *E.T.* Bicycle from Kuwahara. You can ride a bike just like Elliott's, the most famous BMX bicycle in the World. It saved the day for *E.T.* and now it can make every day extra-special for you.

Fly into your favorite bicycle shop and get your *E.T.* Bicycle from Kuwahara today!

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