

TREK THROWS DOWN—THE NEW FUEL EX p. 34

MOUNTAIN BIKES

A SUPPLEMENT TO **RODALE INC.**

Gear of the Year

PLUS

2008 Bikes From Cannondale, Gary Fisher, Giant, Santa Cruz, Specialized and More!

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SEAN GRUMBLES RIDES GIANT'S TRANCE XO IN CALIFORNIA'S LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST. READ THE REVIEW ON p. 88.

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TESTED

THE BIKE REPORT

SNAPSHOT REVIEWS OF
THE HOTTEST BIKES

SPRING'S HOTTEST FASHIONS!

YEAH,
WE KNOW
IT'S FALL.

BUT NEXT YEAR'S
BIKES ARE ALREADY HERE.
A SCANT FEW ARE FOR SALE NOW—BUT MOST
WON'T BE IN SHOPS UNTIL CHRISTMAS.
HERE AT LEAST IS A TEASE.
THE GOOD WORD? START SAVING
YOUR PENNIES NOW.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL DANER

Photo's accompanying: 5-year-old's France 80 near Lake Hughes, California. See The Review, p. 24.



GIANT

TRANCE XO

Giant has filled the only gap in its mountain bike lineup with a new 5-inch-travel trail bike. The bike isn't entirely new—Giant's Maestro suspension design and function are unchanged, even though it now uses a lighter, lower pivot and shock mount. Gone is the heavy, pierced down tube and welded seat-tube pivot, replaced by a lighter, single hydroformed piece. The rest of the frame follows suit with extensive shaping of the tubes and shorter, more compact, forgings, all to yield a frame that's 244 grams lighter (that's just over a half pound) than last year's 4.2-inch-travel Trance.

The new frame's lighter weight is immediately noticeable, letting the bike snap when you mash the pedals and providing a light, agile feel when carving through singletrack—traits last year's Trance and Reign never really had. Even with all its travel the Giant climbs more like a cross-country mount than a trail bike, responding to momentum-robbing bumps when needed without feeling mushy or inefficient. Rough downhill are met with the same stellar performance, serving up excellent control and traction. The point-and-shoot handling carves tight singletrack and works at speed, too, but the front end can feel a bit too quick if the trail gets really steep and gnarly; if this describes the majority of your riding you should be on a longer-travel and slacker Reign or Reign X. Given the Trance XO's performance don't expect this outstanding trail bike to collect dust on the showroom floor—it'll be gathering mud on the trail. —Ron Koch

HITS: Light, responsive, great suspension, cleaner cable routing, more room for bottles on smaller sizes **MISSES:** The grips and saddle won't suit everyone's personal preferences **PRICE:** \$3,500 **WEIGHT:** 26.02 lb. (L) **SIZES:** XS, S, M, L (tested), XL **FRAME:** ALUXX SL aluminum w/ Maestro suspension, 5-in. travel **FORK:** FOX 32 F120RL w/ 120mm travel **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano XT Rapidfire shifters, XTR rear derailleur, Avid Juicy Seven brakes, Mavic CrossMax ST wheels, Race Face Deus XC crank, handlebar, stem and seatpost, WTB Deva Carbon saddle **INFO:** giantbicycle.com

FOES

2:1 XCT 4

For years Brent Foes has pushed the innovation envelope with his intricate mountain bike designs. He has now taken over production of the pioneering Curnutt damper and built an all-new XTD (External Threshold Damping) shock specific to his groundbreaking low-leverage ratio suspension. Its premise is in the name, 2:1, which refers to how much the rear wheel moves in relation to the shock shaft (ratios of 3:1 are much more common). Lower leverage equals more-precise damping and the XTD shock further improves this by using a low-pressure, high-volume air can.

Combined with the 6061 aluminum, semimonocoque frame and single-pivot swingarm, this low ratio creates a highly sensitive ride that feels impressively solid. The XCT is a 4-inch-travel, XC-style bike, but if you slap a set of grippy tires on this beast you'll be surprised by your newfound cornering speed. As you exit a turn and hit the gas, it'll blast through the rough stuff with ease—like a bike with at least an inch more travel. While some of us don't enjoy climbs as much as the descents, this bike, being very well balanced, makes it easy to do both and smile all the while. As more of an all-around trail bike instead of a race rig, the XCT's pedal platform won't hold up to out-of-the-saddle sprints or attacks but rather, when properly set up, rewards the backwoods rider with efficient climbing and solid, well-mannered performance. —Byron Huson

HITS: Awesome trail response and cornering ability **MIS:** Finicky pedal-platform adjustment **PRICE:** \$1,749 (frame and shock) **WEIGHT:** (as tested) 28.5 lb. (18.5 in.) **SIZES:** 16, 18.5 (tested), 20.5 in. **FRAME:** 6061 semimonocoque aluminum, Curnutt XTD air shock w/ 100mm travel **FORK:** FOX 32 F100 RL w/ 100mm travel **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** (as tested) Shimano Deore XT trigger shifters, derailleurs, crank; Hayes Nine hydraulic disc brakes; Easton XC One wheels; Kenda Nevegal 2.1-in. tires; Azonic Strip Bar handlebar; Thomson stem and seatpost; SDG Bel Air saddle **INFO:** foestacing.com



COURTESY (X2)

Even with 5 inches of travel, Giant's Trance XO climbs more like a cross-country mount than a trail bike.