

Rowan Sorrell hasn't had his picture in any mountain bike magazines for a while now, so it was about time he was. Whilst moonlighting between being a journalist and course builder/designer he also gets to ride his bike a bit. We flew him out to this Russian bauxite mine just outside Merthyr Tydfil...the perfect location to photograph a bike with a luminous paint job.



Five dead... the Blood Test

BLOOD
BLOOD ORANGE, DIFFERENT ORANGES
SMALLER THAN AN AVERAGE ORANGE, NO IT'S LARGER THAN AN AVERAGE ORANGE
ORANGE BLOOD, AN ORANGE WAS THE LAST THING THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE
CONTRADICTIONS...COLOURS, BIKES BEING SENT BACK, SIZES
RODE STEVE WADE'S (ORANGE'S MAIN MAN) - DIDN'T LIKE THE SHOCK
ORDERED ONE - DIDN'T LIKE THE SIZE OR COLOUR
GOT ROWAN SORREL'S (JOURNALIST, TRACK BUILDER AND RIDER) - LIKED IT
ORDERED ANOTHER - DIDN'T LIKE THE COLOUR
GOT ONE - IT GOT SENT ELSEWHERE
GOT ANOTHER ONE - HAD TOO LOW GEARING
NAME - NOT WHAT I THOUGHT

The Orange Blood

Bike Test

WORDS: STEVE JONES
PHOTO: STEVE JONES

The Orange Blood

The Orange Blood is a variety of Orange bike; with a neon green frame in this particular guise. The 5” Blood is smaller than an average full suspension Orange (around 150mm) yet its lack of travel hides its hard work intentions, “a triumph of quality over quantity” they say. The distinguishing aggressive look is due to a slack head angle and presence of long travel forks – common on many bikes of this travel. The distinctive colour meanwhile is due to the presence of neon, a common element in the universe, but one rare on earth. Commercially extracted from air in which it is found in trace elements, you can see neon in the dark, fuck knows why, but you can. Anyway, the degree of colouration depends on light, temperature and variety, not strictly scientifically correct, but a bit like the inner core of the variety of Orange from which it was named. In fact this colour is the work of Jay Tolan at Orange bikes – he’s kind of got a theme going on with his swatches up in Halifax...apple, bright, chrome, cosmic, disco, electric, fools, Kermit, mandarin, metallic, neon, passion, pearl, plasma, powder, sassy...has a certain nightclub feel don’t you think? Then again apple, Kermit and mandarin seem a bit odd in all this. Maybe it’s literally the computer protocol of a sentimental anagram. Is Jay Tolan up to something? The ‘Midnight Express’.

But neon doesn’t work. No, neon green doesn’t work in photographs. Or at least it does work in photos, but does not transmit to print very well. You cannot replicate neon through the normal print process. This it seems is the fault of the printer, as traditionally four inks are plated on top of each other, to produce the fifth costs cash and only big hitters splash that in the mags.

The Blood is no weakling, very much a lightweight with a heavyweight thump. It’s not too serious though – a play bike for the playboys out there (as Rowan Sorrell once put it). Him being of the variety that goes to watch old men DJ’ing at seedy nightclubs. ‘Tis a funny mix, at first I thought the Blood was out of sequence in the Orange online catalogue, coming after the Alpine but before the Five, even though it has less travel. Therein lies the problem of bracketing. The Blood actually has more travel overall than a standard production Five with Fox 32’s – 127mm on rear and 160mm up front giving 287mm. The Five having 140mm –140mm. Yet the Five doesn’t behave like the Blood, even if you were to bolt on that 36 beastly.

The Blood is unique, or should I say a rarity, as there actually are bikes designed in a similar way to this albeit with incorrectly spec’d rear shocks. Ours came with a hard compression, medium rebound tune on a Fox Float RP23 with large can, giving a significantly lazy mid stroke. This ensures the bike slows the movement of its inches down through its travel as you head down off the hill. Chassis and suspension design ensures it takes the clouts.

It’s gone down well in the office:

- Mike, Editor:

“Kind of like it quite a lot, front end is made for some action.”
- Jon, Designer:

“Handles like a bigger bike, but still feels quite small.”
- Billy, Web:

“It’s not a flat side oval, it’s a D shape.”
- Ed H, Mag:

“Like the way it looks. Pretty agro. Like the Maxle back end.”

There was obviously more to it than that. Jon took the bike out for some time and liked the way he got more confidence hitting terrain at speed. Ed meanwhile didn’t like some of the cable routing, but preferred the lack of box section classic of Orange of old. Jon also didn’t like the effort involved in pedalling the Blood, but nevertheless took it out all weekend. This was third time round on the Blood for Jon. After riding Orange designer/owner Steve Wade’s bike out in Spain earlier this year we ordered one in for him, “The large made me feel sick when I saw it.”

Now Jon was referring to the large size Blood in baby blue that arrived from HQ and not the tequila sizes he was immersing himself in down south. Very simply the Blood doesn’t seem to work in large, it needs the nip and tuck, it’s not a loafer. The Blood is very much a bike for hanging out. It’s just that it’s a bit at odds with the common classification that companies find themselves copying. The Orange ST4 was a bit like the Blood as well. A four-inch trail bike with a high pulse rate.


The speed at which you can and will ride the Blood will vary. Riding this bike uphill will more than likely give you a high heart rate yes, and at a velocity similar to what blood speeds in the capillaries of your body – pretty slow – five feet per second. On singletrack trail veins it will be faster, yet it’s in those big downhill arteries that flow of THE BLOOD will be fastest. An injection of pace that will give your mates on 70degreeskinnytyredthintubedhilltrimmers a f-kin wake up call.

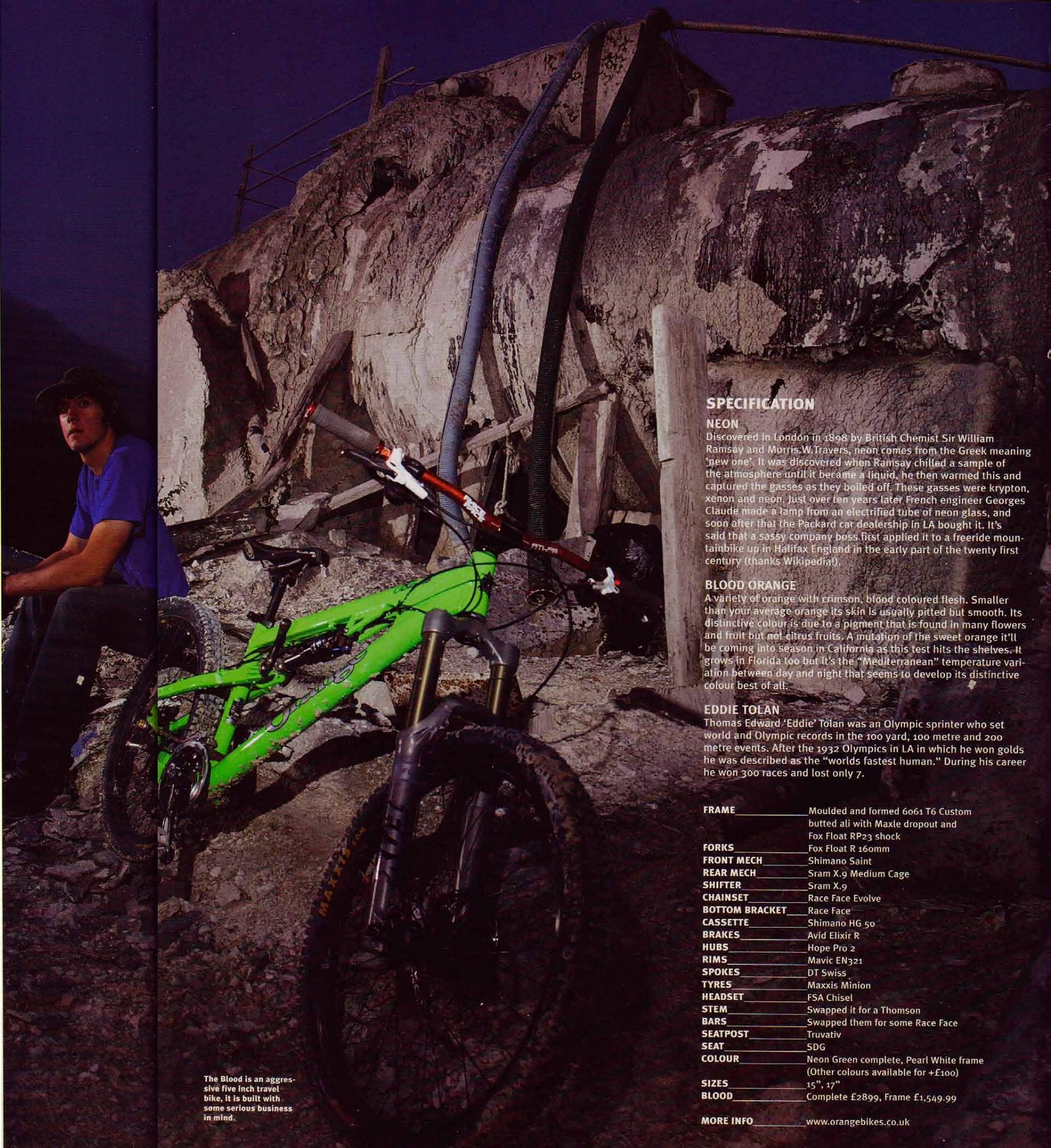
And you can go on about specs and details all day and as much as you like as well. Fast rolling tyres seem the way ahead, and the 60a compound Maxxis Minions are a treat, super tacky slows the Blood down and puts a formal coat onto your informal buddy. If any bike could live without cosmetics it’s the Blood. The double chainring is a mistake, that makes too much noise and is too low geared. A single 36T with device seems the only way to proceed. Likewise it needs a low headtube stack height, short stem and wider than normal bars. It has to have the 36 forks and a solid wheelset simply because the angles give it a downhill poise and therefore you WILL be hitting things faster than any average five inch bike. The Blood lays a wager on you to leave the deck more often than you would normally, a great stable bike to learn off-the-deck action.

UNIQUE

The overview of the Blood states that it’s a bike that can hang with the big guys. That’s not entirely true. You’ll more than likely be hanging if you try following a 224 down a bad bit of track. But that’s missing the point. The Blood can be ridden fast downhill and can do all the things a bigger bike can do but wont give you the comfort ride offered by a bike with three inches more travel...obviously. Slopestyle apparently.

The company’s sortie into rocker territory has been a success, the link gives a good ride characteristic that fits well with gaps, wall rides and man made kit, it’s a touch slow mid stroke but it doesn’t seem a bad thing. Its angles give it stability, the short back end making it lively, but the biggest revelation of all comes on the website, “In practice this means it’s a bike you can pedal”.

Cheeky, tough and balanced is the Orange Blood. Five dead? The Five aint dead for goodness sake. Five inches dead. This is a pretty sweet orange. 



The Blood is an aggressive five inch travel bike, it is built with some serious business in mind.

SPECIFICATION

NEON
Discovered in London in 1898 by British Chemist Sir William Ramsay and Morris.W.Travers, neon comes from the Greek meaning 'new one'. It was discovered when Ramsay chilled a sample of the atmosphere until it became a liquid, he then warmed this and captured the gasses as they boiled off. These gasses were krypton, xenon and neon. Just over ten years later French engineer Georges Claude made a lamp from an electrified tube of neon glass, and soon after that the Packard car dealership in LA bought it. It's said that a sassy company boss first applied it to a freeride mountainbike up in Halifax England in the early part of the twenty first century (thanks Wikipedia!).

BLOOD ORANGE
A variety of orange with crimson, blood coloured flesh. Smaller than your average orange its skin is usually pitted but smooth. Its distinctive colour is due to a pigment that is found in many flowers and fruit but not citrus fruits. A mutation of the sweet orange it'll be coming into season in California as this test hits the shelves. It grows in Florida too but it's the "Mediterranean" temperature variation between day and night that seems to develop its distinctive colour best of all.

EDDIE TOLAN
Thomas Edward 'Eddie' Tolan was an Olympic sprinter who set world and Olympic records in the 100 yard, 100 metre and 200 metre events. After the 1932 Olympics in LA in which he won golds he was described as the "worlds fastest human." During his career he won 300 races and lost only 7.

FRAME	Moulded and formed 6061 T6 Custom butted ali with Maxle dropout and Fox Float RP23 shock
FORKS	Fox Float R 160mm
FRONT MECH	Shimano Saint
REAR MECH	Sram X.9 Medium Cage
SHIFTER	Sram X.9
CHAINSET	Race Face Evolve
BOTTOM BRACKET	Race Face
CASSETTE	Shimano HG 50
BRAKES	Avid Elixir R
HUBS	Hope Pro 2
RIMS	Mavic EN321
SPOKES	DT Swiss
TYRES	Maxxis Minion
HEADSET	FSA Chisel
STEM	Swapped it for a Thomson
BARs	Swapped them for some Race Face
SEATPOST	Truvativ
SEAT	SDG
COLOUR	Neon Green complete, Pearl White frame (Other colours available for +£100)
SIZES	15", 17"
BLOOD	Complete £2899, Frame £1,549.99

MORE INFO www.orangebikes.co.uk