



BIKETEST

DIFFERENT STROKES

Is pivot position or geometry and overall suspension performance most important on these cutting-edge examples of four classic suspension layouts?



★★★★★
WRECKED
& Rated
MBUK



OUR RATINGS

We base our scores on value for money and performance



EXCEPTIONAL

A genuine class leader



VERY GOOD

One of the best you can buy



GOOD

It'll do the job and do it well



BELOW AVERAGE

Flawed in some way



POOR

Simply put, don't bother!

The way the rear wheel interacts with the rest of a suspension bike in terms of pivots, linkages and the wheel paths they create used to be the dominant part of any performance discussion. Inevitably that meant a ton of marketing claims, as well as a vast range of patents to protect each manufacturer's secret suspension recipe. More patents meant more diverse designs to get around them, and more potential confusion for bike buyers. The way the rear wheel moves in relation to bumps, pedalling forces and the rest of the bike, as well as what leverages and rate curves the shock has to work with, are only a part of the bigger performance picture.

So how much difference do different suspension systems really make? How much overlap is there in performance if you start playing around with shock tunes? Can a theoretically primitive system

actually be a great way to interact with the trail? Can some systems be too complicated for their own good? What implications do suspension systems create in terms of chassis design, durability, tyre clearance, set-up and overall ride character.

To keep things even in suspension feel we've used four bikes with between 140 and 150mm of travel running on 650b wheels. We've got a wide range of frame materials though, including both hydroformed and hand-folded aluminium alloy, carbon fibre and even steel. There's a broad spread of geometry from the conservative to the radical and suspension units from RockShox, Fox, X-Fusion and Cane Creek.

We've hammered them all round the same brutal boulder runs, loose bends and senders of Stainburn trail centre and other trails to find out how they perform in every situation and which bike – not just suspension system – will suit you best.

THE TESTER



GUY KESTEVEN

Guy has been testing bikes since suspension systems looked more like anglepoise lamps or the hinge of a folding bike. The reliability, control and stiffness of the suspension set-ups and the frames have improved massively over two decades and they're still getting better. That means Kes and his team of northern testers had to push these 2017 bikes even harder and dig deeper into the tech than ever before to bring you trail-based test results you can totally rely on.

THE LINE-UP



SPECIALIZED STUMPJUMPER FSR COMP CARBON 650B £3,000

Specialized held and fiercely defended the patent for Horst Leitner's four-bar suspension layout for decades. Even now the patent has lapsed it's still the kinematic keystone of all their suspension bikes. The Stumpjumper Carbon Comp is a well proven all-round trail machine available in a wide range of wheel sizes. Do unique suspension set-up and internal storage features help this naturally neutral machine defeat more dynamic-riding bikes though?



ORANGE FIVE S REVERB £3,010

The earliest suspension bikes generally used a single pivot point with the shock mounted directly between the swingarm and the mainframe, and that's still the layout used by Orange. Their latest Five has a tweaked pivot and shock position, a new frame to save a chunk of weight and its overall geometry is altered too. So can competitively priced and upgradable build options help prove this outwardly simple design is actually the smartest of all?



MONDRAKER FOXY R £3,499

Mondraker's radical long top tube, super-short stem Forward Geometry concept is the stand-out feature of their Foxy trail bike. Crouched low and centrally between the split seat tube and 'basket' of the Foxy frame sits their twin-linkage Zero suspension system. Both innovations created the perfect 1, 2, 3 podium for Mondraker at the DH World Championships, but can the same elements put them on the top step on the trail too?



COTIC ROCKET GOLD £3,599

If a bike doesn't have a second pivot on the swingarm between the wheel and the mainframe, you can still do a lot to affect shock behaviour and suspension character by using a seatstay pivot and/or separate shock-driving linkage. That's exactly what Cotic have done with their 'Droplink'-actuated, 150mm travel hardcore hellraiser. It also has a Reynolds steel frame, but can this ferrous flyer iron out the trail as well as the competition?

DETAILS

SWAT TEAM

The removable panel under the bottle cage reveals a ton of internal storage space complete with custom bags to stop your bits rattling out of sight

NICE 'N' NEUTRAL

Specialized's chainstay pivot and fourth shock-driving Horst Link suspension set-up give a naturally pedal and brake-neutral performance

SLAYER TYRES

Specialized Butcher and Slaughter Grid tyres are some of our favourites, but low spoke count makes the wheels flexy



SPECIALIZED STUMPJUMPER FSR COMP CARBON 650B

£3,000 Spesh's latest Stumpy is a feature-loaded smoothie

Specialized's Stumpjumper FSR Comp Carbon family covers every possible modern trail bike base, including 29er and plus versions, but it's a conventional cruiser rather than a radical charger.

The frame

A mid-range composite front end is mated to an M5 alloy back end, and the down tube features Specialized's unique SWAT internal storage hatch under the bottle cage. The RockShox Monarch RT shock gets a bespoke 'Rx Trail Tune' and 'Autosag' side valve for easy set-up of the 150mm stroke.

The rear of the shock uses a custom cradle to connect to the shock driver yoke, which in turn connects to the U-shaped linkage of Specialized's FSR kinematic. A curved seat tube and 148mm wide

Boost rear hub allow super-short asymmetric chainstays, and gear and dropper post cables are all routed internally. The down tube sports a big protective plate in front of the PF30 bottom bracket shell and there are also chain guide mounts.

The kit

The tight grip of the SRAM GX rear mech and Race Face direct-mount chainring meant we never felt the need for a chain guide, though. The RockShox Yari RC fork is a seriously tough unit, while the Specialized Butcher and Slaughter tyres get reinforced Grid casings. The 200mm front rotor on the size L and XL bikes amplify power of the SRAM Guide R brakes. Specialized's bar and stem suit the trail character and the own-brand dropper is reliable, if eye-wateringly rapid in action. Specialized's 29mm internal width wheels add tyre volume, but reduced spoke count affects stiffness.

JARGON

AUTOSAG

Specialized's unique secondary valve system that automatically sets the air pressure of the rear shock.

KINEMATIC

The arrangement of pivots and linkages in a suspension system and how they interact.

The ride

While the Autosag shock drops you into the right sag spot in percentage terms, the RX Tune is very keen to push through its travel. That meant we soon added air pressure and volume-reducing bands to the Monarch shock body to increase support. It's still a very mobile ride under pedalling, though – it could use an additional low-speed compression damping setting between the fully open or almost locked options of the RT lever.

With the carbon mainframe, oversized bottom bracket, stiff Boost rear end and semi slick tread on the Slaughter rear tyre we were expecting prompt acceleration and easy momentum maintenance. But it's not significantly lighter than the other bikes on test and wattage wasted by the soft rear end meant it struggled in power play situations.

While the 67-degree head angle and 620mm top tube look good



THE REAR WHEEL ROLLS UP AND OVER ROOTS AND ROCKS WITH CONSISTENT CONNECTION SO YOU DON'T NEED TO MANAGE TECHNICAL TERRAIN TRACTION YOURSELF

HIGHS

Naturally neutral, well balanced and super-smooth ride

Sorted trail spec at a good price

Unique easy shock set-up and internal storage

LOWS

Heavy, twangy wheels and soft suspension sap responsiveness and short wheelbase undermines flat-out stability

on paper, the Stumpy felt more compact and prone to stumble in aggressive turns than the other, longer wheelbased, bikes. Even the stout 35mm legged, Boost width Yari fork can't add sharpness to the manners of the heavy but flexy front wheel. When we tried to bully the front end out of understeer situations or drag it in to an apex it felt vague rather than visceral.

While ragged-edge riding might not be its forte, there's still a lot for less radical riders to like about the Stumpjumper. The relatively conventional geometry doesn't feel as initially intimidating as the stretched and slack-angled bikes here if you're used to an older bike, and the shorter wheelbase and back end make it easier to steer through tight, slow speed singletrack.

The Autosag feature takes the guesswork out of shock set-up, and the linear shock character and very little chain influence on the

suspension action leaves the rear wheel to roll up and over roots and rocks with consistent connection so you don't need to manage technical terrain traction yourself. The long negative spring in the Yari fork means an equally smooth ride up front and the tubeless-ready wheels and tyres add more potential float.

There's the option to add even more float by choosing the plus-tyred Stumpjumper 6Fatty or get a faster rolling, more stable ride from the 29er model. They're both still short and nimble, so if you want a more radical feel try the new Enduro.



FOR A LITTLE MORE

Stumpjumper FSR Expert Carbon 650b £4,000

The same chassis has the far lighter RockShox Pike RC fork, Monarch RT3, not RT, shock and Roval Traverse wheels.



FOR A LITTLE LESS

Stumpjumper FSR Comp 650b £2,200

The M5 alloy frameset has the same ride character as its semi-carbon siblings, and a Revelation fork helps save weight.

MBLUK VERDICT

Super smooth with user friendly features but soft-focused rather than responsive when pushed



DETAILS

LONG AND SHORT

Mondraker's Forward Geometry is based around a super-long top tube and super-short 30mm stem

SHOCK LOADED

The Zero suspension system compresses the shock between the upper and lower linkages, isolating the mainframe and swingarm from direct loads and keeping weight low and central

TWIN RING

Foxy R reverts to a double chainset for 2017 but converting to a single direct-mount chainring is easy and the front mech fixtures are fully removable



MONDRAKER FOXY R

£3,499 The Foxy is a radical, efficiently tuned trail weapon

Mondraker haven't altered the radical Forward Geometry of the Foxy for 2017, but it gets a stiffer frame, the latest Fox shocks and a dual-ring transmission for a visceral and versatile ride.

The frame

The all-new frame uses a slimmer tubeset with a far less pronounced hump behind the head tube, and a 148mm wide Boost back end for increased stiffness. The Zero suspension system still works through the angular open-basket seat tube, compressing the shock between the two linkages rather than stressing the mainframe, and falls into the virtual pivot category. An external bottom bracket (BB) and external cable/brake hose routing keep servicing simple.

The kit

Mondraker have clearly got XC riding in mind with the decidedly European spec here. Fast rolling, big volume Maxxis Ardent semi-slick tyres gift easy speed whether you're cruising or charging, and a double chainring plus wide-range cassette mean even the steepest climbs won't beat you. The Fox 34 fork and Float shock are tuned for an efficiently firm rather than flowing action too.

The ride

While longer, lower, slacker has been a universal mantra for geometry updates on most aggro bikes for several years, Mondraker's Forward Geometry still has a unique feel. That's because while the reach is massively long (45-60mm longer than the other bikes on test), the head angle is the steepest on test. Add the super-quick steering of the 30mm FG stem and a steep effective seat angle pushing you forward,

JARGON

BOOST

110mm front and 148mm rear hub width that allows a wider stance spoke placement for a stiffer wheel.

REACH

The horizontal distance between vertical lines through the centre of the bottom bracket axle and the centre of the top of the head tube.

the initial sensation of stretched but nervy can be unsettling at first. In fact, whenever we jumped on to the Foxy from the other bikes it felt like it had a travel-adjust fork that someone had forgotten to re-extend.

It doesn't take long to realise that even while the steering might be more active and agitated, the super-long wheelbase gives it hugely stable handling. As sketchy moment trust rockets, the light steering comes into its own for micro-adjusting lines to milk as much traction out of the trail as possible. That's a good job as the semi-slick tyres start sliding early, particularly on the front. The tightly controlled feel of the Fox suspension also gives a consistently firm edge to carve corners on and with bodyweight shunted forward it's surprising how hard you can push the small side knobs before they start to slide out predictably.

That short fork feel and steep seat angle do pitch you forward right

IF YOU'VE GOT THE SKILL TO PICK
THE BIKE UP AND PUMP IT, THEN YOU
CAN USE ITS PRECISION TO SKIM
MAXIMUM SPEED OUT OF THE TRAIL



HIGHS

Forward Geometry gives outstanding stability and quick steering

Stiffer, lighter frame has external BB and cabling

Pedalling efficiency and 2x11 gearing eat climbs with ease

LOWS

Suspension tune undermines chaos control and 2x11 drivetrain adds weight

into the thick of any impact action on rock heaps or speed-choking root spreads though. That conspicuously supportive mid-stroke means that even though you can force the travel indicator right off the rear shock – even when running cross-country levels of sag – it struggles to suck up blunt force trauma. That obviously impacts its ability to carry speed through staccato trail debris and the upper linkage bolts actually shook loose on a long downhill, although they stayed tight once reinstalled.

If you've got the skill to pick the bike up and pump it through rollers and boulders or scythe round the upper lip of berms with the brakes open, then you can use its precision and rich feedback to skim maximum speed out of the trail. This confirms the Foxy R as a pilot- rather than passenger-oriented machine, but the adjustment period after hopping off the other bikes during testing was often filled with thoughts

that the Foxy XR, with its longer travel fork, slacker head and more aggressive front tyre, would feel significantly better.

While freehub pick-up is slightly slow and weight the highest on test, the Zero suspension is super- stable and efficient under the lumpiest pedalling onslaught. The Boost back end means the narrow stance lower linkage and open basket frame design don't noticeably affect power transfer. Add fast tyres and it never struggled to run with the pack when the hammer went down or keep things easy when the trail went up.

MBUK VERDICT

Surefooted yet agile and efficient trail bike but unforgiving suspension undermines confidence



FOR A LITTLE MORE

Mondraker Foxy XR £3,699

The same frame has a 160mm Fox 36 fork, DT Swiss M1900 wheels, a single-ring and SRAM GX transmission and Guide R brakes.



FOR A LITTLE LESS

Mondraker Foxy £2,599

The most affordable Foxy uses the same Stealth Zero frame with a RockShox Monarch RT damper and Revelation fork.

DETAILS

REAL STEEL

The Reynolds 853 steel mainframe includes Cotic's signature Ovalform top tube as well as a custom heat-treated seat tube to carry the 15mm linkage pivot axle

RAMPED UP

The Droplink suspension uses short pop-up linkages to give the simple swingarm wheel path a progressive shock rate

SWEET VIBRATIONS

There's so much subtle damping from the suspension and frame that the fast rolling tyres grip like super-tacky rubber



COTIC ROCKET GOLD

£3,599 An unstoppable, super confident steel grin machine

Sheffield-based Cotic have expanded their 'Droplink' suspension range with the 130mm travel Flare and 29er/27.5+ wheeled 'Max' models, but their 650b Rocket is still an absolute glued-to-the-ground ripper.

The frame

Cotic are one of the few designers using steel, with premium air-hardened Reynolds 853 mainframe tubes and steel seatstays. The chainstays are alloy to allow the extensive shaping to fit the Boost rear end. Rear pivots on the seatstay mean the wheel follows a simple arc around the main pivot. The two Droplink arms on the subtly kinked seat tube create a progressive shock feel for plush traction but power-and-play 'pop' when the shock is

tuned right. Cables, hoses and bottom bracket are all external for easy maintenance and longevity.

The kit

Our bike was based around the mid-range 'Gold' kit spec, well worth getting for the fork and shock. Cockpit and wheel pack were spot on, Shimano XT is noticeably stiffer in feel than SRAM shifting but the rear brake wasn't totally consistent. Extensive kit upgrades and a custom build menu are available.

The ride

The tubes might be thin and the fork narrow compared to 35mm-legged Boost units, but there's no doubt the Rocket is a bike with serious trail presence and gravity swagger. You can really feel the difference in the way the steel frame and advanced dampers connect to the trail. There's a palpable 'stickiness' in the way they mould around the smallest

JARGON

AIR HARDENING

Metal alloys that actually become stronger when air cooled after welding rather than needing water quenching to maintain their strength.

LINEAR

Suspension that has the same resistance to compression throughout its stroke (unlike progressive which gets firmer) so tends to use lots of travel.

surface bumps and suck the Rocket down on to the ground like a DH bike. The first turn shows this rich connection extends to the tyres – WTB's 'Fast Rolling' compound and 'Light' carcass boots feel like super tacky chewing gum on the Cotic.

Tangible twist in the long, skinny mainframe means it finds its own flow around high cornering load or blunt-impact situations, rather than crashing and clattering over the top. That gives a sense of the bike snaking around beneath you as you lock the 785mm bars on to target, but together with the outstanding damper performance it creates an unshakeably confident ride.

The geometry maximises the rewards of all this grip. The tall fork rakes out the head angle to nearer 65 than the published 65.5-degree angle while the long chainstays stretch out stability further. We were initially concerned about the tall bottom bracket, but it squats down



THE ROCKET IS A BIKE WITH SERIOUS TRAIL PRESENCE AND GRAVITY SWAGGER AND IT SUCKS DOWN ON TO THE GROUND LIKE A DH BIKE

HIGHS

Slack and long steel frame gives very surefooted stability and trail connection

Excellent fork and shock sensitivity and support

Lighter, livelier and more trail happy than you'd expect for its gravity swagger

LOWS

Needs accurate suspension tuning and twisty, long frame won't suit everyone

into the Cane Creek DBinline shock as soon as you're rolling and never felt like it was going to high-side us out of corners. There are moments that the frame flex and sheer length of the bike act against it when you're turning it in hard, and it's not the easiest bike to whip around. Occasionally the temptation to let it tank ahead on its own course got us into trouble, but we shouldn't have been going that fast anyway.

What surprised us, given the steel frame and the way the Rocket hunkers down on to the trail, is that it doesn't need gravity to get its groove on. The shock's Climb lever, which slows down both compression and rebound, helps firm up pedalling manners when you're grunting up a climb. Even with plush compression settings the shock is stable under power and, once you've dialled the pressure, its progression is spot on for support without spitting traction. It's not overly heavy either, although

the Gold spec build makes it the priciest bike here.

Having ridden the more basic X-Fusion fork and rear shock last year we'd say the extra dosh for the superbly controlled Roughcut fork damper and DBinline shock is worth it. Expect to spend extra time as well as money getting the fork and shock set up as, even though we got on great with Cotic's default damping tune, balancing shock and fork pressures to hit the spot between over-firm and suddenly linear took us a while. Other Fox units are available as upgrades though.

MIBUK VERDICT

Supremely planted gravity plough that's still surprisingly playful under power



FOR A LITTLE MORE

Cotic Rocket Platinum £4,299

The same shock and wheels as the Gold bike, with a Fox 34 Factory fork, Joystick carbon bar and Shimano XTR gears.



FOR A LITTLE LESS

Cotic Rocket Silver £2,799

Has a more basic X-Fusion Sweep fork and an X-Fusion 02 RCX shock and Continental Pure Grip tyres on WTB rims.

DETAILS

RAINBOW COLOURS

Tough in-house black or orange paint jobs and decals are free, with a choice of eight other colours for £100 extra and four decal choices for £10 more

SHAVED TUBING

Mainframe changes include a curved, ribbed and tapered top tube and reduction of wall thicknesses from 1.6mm to 1.4 or even 1.2mm in places

SORTED DESIGN

Orange have been using a simple single pivot swingarm since the 1990s, but this update is the best yet



ORANGE FIVE S REVERB

£3,010 Orange's fresh Five is a brilliant mix of old and new

Orange have totally overhauled their Five trail bike without disturbing its proven dynamic ride DNA and its addictively enjoyable and interactive character.

The frame

Orange are now owned and headed up by the metal working company who've always made their custom monocoque frames a couple of miles down the road from their HQ in Halifax. The new frame pushes the limits with its folded and moulded fabrication process to shave 290g – more than the difference between carbon and alloy versions of some frames. The single pivot has been moved slightly up and back and the direct-mounted shock nose lowered to give a more progressive spring rate. Boost spacing means a 4mm

shorter swingarm and 6mm wider main pivot for a significantly stiffer rear end. Reach is 5mm longer at 455mm and the bombproof external bearing BB is 8mm lower to compensate for 150mm travel forks. Production models will have neater internal cable routing and weld details than our sample.

The kit

Considering it's fully hand-built in the UK the Five S is excellent value even with the RockShox Reverb dropper (£290) and wider Kore Realm 2.7 rim (£20) upgrades here. We've no complaints about the Race Face/Shimano stop and go kit, the Race Face 35mm cockpit or the RockShox suspension double act.

The ride

The Five was the bike all our testers synced with the fastest. It's not quite as slack as the Cotac, stretched as the Mondraker or compact as

JARGON

FOLDED FABRICATION

Frame sections that are formed using multiple precision-angled folds over a shaped mould to create a 3D-shaped segment or complete seam-welded tube.

PROGRESSIVE

A suspension system that naturally increases the load needed to compress it when it's pushed deeper into its stroke.

the Specialized, but the overall balance is a superb Goldilocks mix for most situations. The 66-degree head angle is relaxed enough for confidence boosting, self-correcting stability. The long reach keeps trouble at arm's length when you're straight-lining steep and drops, but there's loads of room to get forward and make shapes if you want to.

Despite the dramatic weight loss there's still plenty of rich and accurate feedback from the frame. There's much less of the trademark twang from the shorter, wider back end too, although it still has enough deflection to find the path of least resistance through rock and root sections. While the back end stays short (or even shortens) under power for an agile feel, bigger hits pull the rear wheel backwards for extra stability. As long as you're not hard on the gas, the higher pivot arc also lets the bike roll with the punches so flat-faced hits don't



THE LONG REACH KEEPS TROUBLE AT ARM'S LENGTH WHEN STRAIGHT-LINING DROPS, BUT THERE'S LOADS OF ROOM TO GET FORWARD AND MAKE SHAPES TOO

HIGHS

Tough, tight, ultra practical frame with impeccable geometry

Simple but intuitively interactive, set up and forget suspension character

Excellent value for a hand-built UK frame

LOWS

Neutral ride fans might find the obvious suspension feedback crude

smash speed out of the Five like they can on the Foxy and Stumpjumper.

While kinematic theorists might be distraught at the idea of obvious pedal pull or braking influence on the suspension, the level of interaction the Orange has with the trail is one of its greatest strengths. Press the pedals and it naturally stiffens and pulls the Maxxis rubber on to the ground for extra grip and a positive power reaction. Drop the saddle, bend your legs and coast, and the shock is free to sag deeper or suck up bigger hits. Brake hard and weight will shift forwards, increasing front end traction and commitment and making the rear tyre more likely to slide out speedway style.

None of this is anything you have to think about – it's all totally intuitive and continually communicated so it soon feels like the High Roller tyres are actually the soles of your feet in terms of being able to judge how much traction you've got and alter

weight balance and speed to match. The suspension is totally sorted, with the progressive shock rate creating a broad bandwidth of acceptable pressure that makes set-up easy, and the Yari is equally accommodating.

Even with the stout-legged fork and 35mm cockpit it's still lighter than the more expensive Mondraker and Cotic and essentially the same weight as the Specialized. Add that positive power connection and it's as responsive and eager uphill as it is elsewhere, completing its superbly balanced, confident and playfully communicative character.

MBLUK VERDICT

Lighter, tighter, sharper update of an already involving, tough and user-friendly trail classic



FOR A LITTLE MORE

Orange Five Pro £3,200

You get a Fox 34 Performance fork and Float DPS Performance shock, and direct-mount Race Face Affect crank.



FOR A LITTLE LESS

Orange Five S £2,700

Leaving all the upgrade boxes unticked gets you the same bike as ours but with a non-dropper post and Alex MD25 rims.

THE SPEC DECK



SPECIALIZED STUMPJUMPER FSR COMP CARBON 650B



MONDRAKER FOXY R

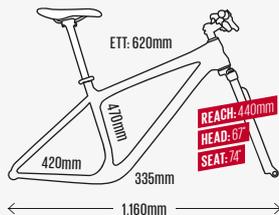


COTIC ROCKET GOLD



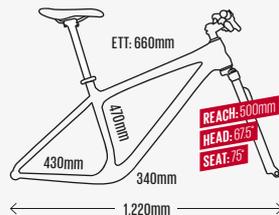
ORANGE FIVE S REVERB

PRICE	£3,000	£3,499	£3,599	£3,010
DISTRIBUTOR	www.specialized.com	www.silverfish-uk.com	www.cotic.co.uk	www.orangebikes.co.uk
WEIGHT	14.12kg (31.13lb)	14.37kg (31.68lb)	14.34kg (31.61lb)	14.18kg (31.26lb)
FRAME	'Fact 9m' carbon fibre mainframe, 'M5' aluminium rear end, 150mm (5.9in) travel	(5.5in) travel	Reynolds 853 chromoly mainframe, 7000 series aluminium rear end, 150mm (5.9in) travel	Custom 6061-T6 aluminium monocoque, 140mm (5.5in) travel
SIZES (*TESTED)	S, M, L*, XL	S, M, L*, XL	S, M, L*, XL	S, M, L*, XL
FORK	RockShox Yari RC Boost, 150mm (5.9in) travel	Fox 34 Float GRIP Performance Boost, 140mm (5.5in) travel	X-Fusion Sweep RC HLR, 160mm (6.3in) travel	RockShox Yari RC Boost, 150mm (5.9in) travel
SHOCK	RockShox Monarch RT Autosag	Fox Float DPS LV Performance	Cane Creek DBinline	RockShox Monarch RT DebonAir
HEADSET	Sealed	FSA No.57	Hope	Cane Creek
WHEELS : HUBS RIMS SPOKES AXLES WHEEL WEIGHT	Specialized Roval Traverse DT Swiss Industry 15x110mm (f), 12x148mm (r) 2.41kg (f), 2.9kg (r), including tyres	MDK MDK-EP1 TLR MDK stainless 15x110mm (f), 12x148mm (r) 2.04kg (f), 2.71kg (r), including tyres	Hope Pro 4 Hope Tech Enduro Stainless 15x110mm (f), 12x148mm (r) 1.97kg (f), 2.83kg (r), including tyres	Formula Kore 2.7 Stainless 15x110mm (f), 12x148mm (r) 2.09kg (f), 2.89kg (r), including tyres
TYRES	Specialized Butcher Grid (f) and Slaughter Grid (r) 27.5x2.3in	Maxxis Ardent DC EXO TR 27.5x2.4in	WTB Vigilante TCS Light/Fast Rolling (f) and WTB Breakout Tough/Fast Rolling (r) 27.5x2.3in	Maxxis High Roller II EXO TR 27.5x2.3in
CRANKSET/BOTTOM BRACKET	Race Face Affect, 30t/ PF30 adapter	Race Face Affect SL, 36/26t/ Race Face external	Race Face Turbine Cinch, 30t/ Race Face external	Race Face Ride, 32t/ Race Face external
DERAILLEUR(S)	SRAM GX	Shimano Deore XT M8000 rear, Shimano SLX M7000 front	Shimano Deore XT M8000	Shimano SLX M7000
SHIFTERS	SRAM GX (1x11)	Shimano SLX M7000 (2x11)	Shimano Deore XT M8000 (1x11)	Shimano SLX M7000 (1x11)
CASSETTE/CHAIN	SRAM XG-1150, 10-42t/ SRAM PC-1110	SRAM PG-1130, 11-42t/ Shimano HG601	Shimano Deore XT M8000, 11-42t/ Shimano HG701	SRAM PG-1130, 11-42t/ SRAM PC-1110
BRAKES	SRAM Guide R S4, 200/180mm rotors	SRAM Level T, 180/180mm	Shimano Deore XT M8000, 180/180mm	Shimano M615, 180/160mm
BAR/STEM/GRIPS	Specialized, 750mm/Specialized Trail, 60mm/Specialized Sip	Mondraker 1.0, 760mm/OnOff Stoic FG, 30mm/OnOff Diamond 1 lock-on	Race Face Respond, 785mm/ Race Face Chester, 50mm/ Race Face lock-on	Race Face Chester M35, 780mm/ Race Face Ride M35, 50mm/ Strange lock-on
SEATPOST/SADDLE	Specialized Command Post IRcc (125mm stroke)/Specialized Body Geometry Henge Comp	RockShox Reverb Stealth (150mm stroke dropper)/Mondraker	Race Face Turbine (150mm stroke dropper)/Cotic	RockShox Reverb Stealth (150mm stroke dropper)/Kore Durox IE



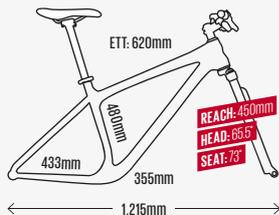
MBUK VERDICT

Super smooth with user friendly features but soft-focused rather than responsive when pushed



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Surefooted yet agile and efficient trail bike but unforgiving suspension undermines confidence



MBUK VERDICT

Supremely planted gravity plough that's still surprisingly playful under power



MBUK VERDICT

Lighter, tighter, sharper update of an already involving, tough and user-friendly trail classic





FINAL VERDICT

The question we asked was how much suspension design affects overall performance, so what did we find out? The Stumpjumper's four-bar FSR suspension is impeccably balanced for pedal and brake-independent smoothness and tough, high-grip tyres underline its confident traction. Soft power response and safe geometry leave it feeling steady not shreddy on the trail, though. The Mondraker is pretty much the polar opposite, with unique aggro geometry and normally excellent twin-linkage suspension repackaged in a lighter, tighter frame. The rear shock tune and overall spec focus it more on fast miles than flat-out fooling.

While a steel frame and linkage-driven shock on a single-pivot bike might sound like something from the

80s, Cotic's retro looking Rocket is actually a FFWD button into a future of much faster, fun loaded riding. Slack and long geometry combines with the subtly damped frame and superbly damped suspension to glue the Rocket to the ground, but it's still a great laugh on techy singletrack or day-long epics.

The 'simple' Cotic creating more of a buzz than the Speshy or the Mondraker suggests you don't need a sophisticated linkage system for full-gas fun on a bike. What absolutely proved it was the single-pivot 'Halifax hinge' of the Orange Five. While the classic layout looks the same, Orange have evolved every dynamic detail to put this classic, intuitively interactive, addictively visceral trail machine right back at the top of the pile in terms of tough, practical value and pure enjoyment.

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