

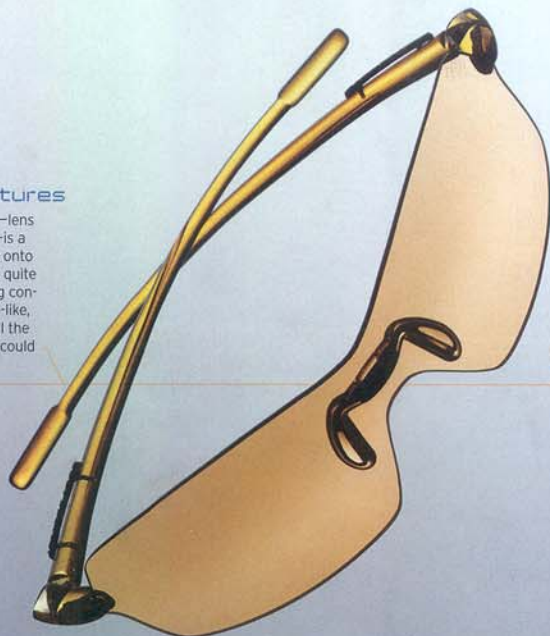
ORANGE CRUSH

Rudy Project hits the sweet spot where sportsworthiness becomes fashion and vice versa. This frameless wonder fends off 70-mile-an-hour winds as effectively as ski goggles, but it'll also turn heads in Santa Barbara. Add dreamy optics and negligible weight and the result is a Gear of the Year award.

By Mike Steere

HIT PARADE: Five Fab Features

1. The whole shebang—lens and tendril earpieces—is a springy unit that holds onto the head delicately yet quite securely. Without being conspicuously sport-shield-like, the Maskeryna gives all the protection any athlete could ever need.



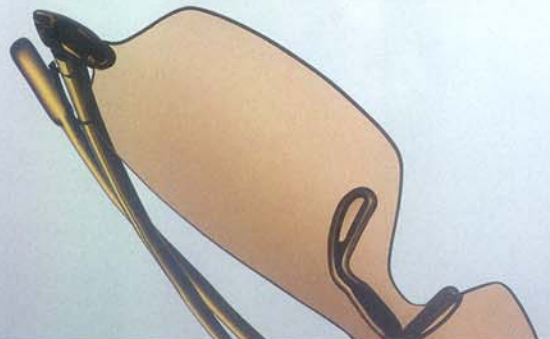
2. The no-frame wraparound uni-lens is undeniably chic—but it's also très sportif, at just over half an ounce. You'll forget you're wearing it. Plus the Maskeryna slayed the wind when I stood up in a convertible doing 75 on the Ventura Freeway.

Rudy Project Maskeryna \$125 rudyproject.com

3. The best polycarbonate lenses are injection-molded under very high pressure—and Rudy pummels these shades with over five and a half tons of it per square inch. The result? Crystalline clarity and acuity, plus improved scratch resistance.

4. A warm orange-brown tint blocks blue light—a bane of sharp focus—rendering everything suitably crisp and 3-D. But don't blink; you might miss the perfect view: This tint also helps speed up visual navigation and, by extension, your road- or mountain-biking pace.

5. Silicone-compound schnoz pads anchor the Maskeryna when you're sweaty and taking hits and dips from the trail and can also be adjusted for fit. Vanity points: These slender, teardrop-shaped grippies don't leave deep, red nose-dents.



LEARNING CURVE

IN THE STORE Place your right hand on this magazine and solemnly swear that you'll try brown- or red-tinted lenses—and see the wonders they work for depth and detail—before you buy gray, which might look noir but is actually ill-suited for action sports. » Safety bulletin: Pick polycarbonate lenses, not glass or basic plastic; should you smash face, poly won't shatter and cut.

IN THE FIELD Using your cotton tee to clean your shades is a no-no: Even a slightly dirty shirt can scratch lenses. Go with that satiny microfiber bag or cloth that came with your purchase. » If you fix your bike's chainring, smear on some sunscreen, or surf and your shades end up greasy or gritty, rinse them with fresh water; Petroleum-based products, as well as salt water and chlorine, can be corrosive to both frame and lenses. » Leaving sunglasses on a dashboard in intense sunlight, even if they're in a hard case, may cause them to warp.

IN THE FUTURE Expect "dial-a-density" technology that'll let you adjust the desired level of darkness in lenses via a setting on the side of the frame. And by spring 2006, Rudy Project hopes to offer faster photochromics: Glasses will darken according to levels of UV exposure in less than five seconds, instead of the current 20 to 60.

