



KILLER VALUE \$
Diamondback Sortie 3 \$2,650

Kudos to Diamondback for producing an affordable five-inch trail bike. "One of the better balanced rides of the day," said one tester. "It corners smoothly, it's a nimble climber, and it descends like a free-ride bike." Granted, you have to lock out the rear shock to hang with lighter bikes on the climbs, but for all-day trail roughnecking and high-speed descents, the Sortie outperformed bikes twice the price. "I was amazed such a big-travel bike could handle so well," said another tester. Surprisingly, Diamondback managed to keep costs down without skimping on quality; the Sortie is loaded with such trailworthy parts as a Fox 32 Float RL fork, Avid Juicy 5 hydraulic brakes, and Mavic rims. 30.4 lbs, medium; diamondback.com

Giant Anthem X2 \$2,900

With a more relaxed geometry and longer travel (4 inches vs. 3.5), Giant's all-new Anthem X line is a slightly more trail-tuned version of its race-specific Anthem line. Theoretically, those changes should make it slower, and maybe they do, but we couldn't tell. "Feels like a full-on race bike," said one tester after a 90-minute session on very technical Arizona single-track. "It feels laid-back when you get on it," said another, "but the handling is really quick in the technical stuff." Credit the stiff aluminum frame and Fox's smooth, responsive F100RL fork. Shimano's attractively priced Deore XT components take care of the shifting and braking without inflating the final cost. 25.3 lbs, medium; giant-bicycles.com



Brian Berthold, the architect behind **Kona's Magic Link**, is a mountain-bike fanatic whose main job for the past 30 years has been designing automotive suspension systems for Formula One, Indy, and NASCAR teams. Check out all of his creations at therapy-components.com.



Kona CoilAir Deluxe \$3,999

The CoilAir had the longest travel—7.4 inches—of any bike we tested this year, except when it didn't. Chain tension keeps the suspension at a pedal-friendly six inches for smooth flats and long climbs. On descents, technical sections, or big drops, a radical suspension design called Magic Link uses a secondary coil shock to move the suspension linkage and open things up for maximum travel. Despite the CoilAir's hefty weight, we still routinely found ourselves grinding up difficult climbs in search of descents that would push it to its limits (we couldn't find any). As an added bonus, when the Magic Link kicks in and drops the rear end, the bike's geometry relaxes for more confident descending. 35.5 lbs, 17"; konaworld.com