

JULY/AUG 17

## WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

Welcome to issue 48 of the World's Number One Online Mountain Bike Magazine! It's another stunning edition with loads of amazing stories, images and videos to keep you entertained! Inside we venture off to Ireland to discover what the vibrant

MTB scene has to offer! Rebecca Parker asks the question all women want answering; do you really need a Women's Specific Design bike? And Ronny Kiaulehn heads off to Fuerteventura and there is loads more inside too, be sure to check it out!

## ENJOY THE LATEST ISSUE!



- Click on the corners to turn the pages or use the navigation bars. If you are viewing on a touch screen device then you can use swipe gestures. Swipe left and right to turn the pages and up and down to bring up the navigation bars.



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WOMEN'S SPECIFIC BIKE DESIGN - INNOVATIVE OR UNNECESSARY?  
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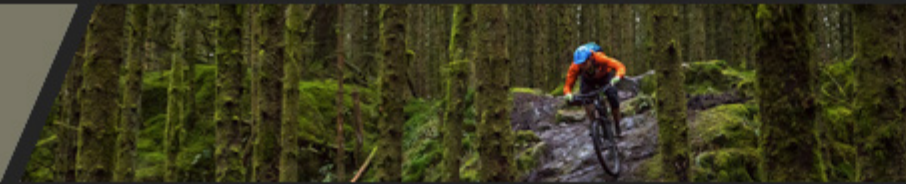
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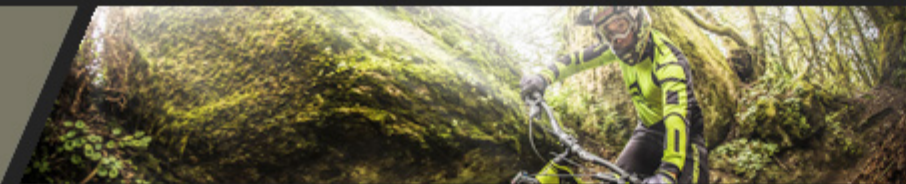
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**PUBLISHING EDITOR**

Rou Chater  
[rou@nextelement.co.uk](mailto:rou@nextelement.co.uk)

**TECHNIQUE EDITOR**

Clive Forth  
[clive@mtbskills.co.uk](mailto:clive@mtbskills.co.uk)

**TEST TEAM**

[testteam@imbikemag.com](mailto:testteam@imbikemag.com)

**FEATURES EDITOR**

Ewen Turner  
[ewen@imbikemag.com](mailto:ewen@imbikemag.com)

**WEB EDITOR**

James Swann  
[james.swann@imbikemag.com](mailto:james.swann@imbikemag.com)

**STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS**

Irmo Keizer  
Ben Gerrish

**DESIGN**

Raise Creative  
[raisecreative.com](http://raisecreative.com)

**ADVERTISING SALES**

Mary Booth  
[mary@imbikemag.com](mailto:mary@imbikemag.com)

**IT DIRECTOR**

Alex Chater  
[alex@nextelement.co.uk](mailto:alex@nextelement.co.uk)

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Rebecca Parker, Dan Wright,  
Ronny Kiaulehn, Rob Stortoni,  
Sven Martin, Daniel Geiger,  
Kike Abelleira, Bartek Wolinski,  
Lear Miller and Jens Staudt.

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THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE PLAYING IN THE WOODS DURING THE SUMMER!  
PHOTO ROO FOWLER



# WIN

## ...A GOPRO HERO 5 BLACK ACTION CAMERA!

We use GoPro's all the time and can't rate them highly enough! If you want to get a great action shot of your riding there really isn't a substitute! With the launch of the new Hero 5 Black action camera on the market, we figured this would be a great prize for our subscribers this issue!

If you've used a GoPro before you will know how great they are, the Hero 4 Black was a fantastic camera and has been in service for a couple of years now. The new Hero 5 Black is fully waterproof without a housing, features voice activation, one button control and has a 2-inch touchscreen display so you can frame your shot and adjust the settings!

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PHOTO PETE ARCHER/GOPRO





### The Unstoppable Growth Of The Female Side Of Our Sport

Women in our sport often have a tough time, in the past; they were sometimes treated as a sideshow. The brands didn't get behind them and to be a girl in MTB you were really swimming against the tide. There were a few standout athletes who broke the mould, of course, riders like Anne-Caroline Chausson, Missy Giove and Leigh Donovan spring to mind. In more recent years riders like Tracy Moseley and Rachel Atherton have done amazingly well at raising the profile of the sport.

However, when it came to the inhabitants of the car park and the bike forums the ladies were heavily under-represented. It's fantastic to see the attitudes and demographics changing, and changing fast. It's not gone unnoticed that when we rock up in the car park at trail centres and trailheads around Europe, there has been a growing trend in the number of women getting ready for a shred. These days it's not uncommon to see entire groups of female riders gearing up for a day in the saddle.

Naturally, the bike brands are catching on to this incredibly fast growing segment too. More equipment for the fairer sex makes the sport more appealing to women everywhere. They can walk into a bike shop and feel included, they can rock up to a ride feeling feminine, and they can get even more out of the trails with bikes and accessories designed for them.

It's a market segment that is sure to grow and grow, and whether you are one of the newcomers to the sport enjoying the inclusivity or someone who's been riding for years and years and flying the flag for women on bikes, we are wholly embracing it as we always have. We'll continue to push the female side of MTB, just as we did when we first launched our magazine nine years ago.

Mountain biking should be for everyone, no matter what.

*Rou Chater*

Publishing Editor



LEIGH DONOVAN, ONE OF THE ORIGINAL MTB SHREDDERS HAS DONE A HUGE AMOUNT FOR WOMEN IN THIS SPORT OVER THE YEARS  
PHOTO STIKMAN GLASPELL

EDITORIAL



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# TRAIL GUIDE

## NORTHERN IRELAND PART ONE

Sometimes it's easy to forget that there are places very close to home that are missed in our desire to travel and explore the exotic or the far-from-home. For me, Northern Ireland represented somewhere geographically close, just a short stretch of water away, but distant in terms of my understanding or knowledge of the place or the people.

WORDS EWEN TURNER  
PHOTOS BEN GERRISH





The chance to go and explore came about as an invitation from Mountainbike Northern Ireland, but there was more motivation than this. I felt there was growing momentum in the scene and rumours of modern trail centres, a thriving racing vibe, excellent hospitality and awesome scenery meant a trip was inevitable.

Driving off the ferry, my idea of Northern Ireland being close to home felt inaccurate, but this was more due to the Scottish roads than the efficient ferry service from Stranraer. Those travelling from further afield would no doubt take advantage of the flights into Dublin or Belfast, but for those in mainland UK, the ferries from the west coast make the most sense.

Travelling through the country, I was struck by how many place names I recognised. As a child of the 80s, I grew up with the news being punctuated with headlines from these areas, all for the wrong reasons. 'The Troubles' have long ended, and the region has bounced back, and tourism is now a huge part of the economy.

Our journey takes us away from Belfast and out west into more and more rural landscapes that have us questioning the sat nav. The scenery is very familiar but somehow foreign, a mix of the English countryside and Scottish ruggedness. For a small country, the scale of the land feels huge.

### Davagh Forest

In what feels like the middle of nowhere a familiar trailhead sign points us further into the back of beyond.



" CAMPERS AND CARS WITH BIKES WORTH MORE THAN THE VEHICLES STRUNG TO THE BACK WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN. "

It's mid-week, and there are no signs of other bikers on the roads or surrounding areas, the usual sight of trucks, campers and cars with bikes worth more than the vehicles strung to the back were nowhere to be seen.

The wide open landscape mixes forest and farmland for as far as the eye can see suggests land that has changed little in the last few hundred years. The trees that used to carpet the entire area have gone, like the majority of Europe, but the traditional farming landscape remains.

Despite the rural feel, we pull into a modern car park with fresh looking tarmac, changing facilities, toilets, and even a free bike wash. Just a hose and a tap, no shop or hire centre, nothing overly sophisticated, just help yourself. The biggest feature is a brand new playground that sits next to the car park tempting riders to have a go on the swings rather than the trails, providing another angle to this new centre.

We meet some guys from the council who are out prepping the trails for some closures for forestry work.





The Council and Forestry collaborations have been crucial for the trail developments. With limited access to the hills, the development of MTB-specific venues has been one of the only ways to get more people on bikes.

We've been introduced to local Nial Convery to take us off for a tour of the trails, his enormous calves of steel warning us that they might breed 'em strong in these parts. Having had a long journey, it's time for a leg stretch and just passed the shiny playground is a pump track, again suitable for all, and a great way to get warmed up for a spin.

Further beyond this is a short skills loop that takes you up switchbacks, down berms, drops and rocks.

" IT'S TIME FOR A LEG STRETCH AND JUST PASSED THE SHINY PLAYGROUND IS A PUMP TRACK "



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SURFING TRAILS





" THE VISTAS ACROSS THE VAST LANDSCAPE GIVE A GREAT SENSE OF PLACE, AND A WIDE-OPEN FEEL, USUALLY ABSENT FROM MAN-MADE TRAILS. "

An ideal spot for a bit of skill fine tuning, and far better than your average skills area which is usually tagged on as an afterthought.

The initial climb takes us up and out into the moorland on a mix of single-track and forest roads, some of these not just gravel track but old tarmac gradually being reclaimed by the woodland like a long forgotten highway.

As with many modern trail centres, the latest designs have come a long way since they started in the 90s. Corners upon corners give all the flow you need to keep smiling, and more than that, the underlying shape and geology are used to great effect creating rock slabs and cheeky lines everywhere.

Chain Reaction Cycles, the enormous global bike shop has played a part here as well as the council and forestry. Trail names are sponsored by Ragley such as 'Run Ragley Run' and 'The Big Wig Jig'. One of the most striking features in the trails is the density of the trees and the depth of colour, giving an overwhelming green glow to the whole forest.

The two main red descents provide everything you could want from a trail centre run, fast and flowing, but with enough rocky features thrown in to keep you on your toes. Never dumping too much height, you spend it well, pumping, jumping and railing berms to the bitter end.

Not always hidden in the trees, the vistas across the vast landscape give a great sense of place, and a wide-open feel, usually absent from man-made trails.

Throughout the trails, the underlying rock pokes through, hinting that ancient geology hides beneath.





" ONE OF THE MOST CHALLENGING FEATURES I'VE SEEN ON A TRAIL CENTRE IN A LONG TIME. "

Eventually, we get up close and personal as the trail opens up with a few options, some of which give some very spicy rock rollers and slabs. It's refreshing to see large natural features, and these are pretty full on, yet by no means compulsory.

Towards the end of the trail, through a sea of green lurks what appears to be an enormous moss-clad boulder emerging from the depths of the forest. We pedal on only to find ourselves atop this behemoth trying to spy a line down it that we might survive. This is part of an optional black section and

has to be one of the most challenging features I've seen on a trail centre in a long time. Slippery, greasy and with an awkward drop, it's full on, but Davagh is all about the rugged and the raw, nothing is overly manicured.

As a final touch, we head up to ride something in high contrast to the rocks. A new section shows a different side of trail building as we get a bit more of a bike park feel, with high speeds and rollers to pump and jump, it's all the right stuff thrown in together. Smooth, fast, fun and over too soon.

Combining all these trail options gives a great day exploring the forest, and with the simple facilities on offer to change and wash bikes, it feels welcoming and fresh.

### **BLESSINGBOURNE**

Moving on again from Davagh we head to a trail that sounds pretty curious. Blessingbourne is the result of a local council and a private estate getting together to create bike trails. Think Downton Abbey meets Whistler Bike Park...well perhaps not quite Whistler, but the estate is pretty grand.





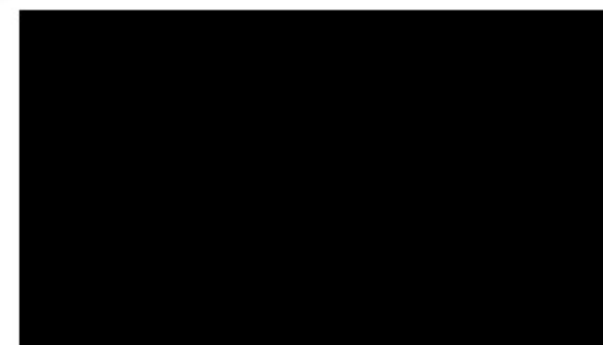
Rocking up in the dark, driving through a small farmyard, we arrive at the Manor but find our accommodation is lesser in scale, but not in quality. A quick feed in the pub and a reasonable number of Guinness's later and we settle into our rather fine accommodation, which feels above our pay grade for travelling journos. High-quality self-catering apartments are run by the guys at Blessingbourne, and although it feels unworthy to fill them with dirtbag mountain bikers, needs must I suppose!

Unlike most trailheads, here is a great big house, gardens, a lake, and hidden around it all are a bunch of red and blue mountain bike trails. What it does lack in terms of height and gradient, it certainly makes up for in creative trail building as we were to find out.

" IT FEELS  
UNWORTHY  
TO FILL  
THEM WITH  
DIRTBAG  
MOUNTAIN  
BIKERS "



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**ONE BIKE  
TO RULE THE RIDE**







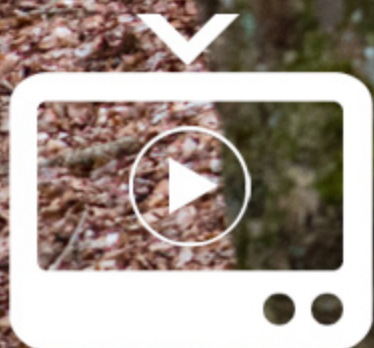
" PRAISE MUST GO TO THE BUILDERS  
HERE, AS WE HAD SMILES ON OUR  
FACES ALL THE WAY ROUND. "

Our approach was to go with an open mind, a small, new, trail centre with no real hills, let alone mountains, set up for novices, families, or anyone who rides. Our assumptions that it could be a bit sedentary and only suitable for kids and families were immediately blown out of the water as we drift and hop our way around the first few kilometres.

Praise must go to the builders here, as we had smiles on our faces all the way round. I had predicted a day photographing steady shots of pleasant backgrounds. I didn't think we'd be climbing trees for pan shots or trying to double up every set of rollers.

These excellent flowing trails, coupled with the mix of vegetation cover only found in gardens of stately homes gave a unique feel to the riding as we brushed past ancient trees, rhododendrons and bamboo. Sure, it's not the biggest or longest set of trails in the world, but for a small estate this place rocks. For kids or for adults that know how to find fun on a bike this place is a great spot to spend some time. It may never draw crowds from far and wide, but the rest of the world could learn a thing or too about creating accessible mountain bike trails for everyone.

Returning to the accommodation and a quick lap of the pump track a peacock saunters past to greet us, and we add a further thing to our list of unusual occurrences for an MTB ride. Meeting the owners, it's clear how passionate they are about the developments, and it seems the outdoor scene, especially now the biking scene is really on the move in Northern Ireland.







" WHEREAS MANY TRAILS NOW SHOW THEIR AGE, THESE ARE NOT ONLY FRESH BUT HAVE SUBTLE NUANCES THAT MAKE THEM AWESOME. "

## CASTLEWELLAN

Our journey takes us east, back across the country to better known destinations such as Rostrevor, but Castlewella is the plan for the day. Northern Ireland must have a thing for trail centres in stately homes, with this, an even grander version of the small but perfectly formed Blessingbourne.

The clue is in the name, and the Castle dominates proceedings at this grand venue. But while the castle may be old the bike and outdoor centre at the trail head; Life Adventure Centre is a friendly,

modern, slick operation, with kit and equipment for whatever outdoor activity you fancy. It's clear the outdoor industry is on the up, and keen to promote not just the services they provide, but the whole area as a destination.

The setup is a familiar, UK style trail centre, with a blue, red and black trail, alongside a pump track. A family friendly green route and lakeside cruising also add to the full range of visitors the centre caters for.

We meet with up and coming Vitus Enduro racer Jack Devlin to show us around, and act as photo fodder.

Given the modern nature of all the trail centres in Northern Ireland, we are treated to the latest and greatest in machine built trails. Whereas many trails now show their age, these are not only fresh but have subtle nuances that make them awesome. For instance, as soon as the trail flattens or goes slightly uphill you are gifted some topography to pump, saving you getting on the pedals and preserving the flow. This sense of flow continues through the trails here, and every change in angle or direction has been so well thought-out to give the maximum return.





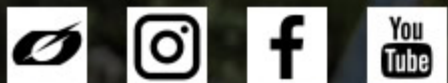


UNSTOPPABLE - LEGEND  
**GREG MINNAAR** MAKES IT  
**20 WC DH WINS** OVERALL,  
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Greg Minnaar talks about his 20th DH World Cup Victory in Fort William 2017.



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" THE TERRAIN IS ROUGHER,  
TIGHTER, AND MORE IMAGINATIVE  
LINES CAN BE REWARDED. "

The views offered across the lake to the Mourne Mountains are magnificent, and they command the landscape. As we pedal around, we keep catching glimpses of these huge mountains while the Castle backdrop is certainly a different view from the usual mountain bike hangouts.

The fun continues, and we move onto the black for a bit more bite, and fortunately, we don't see the traditional 'let's just make it awkward' style of trail building. Instead, the terrain is rougher, tighter, and more imaginative lines can be rewarded. Jumps and gaps feature, as does more of the bedrock, but without losing the all-important flow.

Jack shows us some crazy and imaginative lines, spotting gaps between natural lips on the trail, launching between super tight trees with only a hair's breadth to spare. He is clearly a racer, always fast, always committed, surely a product of the fantastic facilities cropping up in the area and one to watch on the Enduro World Series this year.

With 19km of red loop and black options, there is plenty to keep you busy, and the 5km of blue is fun and flowing. Those with a keen eye will surely spot other trails hidden in the woods, as this has been a venue for enduro racing over the years and the hills look prime for trail development. The 4km of green trails gives something for family and further instils a sense that the developments here are for everyone, not just the experienced riders.

The experience of these three areas was one of modern and inclusive mountain biking. The outdoor industry is in full force here, and the people, hospitality and natural resources combine to give a fantastic mix. Northern Ireland is definitely now on the map as a destination for riders.





"NORTHERN IRELAND HAS A WONDERFUL VARIETY OF ACCOMMODATION FOR ALL TASTES & BUDGETS."

Next on our list to visit was the biggest of them all, Rostrevor, probably the best-known area in the country, but that's for the next trail guide.

Thanks to Ethan Loughrey, Jack Devlin, Nial Convery, Colleen and Nicholas Lowry

### GETTING TO NORTHERN IRELAND

For all the information about the mountain bike trail centres in Northern Ireland visit – [mountainbikeni.com](http://mountainbikeni.com)

P&O run regular ferry services, up to 4 per day, between Cairnryan and Larne and Liverpool and Dublin. For sailing times and services visit the [P&O website](http://P&O website).

### DISCOVERING NORTHERN IRELAND

From chic, city boutique hotels to rustic rural retreats and from self-catering apartments to outdoor glamping, Northern Ireland has a wonderful variety of accommodation for all tastes & budgets. To book a short break or to find out about Northern Ireland's visitor attractions, accommodation and things to do, visit [discovernorthernireland.com](http://discovernorthernireland.com).

### LINKS

Blessingbourne Estate -  
<http://mountainbikeni.com/blessingbourne/>

Davagh Forest -  
<http://mountainbikeni.com/davagh-forest/>

Castlewellan -  
<http://mountainbikeni.com/castlewellan/>







LAPIERRE  
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DESIGN  
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2017





RACHEL BYUS ON THE NEW PIVOT MACH 5.5  
PHOTO JENS STAUDT



# WOMENS SPECIFIC DESIGN BIKES - POINTLESS OR INNOVATIVE?

WORDS REBECCA PARKER

The question of whether women's specific bikes are a necessity or a marketing scam seems to be a hotly debated one in the mountain bike world. Some poor soul only has to mention the subject in a Facebook group or forum, and the subject is awash with people arguing passionately for each side.





## " HAVE THEY FINALLY MADE A RANGE OF WOMEN'S SPECIFIC BIKES THAT CAN APPEAL TO ALL LADY RIDERS AND DO WE EVEN NEED THEM AT ALL? "

There are often many complaints about the inequality in our sport so why, when bike manufacturers try to build something specifically for us, is it viewed so negatively?

Maybe it has something to do with how this has been approached in the past. First came the 'pink it and shrink it' ethos, then the mostly unfounded concept that all women have shorter torsos and longer legs leading to women's bikes having poor geometry and rubbish handling. While the rest of the industry made bikes longer and slacker for better handling, women's bikes became shorter and taller out of some weird misconception that women liked that. Cramped cockpits with twitchy handling? Yes please! NO.

Thankfully the days of butterfly graphics and insulting name choices seem to be coming to an end. Elite riders such as Anka Martin of Juliana and Rae Morrison of Liv are now hitting the EWS aboard WSD bikes. Does this mean they are now a valid choice for even the most aggressive riders? Have they finally made a range of women's specific bikes that can appeal to ALL lady riders and do we even need them at all?

### What is the Difference?

Firstly, we need to take a look at why they say we need a different bike from our male counterparts. Anatomically there are a few differences other than the obvious. While the shorter torso and longer legs theory is, in the most part, a myth, it is undeniable that on the whole, ladies do tend to have narrower shoulders,







KATY CURD ON THE BRUTAL AND UNFORGIVING FORT WILLIAM TRACK  
PHOTO CALLUM PHILPOTT

smaller hands, wider hips and are in general shorter in height and lighter. We have less muscle mass, and our weight distribution tends to be around the hips and chest as opposed to the arms. This means our centre of gravity is altered and our power comes from the legs, not the arms.

In terms of bike design brands have taken three different approaches to what they think this means we need.

#### Approach One

Bike brands who place higher belief in the majority of women fitting the above stereotype and redesign their bikes from the ground up with these specifications in mind. Their bikes will have shorter top tubes, stems and cranks.

**" OUR CENTRE OF GRAVITY IS ALTERED AND OUR POWER COMES FROM THE LEGS, NOT THE ARMS. "**

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RAE MORRISON RACING AT THE EWS IN IRELAND THIS YEAR  
PHOTO SYEN MARTIN

**" THEY HAVE ENGINEERED THESE BIKES FOR WOMEN WITHOUT COMPROMISING ANY OF THE BIKES PERFORMANCE AND SPECS. "**

They then need a steeper seat tube angle to prevent the toe rubbing on the front wheel due to the shorter frame.

They also sometimes have taller head tubes set on a steeper head angle. An example of a brand that follows this design process would be Liv. They believe that women benefit from a steeper head angle as it makes it easier for them to lift the front end despite having less upper body strength.

Rae Morrison races the EWS aboard the Liv Hail, we spoke to her to see if the brand had really achieved their aim of building a women's bike as good as the Reign.

"Liv bikes have the design, research and passion behind them, they have engineered these bikes for women without compromising any of the bikes performance and specs. I found the Reign a great bike, but it always felt a bit big and would only feel amazing when I was riding very aggressively. The Hail has been in development for a long time, it's a product of a tonne of research and testing, and they got it right. The Hail has the same amount

of travel, but by having women's specific geometry, it makes the bike fit and feel incredible. This means it is super aggressive and capable of standing up to the serious demands of Enduro racing, while also being very playful, stable and easy to handle. It's the best performance and all-round bike I have ever ridden."

**Approach Two**

The second set of WSD bikes, for example, Juliana, Trek and Specialized are made with the same frame as their unisex equivalent but finished with female specific contact points i.e. saddle, narrower bars and grips and shorter cranks. They will also have a different paint job fashioned to appeal to female tastes. We spoke to Anka Martin about Juliana.





**" THE WOMEN WHO BUY THESE MODELS ARE LIKE-MINDED WOMEN WHO CAN ALL IDENTIFY WITH THIS JULIANA BRAND. "**

"What I love about the Juliana Bicycles line-up is that the bikes are the same bikes Santa Cruz Bicycles offer. The women who buy these models are like-minded women who can all identify with this Juliana Brand. They can still choose a badass bike, but in their own colour so they look different to the guys out there, but without compromising anything relating to the working of the bike. In my opinion, I don't see the need to change the bikes for women, we ride bikes with the same geometry, with the same dimensions, angles, etc., as we ride the same way as guys do, I love that Juliana offers this with their badass bikes. They accommodate the broadest range of riders by keeping the stand over heights minimal across all the sizes; they offer suspension that is tuned for a typically lighter rider, some different colours but all under the Juliana brand name."

### **Approach Three**

The final approach is for brands to simply provide their unisex bikes in sizes small enough to cater for the shorter, petite women that would be more likely to gravitate towards female specific bikes. Pivot is a brand that seems to have got this just right, CEO Chris Cocalis explains:

"We have not branded particular models as women specific and prefer to refer to all our bikes as 'rider size specific'. All angles are not the same across the range. The smallest sizes generally have geometry and design adjustments that are appropriate to the size of bike and the size and weight of rider that rides the bike.





DO THEY NEED TO BE SPECIFIC?  
OR JUST A BIT SMALLER?  
PHOTO JENS STAUDT

With the Mach 4, we actually run a shorter stroke rear shock at a higher leverage rate so that the lightest riders can run similar pressures to a heavier rider on a larger bike and thus benefit from the same damping performance that the shock was meant to have.

With the new Mach 5.5, the small and X-small sizes use a different lay-up in the rear triangle that is lighter but is also not as rigid. Ride tuning the frame to the size and weight of rider is important so that everyone gets the optimum performance out of the chassis regardless of their size. Set up of the suspension and being comfortable with your fit on the bike is as important as the bike you pick.

We give female riders the tools they need to make us guys look bad on the climbs and descents. I'm more than ok with that."

**" WE GIVE FEMALE  
RIDERS THE TOOLS  
THEY NEED TO MAKE  
US GUYS LOOK BAD "**



**CURA**

Now, you can ride faster.

In 1993 we created the first hydraulic disc brake in history of mountain bike. Now, the Cura is the culmination of everything we have learned. An extremely powerful, wide range brake that feels comfortable from weekend warriors to World Cup Downhill racers. Unwavering power and great modulation are balanced with newly developed forging processes to make a brake that's accessible for all riders regardless of discipline.





## " DOWNHILL BIKES THESE DAYS ARE GOING LONGER AND LONGER TO TRY AND KEEP UP WITH THE TRACKS AND SPEED PEOPLE ARE RIDING "

Despite my best Internet searching I am yet to come across any modern day female specific Downhill or Freeride bikes. In fairness, the likes of Rachel Atherton seem to be doing pretty darn well without one! I spoke to another hard shredding lady rider, Katy Curd to see whether she saw this as a problem or not.

"To be honest I don't think there is that much need for them, downhill bikes these days are going longer and longer to try and keep up with the tracks and speed people are riding, even I am riding a large downhill bike, and I'm 5ft2"! Women specific bikes seem just to be smaller versions of the male bikes which aren't needed in downhill as it makes the bikes feel unstable at speed which knocks a rider's confidence."

"Companies spend a huge amount developing bikes to make them as good as they can be year on year. If this design works for males, then why would it not be good for us females too! I think most people are worried about stand over height when choosing female specific bikes, but I don't think this becomes a problem when riding downhill."

It seems this is an opinion shared by many of the elite riders. Tracy Moseley sat a little more on the fence when asked her opinion though her reasons for the WSD bikes revolved more around the annoyance of having to change parts after purchase.

"In general, I find that most Trek MTB bikes are quite short in the top tube length compared to some of the other brands, so their normal shape and sizing works great for me. However, for some women,





# REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL : 1, 2, 3



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1



Reynolds Cycling is so confident that we make the best carbon wheelsets, that we offer a limited Lifetime Warranty on all wheels purchased since 1st January 2017. See website for full terms and conditions.

2



Just Riding Along Guarantee is the UK's version of Reynolds' Lifetime Crash Replacement policy. Because accidents will happen, through your Reynolds dealer we offer a low cost replacement price for your Reynolds wheels, even if you bought them second-hand!

3



Bernard Kerr  
5th World DH Champs 2016  
Winner Red Bull Hardline



TRAIL



ENDURO




27.5 PLUS



Kerr Signature DH





TRACEY MOSELEY, ALWAYS DOMINANT  
NO MATTER WHAT THE BIKE  
PHOTO IAN LINTON

**" MANUFACTURERS ARE TOO OFTEN AIMING AT THIS ENTRY LEVEL MARKET SEGMENT WHICH OFFENDS MORE EXPERIENCED AGGRESSIVE LADY RIDERS BY PIGEON HOLING THEM INTO THIS NERVOUS, CAUTIOUS, 'LIKES PINK' CATEGORY. "**

a narrower handlebar and shorter stem are things you may need to change if you are shorter and have less upper body length. Sometimes the colour schemes can be great too, to have other options than just black and grey!

Often WSD bikes will spec lesser components to save the price from becoming too high, and if the volume of

sales on a high-end spec women's bikes aren't huge the brands can't justify making a top spec bike for the women's market...it's a catch 22 really, but in general, I think women can fit a standard MTB in a small size. Not every woman is shorter or smaller than average so as long as there are good size options available in standard bikes we all have a choice and can find something that fits and works for us all."

This brings me back to the question of are WSD bikes merely a marketing gimmick or is this just a sceptic's outlook? Should we not embrace the fact that women are being recognised as a quantifiable enough market

segment to warrant manufacturers trying to build bikes specifically for us.

The marketing efforts that go into promoting these bikes are, I believe, an excellent way to encourage new lady shredders into the sport by providing bikes that will make them feel personally thought of and welcomed. The colours can be more aesthetically attractive, and the overall appearance at this level is less intimidating. For a nervous new rider, the upright build can also be more confidence inspiring.

This, in essence, is part of the problem. Manufacturers are too often aiming at this entry level market segment which offends more experienced aggressive lady riders by pigeon holing them into this nervous, cautious, 'likes pink' category.





ANKA STAYING FAST AND LOW  
PHOTO SVEN MARTIN

Luckily it does seem like brands such as Juliana are doing their best to dispel this stigma with their high-performance WSD bikes. Anka Martin explains:

“That is exactly the reason why the bikes in the Juliana line-up are the same as the Santa Cruz Bicycles line-up. We have our own brand to identify with, our own paint colours, but the actual bikes are just as sick as the “boys” bikes. They come with the same high-end specs, the same options & price points, but they target women with their own ads, their own marketing campaigns, etc., so they have a dedicated team who focus on women and what they are looking for, but underneath the different paint job is the same bike.

**“ THEY HAVE A  
DEDICATED TEAM  
WHO FOCUS ON  
WOMEN AND  
WHAT THEY ARE  
LOOKING FOR ”**



**YOU SET THE SCENE**

The world is full of adventure. We've geared you to be able to soak it all in. Our tough, no-nonsense gear is weather resistant yet ventilated and prepares you for any environment so that you can explore endless possibilities.  
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**LEATT**

OVER TO YOU



**" ANYTHING THAT MAKES MORE WOMEN FEEL WELCOME, INCLUDED AND ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THEIR PLACE IN THE SPORT CAN ONLY BE A GOOD THING "**

Juliana started off by offering a few different models at more of an affordable price point, thinking that those would be the big sellers, but as it turns out, the women wanted to buy the high end, high spec'd models and so that is now what Juliana decided to focus on their high-end models.

"There are other companies who are also doing great with what they are offering women, and hopefully more will follow suit. Certain brands fit certain people differently whether they are a man or a woman, we all have such different body types, but that doesn't mean they have to change the geometry of the bike, you just have to find a brand that fits your body type or riding style best."

It seems to me that there is no clear-cut definitive answer to this question. Juliana have undeniably got something good going on with their brand. Anything that makes more women feel welcome, included and enthusiastic about their place in the sport can only be a good thing. Liv have also clearly put a lot of time and effort into creating bikes they feel are specifically better suited to women. The Hail caused quite a stir as the first long travel enduro bike designed from the ground up for women. Having converted Rae who was a self-confessed 'anti WSD' to begin with to saying things such as -

"Finally a women's specific bike that can be playful, confidence inspiring and competitively raced at the highest level of Enduro."



RAE MORRISON RACING AT THE EWS IN IRELAND THIS YEAR  
PHOTO SVEN MARTIN





## " WHY SHOULD SHE ALWAYS HAVE TO PAY MORE TO CHANGE THE FINISHING KIT AFTER PURCHASE? "

When Rae backs up her words by racing said bike in the EWS, it has to be, at the very least, worth considering. At the same time Pivot also have a good approach, and it would be good to see more brands offering a wider range of sizes to provide the more petite riders with a better choice.

With the school of thought now being that longer is better, could a valid solution not be for all new bikes to be offered with custom sized contact points. If a woman can happily fit a medium frame why should she always have to pay more to change the finishing kit after purchase?

For the time being the best approach is to keep an open mind, shop around and try all types and sizes. Personally, I am 5ft 6, and I'm comfortably racing a large Orbea Rallon that I have, in fact, made no changes to at changes to at all.

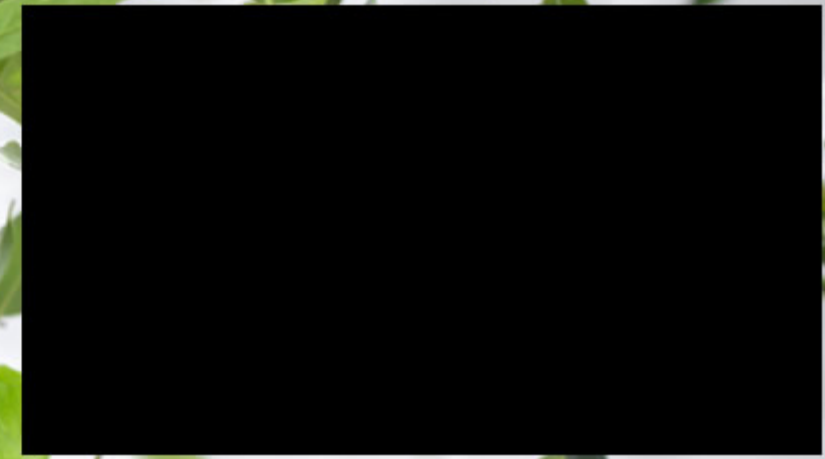
At the end of the day, there is no rule as to what is right, only what's right for you...





# LESS IS BEST

LESS WEIGHT. MORE COMFORT.



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**VAUDE**  
*The Spirit of Mountain Sports*



## BEHIND THE BRAND

Merida is the brainchild of Ike Tseng, a man with vision and, a man on a mission. The story goes that on a trip to the US in the early '70s he found that bike shops over there refused to take in Taiwanese bikes for repair due to their poor quality. These days a bicycle shop refusing products from Taiwan would be a rather poor business decision indeed.

WORDS EWEN TURNER

# BEHIND THE BRAND MERIDA

THE NEW ONE SIXTY IS WINNING CRITICAL ACCLAIM EVERYWHERE  
PHOTO KIKE ABELLEIRA





**"PRODUCING HARD-HITTING BIKES AND E-BIKES TO COMPLIMENT THEIR RACE-PROVEN XC LINE-UP"**

Annoyed, Ike returned to Taiwan to start his own company, and in September 1972 Merida Industry Co. was born, and the first production plant opened in Yuanlin. His motto in life (it's always good to have a motto!) was to 'move with passion and courage' which translated into a company whose motivation was to create beautiful and high-quality products, enabling anyone to reach their destination as pleasantly as possible.

In 1988 Ike took things up a notch and launched the independent brand MERIDA, combining his company with a German R&D centre. This combination of engineering research and high-quality manufacturing would take the brand to the next level in quality bikes and satisfy the demand across all disciplines of cycling.

Merida has continued to grow and develop every year, but 2017 sees another step-change in their mountain bike range. Suddenly their profile is on the up, certainly in the UK, producing hard-hitting bikes and e-bikes to compliment their race-proven XC line-up. It was time to catch up with the good folks at Merida and see what's been happening.

**You have been around a long time, but how big is Merida now and who are the key people involved in the brand?**

MERIDA now has distributors in over 80 countries and supports these from our R&D / Marketing office in Germany as well as from our factory in Taiwan.





WORKING ON NEW DESIGNS AND IDEAS IS A TEAM EFFORT IN GERMANY  
 PHOTO PHILIPP REINHARD

**" FINDING HIGHLY SKILLED PEOPLE WHO ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT DESIGN IS RATHER STRAIGHTFORWARD. "**

We have a dedicated and highly skilled team of engineers on both sides. Our Germany R&D team (headed by Jürgen Falke) focuses very much on the initial idea and the concept of the bike while our engineers in Taiwan work closely with them to guarantee the feasibility of the new project and keep a close eye on our often praised quality control mechanisms. The two teams are in constant communication to maximise the

benefits of the two location approach. Designed and engineered in Germany. Made in Taiwan.

**Your research and development process is in Germany, so is this where all the magic happens? Is Taiwan now solely for the manufacturing process?**

In Germany, we develop the complete international MERIDA line-up. That means from the idea, via the appearance of the frame in 3D all the way to the decal design, it is all done here, in Magstadt. However, good ideas which can't be produced don't have any real value. So we work very closely

with MERIDA Taiwan. Our R&D team flies several times a year to Taiwan, and our Taiwan colleagues come to Germany. Furthermore, they have an enormous amount of video conferences every month and write hundreds of emails to each other. It's a significant advantage for MERIDA that we have our own factories where we produce our own bikes.

It's also worth noting that Magstadt is a small town near Stuttgart; which is one of the technology hot spots in Germany. So finding highly skilled people who are passionate about design is rather straightforward. It is a real advantage if you want to stay fresh, as well as keep your outstanding product quality levels.



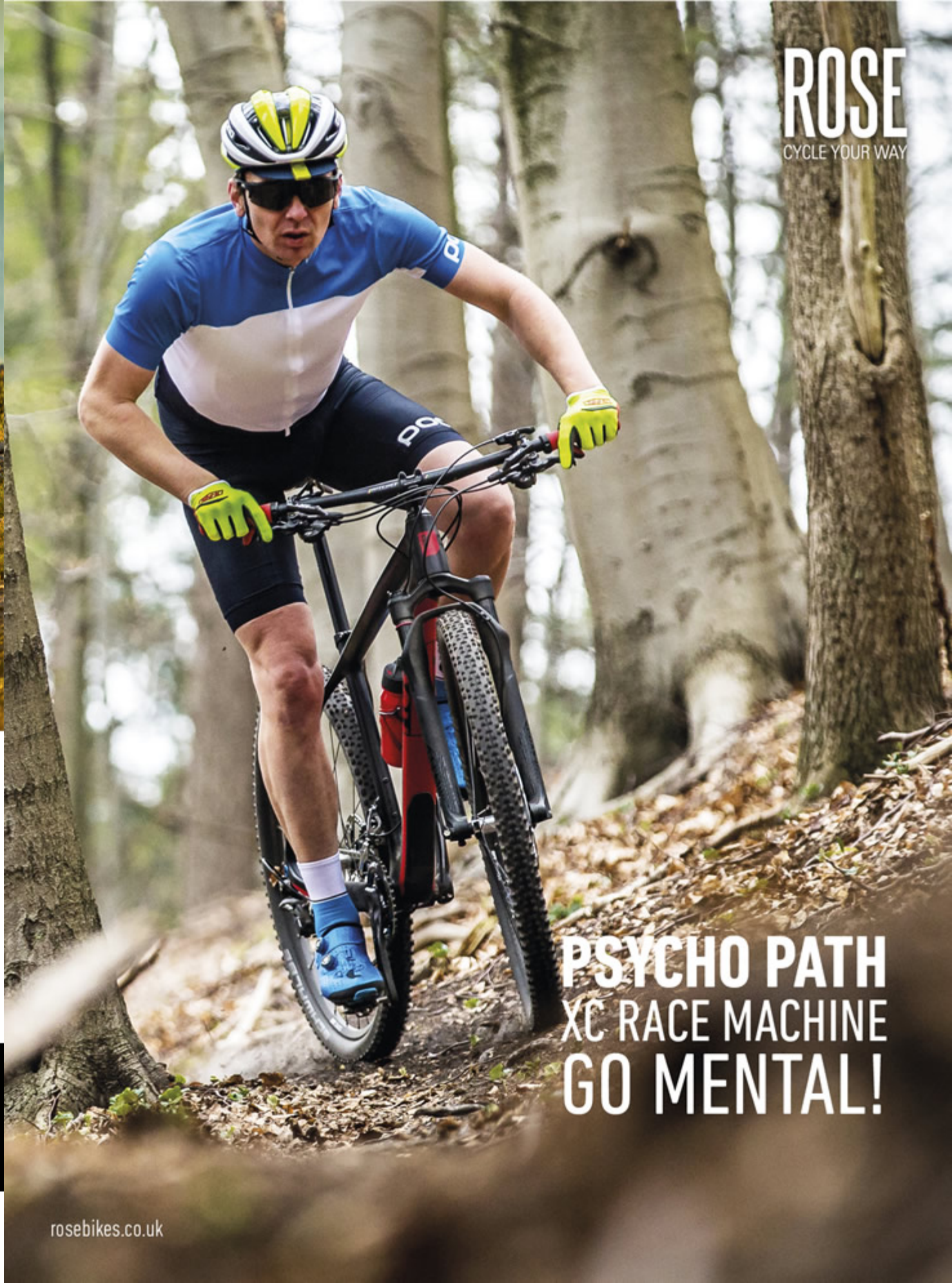


**Where does your testing happen, is it mostly done in Germany? Do you have a good set of local trails?**

Lots of it happens in Germany, and luckily we have some great riding on our doorstep. Quite a few of the leading German MTB and Road mags test on the same roads and trails. As mentioned previously we have a fleet of MERIDA athletes who test our products all over the world. Our R&D centre in Germany and our engineers in Taiwan use the latest testing technologies in their in-house testing labs.

THE HERITAGE IN 29ER  
HARDTAILS AT MERIDA IS  
WELL ESTABLISHED  
PHOTO DANIEL GEIGER

" WE HAVE  
SOME GREAT  
RIDING ON OUR  
DOORSTEP "



**PSYCHO PATH  
XC RACE MACHINE  
GO MENTAL!**



**How are your products developed? Does it come from demands of the pro riders? Or is it led by technological advancement in materials and other factors?**

It always depends on the category. For example, the MULTIVAN MERIDA BIKING TEAM had a significant influence on our race cross country hardtail and dual suspension bike. But of course, we also have our own expertise and interest in pushing things forward. All employees at MERIDA's R&D centre have a strong cycling background. From road racing, daily commute to downhill racing we have all kinds of cyclists here. On the technical side, we have the advantage of our own factories and engineers in Taiwan. They always keep us informed about the latest material and production technologies.

**" THE CHALLENGE IS TO ADAPT THE MATERIALS AND PROCESSES FOR EACH CATEGORY AND ACHIEVE THE PERFECT BALANCE "**

**With such a diverse range of products, is there much technology overlap between the road, mountain bike and e-bike products?**

Yes. Because from the production side the methods are very similar. The differences are the loads involved and how the product is used. So the challenge is to adapt the materials and processes for each category and achieve the perfect balance between weight, durability and appearance.







EVERY CARE IS TAKEN TO ENSURE THE BIKES ARE FINISHED TO THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARD  
PHOTO DANIEL GEIGER

**" RATHER THAN JUST ADDING A MOTOR - THE SYSTEM HAS TO WORK AS A WHOLE. "**

**My image of Merida used to be one of XC hardtails and Lycra. 2017 has seen a big shift in how Merida is perceived and your new bikes have broken the mould, was this a planned change or has it happen organically?**

We very much came from a mountain bike background and probably focused more on cross country due to the popularity of the sport in the markets where we operate.

However, things are changing globally, and we are discovering new sectors which, we have lots fun with, such as trail and e-bikes. Also, our R&D team has seen a shift in what they enjoy riding, etc. We had successful attempts in those areas before but we are now more focused, and we have also invested heavily in finding the right people to support that direction.

**This year also you have received great acclaim for your e-bike models, am I right in thinking these are your first e-MTBs? What is the secret of your success?**

We have been in e-bikes for a while but more on the commuting and leisure side as

more on the commuting and leisure side as they have been big for many years in certain markets. But 2017 is certainly a real push into the 'performance' side of e-bikes.

The success (so we believe) is based on using a great motor system (small/light etc.), also the fact that we could bring across lots of geometry elements from our proven 'non-powered' range and that our R&D team is e-bike mad. Our concept is very much based on the perfect integration of the motor in an already successful bike concept - rather than just adding a motor - the system has to work as a whole. Our award winning eONE-SIXTY, for example, shows how important the perfect geometry and specification is, even if you have a motor to help you along.





Without a doubt, the highly acclaimed Shimano STEPS system has given us not just a great power unit which is quiet, super smooth and straightforward to operate but also allows us to keep the chainstays short, the centre of gravity low and position the motor perfectly within the bike.

You also brought out the **BIG.TRAIL**, a hardtail which would perhaps be more at home in the UK or Canada. This is a very different type of hardtail for Merida, what was the idea behind such a new direction?

You are right; people know us more from our more 'racy' hardtails like our **BIG.NINE** or **BIG.SEVEN** but the idea of a more trail orientated hardtail has been a subject for quite some time at MERIDA.

SWEET DREAMS ARE MADE OF TRAILS LIKE THIS!  
PHOTO DANIEL GEIGER

" POSITION THE MOTOR PERFECTLY WITHIN THE BIKE "

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THE BIG.TRAIL IS A CHANGE IN DIRECTION FOR MERIDA,  
WITH A NEW FOCUS ON MORE TRAIL ORIENTATED BIKES  
PHOTO DANIEL GEIGER

" THE BIG.TRAIL IS SUPER  
CAPABLE AND GREAT FUN TO  
RIDE - THE MORE DEMANDING  
THE TRAIL, THE BETTER IT  
GETS."

Some markets had a bike called MATTS TRAIL in the range, which in particular in the UK was quite successful. Recently the whole concept of trail hardtails has progressed, and 2017 was our first step back into that segment with the much loved BIG.TRAIL.

We believe that there are lots of people out there who like certain elements of trail full suspension but might not want the hassle etc. of looking after it. The BIG.TRAIL combines lots of great trail bike features (geometry, handling, long travel fork, dropper post), offers massive grip and some cushioning through the 650B+ tyre/wheel concept and brings all this together in a hassle free and fun packed concept. The BIG.TRAIL is super capable and great fun to ride – the more demanding the trail, the better it gets.

**You have a solid set of riders who you support and also the famous MULTIVAN team. Tell us about your sponsored riders for 2017 and why they are important to the brand. How successful has the team been over the years?**

The MULTIVAN MERIDA BIKING TEAM has been one of the most successful XC teams of all times, but after 13 years it was time to move onto other things. The team had a huge impact on many important product innovations and has helped to make MERIDA known around the globe.





**" OUR R&D TEAM IS VERY DEDICATED AND EXPERIENCED WHEN IT COMES TO TESTING OUR OWN PRODUCT "**

Now we have a broad range of athletes we are supporting who cover varies types of riding and racing as well as travel the world in search for the best riding locations out there. For example, we have been working with dirt jumper and freerider Clemens Kaudela for a few years as well as support trials specialist Dominik Raab. Furthermore, we have adventurers and freeriders Hannes Klausner and Alban Aubert as part of our

MERIDA athletes who are always on the go working on some great photo stories and videos from some of the most breathtaking riding locations imaginable.

And last but not least we are still working with former MULTIVAN MERIDA BIKING TEAM riders José Antonio Hermida and Gunn-Rita Dahle Flesjå. Gunn-Rita remains in full racing mode, concentrating on UCI World Cups and selected marathon races while José still does a fair amount of racing but in all kind of disciplines as well as doing some testing and development work for MERIDA. All in all, you can say that

nowadays the experience is more important than the results.

**What are the benefits to having these riders other than the obvious marketing and promotion?**

We have been working with most of our riders for a number of years, and besides spreading the MERIDA name, they get heavily involved in our testing and product development. Our R&D team is very dedicated and experienced when it comes to testing our own product, but our athletes ride their bikes 24/7 and take them to places (geographically as well as pushing them) where regular riders would not be able to go.





" MIGHT NOT JUMP INTO YOUR FACE BUT HAVE A REAL IMPACT ON IMPROVING THE RIDING EXPERIENCE AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE BIKE "

The ONE-SIXTY is a very capable enduro bike, will we see a downhill bike in the future? Maybe even a world cup team?

That is not the plan at the moment – but 'never say never'.

How would you describe the riding culture at Merida? Is there still a focus on lycra-clad, super-fit racers, or are things changing?

We have racing in our blood – but you will see more and more baggy shorts in our catalogue and in our changing rooms. As we said before, we have a very varied rider base at MERIDA, from XC and enduro racer, via e-bike explorer and off-road tourer all the way to weight obsessed road racer and iron man triathlete.

What does the future hold for Merida?

Lots of new and exciting products and more and more stuff, which you would not expect from a more conservative brand like MERIDA. There is a strong focus on improving important details on our bikes, which might not jump into your face but have a real impact on improving the riding experience and the performance of the bike. But don't worry there will be some real surprises further down the line too! We are also getting more and more into the accessory side of our business by investing in new and exciting lines as well as supporting it through some hugely experienced specialists. Watch this space.







# TECHNIQUE

## FINDING YOUR FLOW

### SPEED CONTROL PART 1

Finding flow on a trail or maintaining a rhythm is down to a combination of things, speed control plays a major factor in descents, in climbs and on all the bits in between. This time we look at shifting and the impact of cadence on your ride.



Often overlooked in skills instruction and something we should never let slip is the process of shifting gear to match the trail speed. In old money, we are talking gear inches, forwards progression per revolution of the cranks.

In automotive circles, companies boast about BHP, the power of the vehicle - Torque & Revs. Similarly, we produce power measured in watts, and they enable us to spin the cranks at the desired RPM. Engines are all about this balanced equation, and maximum BHP is produced in a sweet spot where revs and torques can be sustained.

## " THERE IS FOR ALL OF US A SWEET SPOT AND A PREFERRED APPROACH "

---

Just like engines different human frames and muscle types work differently, some of us are light block small cubic capacity 1000cc machines that like to rev and others are big block diesels that use low down grunt (torque) to propel forwards at low RPM. Unlike engines, though we are pliable and can train our system to either drive larger loads around or deliver a higher rate of speed, resulting in the deadly combination of improved overall trail speed and endurance.

As with most things in mountain biking there is for all of us a sweet spot and a preferred approach, we are creatures of habit, and sometimes this locks us in, and progression slows or stops because of certain constraints. Fitness and technique are at the core of proficient mountain biking; you may have the lungs but not the legs and vice versa. These features should give you some food for thought in how to mix up your riding style to maximise your riding potential.







Back to gears and the pros and cons of the various ways in which to address them. Using high revs and spinning is fine but only if you're in a gear large enough that you are actually making some forwards progression, likewise burning some diesel and grinding along in a massive ratio is only worthwhile if you can sustain it for the duration.

I spend a lot of time on trails in one capacity or another and get a good chance to see the various riders and how they address the trail. Watching the newer riders on their 1X 10 and 1X 11 set ups many seem to have miss interpreted the 'spin to win' philosophy, revving like mad but not really going anywhere. Perhaps they have misunderstood the riding technique theory of early suspension bike; it used to be said that to reduce pedal influenced 'bobbing' you are supposedly better to sit and spin rather than stand and stomp.

" MANY SEEM TO  
HAVE MISS  
INTERPRETED  
THE 'SPIN TO  
WIN'  
PHILOSOPHY "

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" IT'S NOT AS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN A CONSTANT RPM UNLESS YOU'RE ON A LONG ENDURANCE HAUL, IT CAN ACTUALLY WORK AGAINST US. "

Not strictly true and should be filed in the same place as the other misconstrued phrases like 'get your ar\*e out the back'.

Spinning like Armstrong only has real value if you're strong enough to drive around a decent size ratio and progress up the trail.

Just like engines we burn fuel, we need to be efficient and avoid burning excess fuel by over revving. Likewise, we also need to avoid labouring (revving too slow pushing large gears) as this wastes fuel too.

Unlike road riding it's not as essential to maintain a constant RPM unless you're on a long endurance haul, it can actually work against us. The constant gradient changes and dynamics of mountain biking mean we have to hammer at rough ground and punchy climbs, we may need to use more

torque to get better traction on slippery and loose surfaces or to help carry speed in sections. Sometimes the nature of the terrain means the last couple of revolutions of the cranks require an inevitable laboured effort to turn around as you summit a steep little rise.

On that particular point of cresting features and speed control if you have ever encountered the 'teeter totter' wobble as you pass over a large crag or steep little bank then you can deconstruct those moments and conclude you did not commit to the feature and carry enough speed on entry.





If you go back to that problem passage and have another go, simply hammer at it harder and faster, don't be shy for its easier to squeeze the brakes and scrub some speed as you crest the summit too fast than have to put in a pedal stroke!

Trying to pedal at this crucial point will ruin your stability and open up the potential of the pedal/crank striking the trail, having ridden at the feature with a bit of gusto you will probably also discover your coincidentally in the wrong gear also and the revs/torque numbers are stacked against you.

**" WE NEED TO DROP DOWN THROUGH THE GEARS ONE BY ONE AS THE LOAD THROUGH THE LEGS INCREASES. "**

Equipped with a wide range cassette and lots of ratios to choose from it's important where the trails are undulating to maximise the use of our gears to help carry speed from the downslopes into the rises in the trail. You may have to accelerate in an uphill gradient of off from the flat to assist with carrying good speed up the next section of trail. As the angles work against us, we need to drop down through the gears one by one as the load through the legs increases.

All too often riders get to the bottom of a ramp and simply drop into a low gear before the gradient really kicks in, the result is a significant loss of speed and an inevitable grind up a rise, just in a low range gear moving at a snail's pace. On the flip side, those that fail to shift end up grinding up ramps and rises and it can result in a failed attempt at clearing a section. The sweet spot is that middle ground where we judge through the feeling in the legs and let them decide when to shift.





Now there is a catch here, if the lungs and other essential processes in the body are not capable enough to keep up then we can't recover from that effort and go again. We burn out and power drops off, balancing this for the duration of a section is one thing and doing it for the whole ride is another. For all of us there comes the point where muscles burn, or our heart punches through our rib cage, and the brain sends a signal to the thumb, and we start the process of running out of gears.

Pacing is essential no matter how long the ride lasts or what type of ride it is; even World Cup Downhill racers understand pacing is key to optimising performance. If your running out of diesel at the end of a ride maybe you started too fast, you may not have taken on enough fuel before or during your effort.

" BALANCING THIS FOR THE DURATION OF A SECTION IS ONE THING AND DOING IT FOR THE WHOLE RIDE IS ANOTHER. "

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Fuel is key, small and often. There are clever calculation for sports performance, and everyone should put some time into research these things even if your not performance driven and gunning for results, drinking and eating right are key to living long healthy and happy lives. Fluid is calculated in millilitres vs. body mass in kilogrammes, and similarly food is calculated against body mass. You should be eating every 40 minutes a specific amount of carbs (including sugars), proteins, etc.

" FIND OUT WHAT FOODS WORK FOR YOU AND SIT WELL IN THE BELLY AND STICK WITH IT. "

To give you a rough idea how to calculate your intake the following was calculated for me by one of the guru's at Sport UK. I weigh in at 59kg, and I drink 500 to 750 ml per hour (for calculation purposes I measure out at 500ml to match my 40 min eating regime). For food, I need to take on between half and 3/4 of a regular size nutrient bar, or the equivalent; this could be a banana, a handful of mixed nuts and fruit, some chocolate. Find out what foods work for you and sit well in the belly and stick with it.

Back to gears and pacing, standing up on the pedals will increase leverage but is only sustainable for short periods as the legs are then supporting the weight of the body as well as driving us forward. At higher speeds, it's also less aero efficient and works against us, but we'd have to be travelling at a fair rate of knots for this to be a concern and added wind resistance only really comes in on mellow gradient climbs for those hauling along.







**" YOU CAN USE YOUR GEARS TO GIVE YOU A WEIGHT TRAINING SESSION ON A RIDE OR A SPINNING CLASS. "**

Off road riding requires us to be independent from the bike, skimming/hovering in the saddle lifting up out of it to enable the bike to rise onto bumps and lumps or staying at the same height to allow the bike to drop into the holes so as to aid us in rolling forward.

The process of being planted in the saddle, hovering and just lifting the bum up enough to allow the bike to roll up onto bumps is a constant operation unless of course, the trails are pan flat and super smooth.

Physiology will to some extent determine what approach you take to climbing and the cadence you use; it's worth experimenting and helping your muscles develop the twitch they are lacking, be it the slow, strong style or the high speed flat out revving approach.

Remember you may benefit from spinning, but you need the torques to drive around a sensibly sized ratio. You can use your gears to give you a weight training session on a ride or a spinning class.

Psychology plays a significant role in off-road riding, having the confidence to commit to technical passages and being 'on your game' can make all the difference. Try to avoid being demoralised by ramps and climbs in the trail, a good positive mental attitude towards going up can contribute to making lighter work out of climbs.





Here in the UK genuine 'monster' climbs are a rare thing, sure we have some steep gradients we can hunt out but nothing that goes on for hours on end, try and mentally shrink the hills by breaking the trail down into bite size chunks. Plan to push harder in places and recover in others, hold that gear for just a little longer before dropping down a cog into an easier gear. Be mindful of what gear you are pushing where and you can easily monitor your performance (fitness) gains or losses!

Don't be shy of shifting under load either, if your gears are indexed correctly you only have to reduce the pressure ever so slightly to get a clean change, timing is the key.

" PLAN TO PUSH HARDER IN PLACES AND RECOVER IN OTHERS "

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## " THERE IS A POINT IN THE DRIVE WHERE GEARS JUST WANT TO BLEND TOGETHER "

Poor shifts that occur under load, the ones that sound messy or result in equipment failure, are a result of poorly adjusted and or worn parts, combine them with a very low cadence (high torque), and you do not enable the profiled sprocket to lift the chain up in time. The chain becomes stressed as it drags on the sprocket and jockey wheel

waiting for that little ramp to move just enough that it will claw its way up not the larger sprocket.

We are back to that sweet spot, there is a point in the drive where gears just want to blend together sweetly, and shifts are natural, how many of you have ever looked closely at the relationship between crank position, sprocket profile and chain movement between sprockets while shifting? It's worth getting the bike in the stand and

putting the drive system to work and observing where and how things line up; this will help you better understand when and where in the pedal stroke is a good time to get that derailleur moving.

Remember gear shifting isn't instant, there is a small delay from the actuation of the lever to when the derailleur starts to move, and the profiled sprocket starts to ride the chain up (or drop it down) onto the next sprocket. Always look up the trail and pre-empt the changes in gradient and speed so as to time your shifting to match.





That brings us onto shifting while descending quite nicely. Shifting is necessary everywhere, matching gears to trail speed in descents will help you exit corners faster with added traction, you will be set up for that next section with no fuss or bother.

Often the gradient just drops away, and we start to coast down the trail, freewheeling with a trail speed far greater than that we had when last driving the cranks round. When this occurs its time to pre-empt when you will be pedalling next and select a ratio that will give you engagement without grinding or spinning.

**" PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE AND YOU WILL IMPROVE. REMEMBER, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR TIME ON THE BIKE. "**

---

This can sometimes mean we have to rack off three or four gears and get a sneaky half pedal stroke or a couple of full rotations of the cranks so that gear is pre-selected ready for the next concerted effort on the drive. If we don't have drive when we next rotate the cranks, we are missing that all important forwards progression, essentially pedalling without cause and gradually slowing from all the forces tugging at your trail speed.

Frequent shifting and timing that shifting is key to maintaining good speed, as ever, practice practice practice and you will improve. Remember, there is no substitute for time on the bike. I leave you with the words of an elderly Welsh farmer who shared this gem of wisdom with me as I slogged my way up a wet hillside some years ago chasing my mates "it's easy boyo, just push one pedal down and the other comes up".



More fast bikes on test this issue plus we take a look at SRAM's new ShockWiz and Magura's MT7 enduro brake set up.

# TRIED AND TESTED

## BIKES

DMR Sled

Liv Hail

Merida ONE.SIXTY

Orange Four

Rocky Mountain Altitude

Rose Granite Chief

## COMPONENTS

Magura MT7 Brakes

SRAM ShockWiz

WORDS AND PHOTOS THE IMB TEST TEAM  
PHOTO THIS PAGE ROO FOWLER





" A GREAT ALL  
ROUNDER WITH  
A DESIRE TO GO  
DANGEROUSLY  
FAST "



### At A Glance

The Sled was always going to be an exciting bike. Ever since I got wind of the new machine last year, it was clear that DMR were not going to be messing about. There are obviously a couple of aspects about this bike that makes it stand proud from the rest of the DMR fleet. To begin with, it is their first aluminium bike, and secondly, it is considered their first 'proper' full suspension bike. Sure, the Bolt was well received and still exists, but it wasn't designed as a bike to compete in the modern trail and enduro category.

Those of us at a certain age will have grown up with DMR being a part of the fabric of mountain biking and they have a place in the heart of many a rider. Now a lot of those mountain bikers are older, wiser, more broken, yet still hit the trails and get loose in the woods. What if they still want to engage with a brand from their youth, but want more than a dirt jump bike? In slides the Sled - sideways onto the scene.

If reputation is not enough, what backs up this new frame to make it special? It's a 160mm trail-enduro "insert latest label here bike". It is aluminium in construction

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" WANTS TO BE  
RIDDEN FAST,  
HANDLING  
ANYTHING YOU  
PUT IN FRONT  
OF HER "



### At A Glance

Calling all ladies out there! You are about to lay your eyes on a very tasty, women's specific all-mountain bike, which ticks all the boxes of an aggressive and slack geometry enduro rig. This is a bike that makes an instant impression.

If you didn't already know, Liv is the sister brand to Giant Bicycles and has only been on the market for the past couple of years. The bike's all feature Giant markings, but are a bespoke creation with specific geometry designed for women. Not only are they exquisite to look at, the thought process gone into the build helps the bikes offer far more to the female rider.

The Liv Hail is the first women's specific bike offering 160mm travel at both ends (yes you read right, 160mm!). The Hail is fitted with Fox suspension front and rear, which comes in a very cool 'murdered out' black. At the pointy end, the Fox Talas 36 Performance Elite fork guides the bike through the rough. This fork has a travel adjustable air spring enabling switching between 130-160mm travel, meaning you can knock it down to 130mm on long-haul climbs, and then turn it up a notch for a bump devouring descent.

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"DESCENDS LIKE  
A BAT OUT OF  
HELL AND CAN  
WINCH YOU TO  
THE TOP  
WITHOUT  
COUGHING YOUR  
LUNGS UP"



### At A Glance

With Merida giving their range a massive overhaul this year, there has been a lot of excitement around a certain all-mountain/enduro bike they were releasing - the One-Sixty! The model is available in three builds with this bike we have on test, the One-Sixty 7000, sitting in the middle of the range.

Merida are from Taiwan, the home of bike manufacture, and have been around for a long time now. In addition to making their own bikes they also produce for some of the industries key players. In short, these guys know what they are doing! Perhaps best known for the Merida Multivan XC team, 2017 sees them moving into the broader mountain bike market, with a range of trail hardtails and long travel enduro bikes.

Merida's One-Sixty comes with cutting edge tech and geometry, sporting a fashionable 65-degree head angle, which seems to be the benchmark for modern enduro bikes, and featuring 148 Boost spacing on the rear and float link suspension with a metric shock. This bike seems future proofed...for now anyway!

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"THE REWARDS ARE FANTASTIC, CAPABLE OF TURNING ITS HAND AT ANYTHING."

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### At A Glance

With so many new bikes and revised versions of the iconic single pivot machine coming out of Halifax, it's easy to forget that the Orange Four is still a very new bike. Having just dropped the Stage 5 and Stage 6 only recently, the focus seems to be clearly on the big wheelers, yet this short travel 650b trail bike is still hot off the press.

The Four sits into the Orange range comfortably with, you guessed it, four inches of travel delivered through that tried and tested single pivot design. Four inches isn't really the true story in this case though, as it's actually 120mm of travel, so that'll be 4.7inches... No rounding up here!

So, with 120mm rear and 130mm up front delivered through a set of Factory 34s from Fox, the Four is small on travel but large on life, with a set of numbers designed to get the pulse racing. 458mm reach in a large starts things off, and with a 25mm bottom bracket drop, add some short, 425mm chainstays we have a thoroughly modern bike. The 67-degree head angle is the only sign that this is not an enduro weapon,

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"BUNNY HOPS AND WHEELIES ALL ROUND, NO STRAIGHT LINE RACER MOVES FOR THE ALTITUDE."



### At A Glance

Rocky Mountain seems to be having a bit of an overhaul at the moment, with new bikes hitting the trails all over the place. The new Slayer, launched last year, has been snapped up so quickly they are exceptionally hard to get hold of. I count myself lucky to have even touched a Slayer, let alone ride one!

Whilst the dust was settling from one launch another one explodes, this time with the updated Altitude. Having not received a 2017 update, the Altitude was conspicuous by its absence and was ripe for a re-jig.

Sitting into the range one notch below the Slayer, it's a 150mm rear, 160mm front 'Aggressive Trail' bike according to Rocky. Lacking the sheer depth of travel from its larger cousin, the Altitude wants to be more of an all-rounder.

The frame has come up to date with some fresh numbers and moves towards a longer, lower, slacker design which, although isn't ground-breaking, is now current. Large sized frames receive a 458mm reach, a 65.6 head angle and a 7mm bottom bracket drop. In other news,

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" AN ENGAGING AND LIVELY RIDE WITH PLENTY OF TRAVEL TO BACK YOU UP IF NEEDED "



### At A Glance

For 2017 Rose have updated two of their classic trail bikes, the Root Miller 29er and the Granite Chief in smaller 650b wheels. The geometry has been modernised and brought up to date to do battle in the fiercely competitive and difficult-to-define Trail category.

The Granite Chief is based around a 150mm Horst link frame and matched up front with a RockShox Pike also delivering the same 150mm. The frame sees an increased reach over the previous model, and some trimmed down chainstays, while the head angle is relaxed slightly to 66.6 degrees. Standover is kept nice and low and seat tube lengths have been shortened to allow long-drop posts.

Other modern touches include a move to Boost spacing for the hubs, which is pretty much expected now on new bikes. Internal routing is neat and simple and the overall finish of the frame is excellent, especially the contrast coloured pivot bolts and cable clamps.

Talking about the spec of a Rose can be tricky given the ability to customise a bike to your exact specification.

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" AT HIGH SPEEDS  
THEY FILL YOU  
WITH  
CONFIDENCE TO  
BRAKE LATER  
AND HARDER "



**BRAND** MAGURA **WEIGHT** 375G  
**MODEL** MT7 HYDRAULIC DISC BRAKES

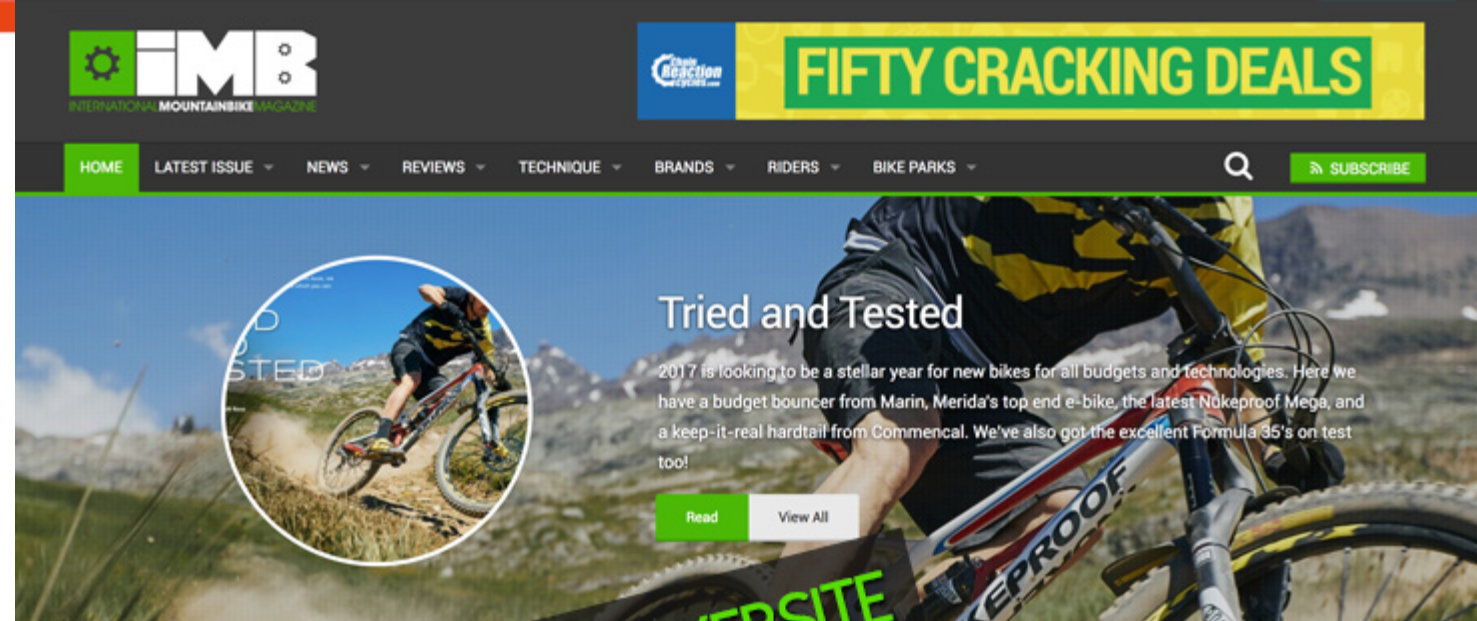
#### AT A GLANCE

Designed and made in Germany, and born from their super-moto big sister, the Magura MT7's have landed on the scene in a sleek looking package that provides unrivalled stopping power. Heir to the old and highly regarded Gustav M, these are Magura's latest flagship brakes designed and built for gravity and high speed riders.

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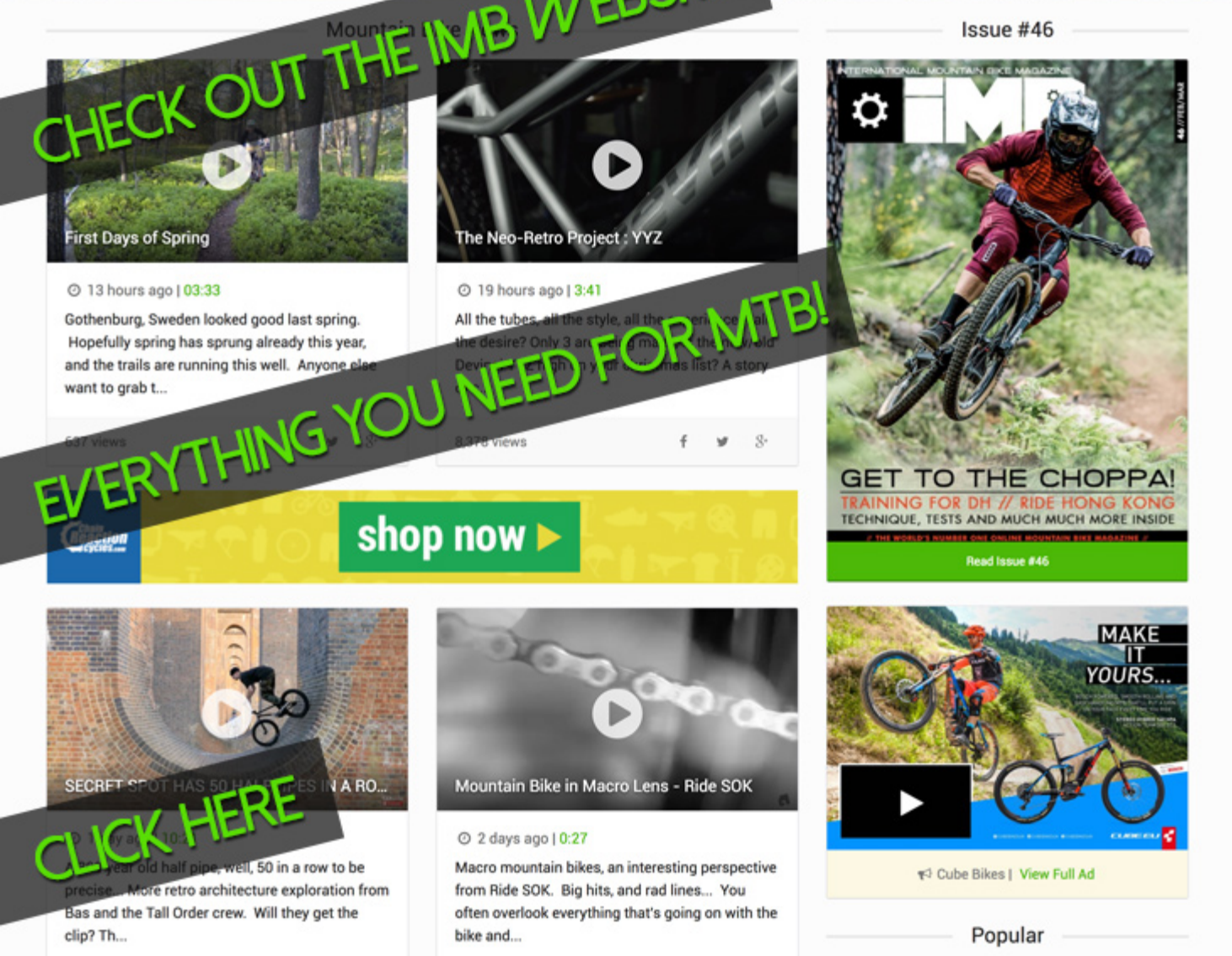
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" BOTH  
BAFFLINGLY  
INTELLIGENT  
AND SUPER  
SIMPLE IN ONE  
HIT. "



**BRAND** SRAM/QUARQ **YEAR** 2017  
**MODEL** SHOCKWIZ

#### AT A GLANCE

Initially a Kickstarter project, the idea of measuring a shocks performance through air pressure was deemed by the funding public to be an excellent idea. Shortly after the public got behind it, SRAM, or more accurately Quarq, bought it up and developed it into the product we see before us now.

Very simply, the ShockWiz plugs into the valve on your air suspension and measures the pressure.

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PHOTO TROY LEE DESIGNS

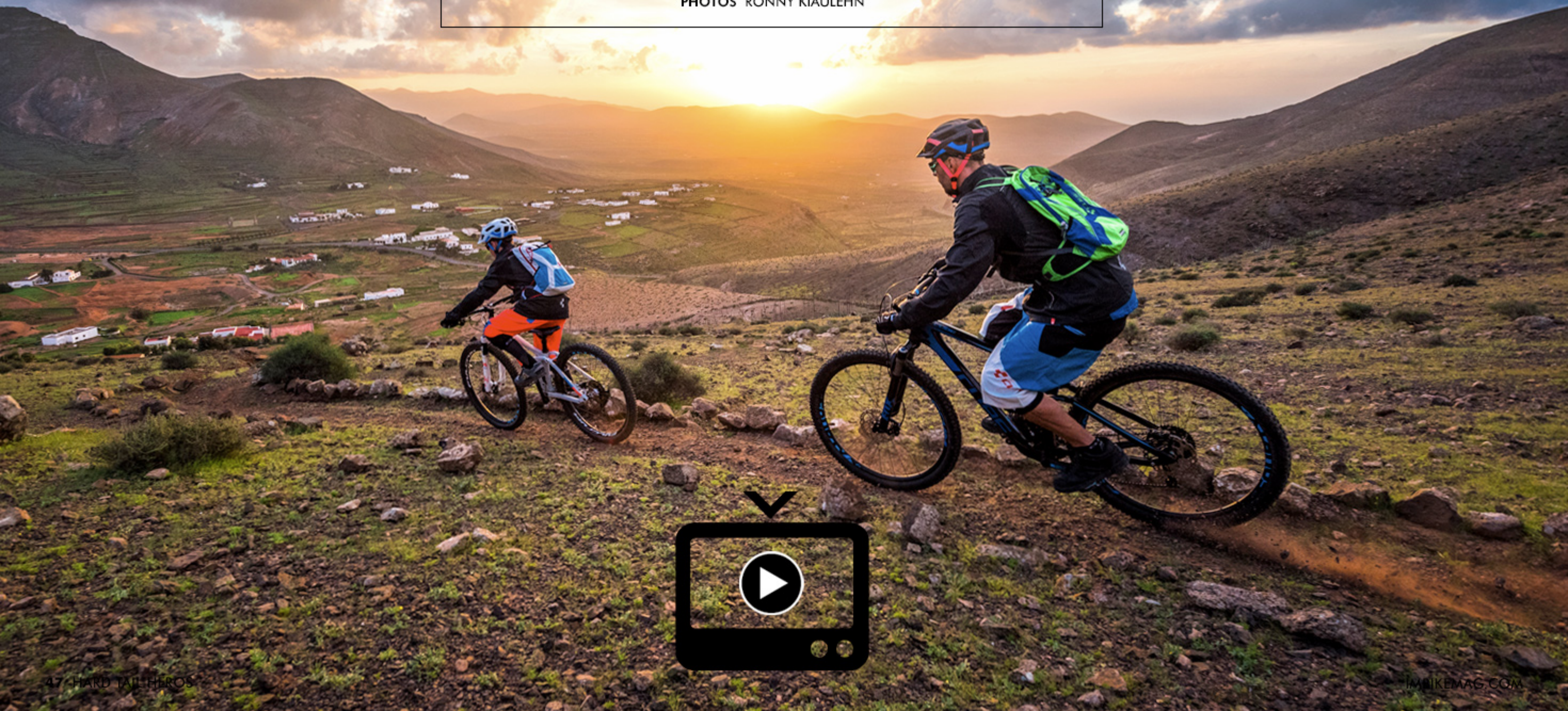
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Rob Stortoni, Ronny Kiaulehn and his son Pietro have been blazing in trails in Fuerteventura for years, their film, Surfing Majorero Trails, was a finalist at the Peugeot Drone Festival and the incredible scenery the island harbours is something to behold.

# STUNNING ADVENTURES OFF THE COAST OF AFRICA

WORDS ROB STORTONI  
PHOTOS RONNY KIAULEHN







**" I WENT BACK ON A MOUNTAIN BIKE TO STRENGTHEN MY KNEES, AND I COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED THE BEAUTY HIDDEN IN THE HEART OF THE ISLAND. "**

You may have heard of this paradise in southern Europe, or maybe not, Fuerteventura is one of the Canary Islands and the one which chose me. My passion for kitesurfing led me to travel to this mecca of water sports, but I would soon discover that this place has much more to offer.

Five years ago I went back on a mountain bike to strengthen my knees, and I could not have imagined the beauty hidden in the heart of the island. Since then a force inside me has been ignited that pushes me to the mountain and that force, day by day, has grown.

I do not believe in coincidences. I do not think that having crossed paths with Ronny and Pietro, a father and son, photographer and BMXer, was a matter of chance. There are certain things that are meant to happen. Ronny's connection with Fuerte comes from long ago.

More than 30 years ago he visited the island for the first time as a professional windsurfer and later as a windsurf and surf photographer. Since then he has not stopped returning, for almost a lifetime, to this enclave to feel again the magnetism of this land and the human quality of friends and the whole family of life here.

Sometimes it's hard to know how a great friendship arises. Maybe it's an attitude? Perhaps a frequency? Maybe a vital sensibility? No doubt our love for sport has a lot to do with our connection. For me, friendship is one of the most important values in the world and is almost a religion and a purpose in life. Friends are the family we choose.





**" IT WAS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO SURPRISE THEM. I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO AWAKEN UNIQUE SENSATIONS IN MY DEAR FRIENDS AGAIN. "**

I will never forget the satisfaction of showing Fuerte's treasures to my two new friends, especially the new trails that appeared as we explored the farthest corners of the island.

If something has characterised our relationship, it is motivation. There has always been a "Sure!" In every response. Very naturally we decided to start "playing" at producing a video describing Fuerte's potential for the bike. We decided to record

a video with only a drone. It was an unforgettable experience. "Surfing Majorero Trails", to our surprise, entered the final of the "Peugeot Drone Festival" and national media covered our first story.

We looked forward to more and Ronny called me to come up with a new adventure. This time it would be a bike story to publish in specialised media. "Suuure!" A month later I had my friends back on the island, and this is the result.

Planning was essential to get the most out of every day of the shoot. They say that the old devil knows more than the devil. I already feel a little old, and like a little devil on this

island. I selected the first routes for their panoramic value and for the bike experience.

Consideration has to be made here for the wind, which is very variable in terms of direction and intensity during the winter, as well as the weather. It's usually quite stable but when it rains it really rains here. We would plan our rides depending on the forecast, trying to keep the wind on our backs where possible or head out before it picked up when we could. It is a gift that the island is so versatile and has so many possibilities for riding.

After the previous experience with Ronny and Pietro, it was increasingly difficult to surprise them. I had the feeling that I would be able to awaken unique sensations in my dear friends again.



**" THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN KNOWING YOUR ISLAND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A FUTURE MOUNTAIN BIKE UNDERTAKING AND AN INCREDIBLE PHOTOGRAPHER. "**

As a rule, we decided to focus on the north-central area of the island to avoid long car journeys, and spend as much time as possible on our bikes.

The first day we combed the volcanoes that surround the northern area where I live: El Roque, the Villaverde volcano at dawn, and just after a light rain. The cosmic kitchen gave us an epic ride with a crucible of colours that left us speechless. I think the photos speak for themselves.

A pause to eat something in the La Oliva market, and then continue pedalling, including ups and downs with the volcanoes near to Lajares to complete this spectacular day.

This area of the island has a huge variety of routes and panoramas. We came back on a couple of occasions in search of the best moment for light in some places that we had located. There is nothing better than knowing your island to take advantage of a future mountain bike undertaking and an incredible photographer.

Once we finished the northern zone, we decided to take a couple of days off. A bit of surfing, a little beach time, and still catching snapshots that were worthy of any magazine. The truth is that the first few days were intense and we were somewhat tired. However, after a fantastic day at the beach, we could not resist a return trip at sunset to another nearby mountain: Tindaya. They say that luck favours the brave.







**" THERE IS A CHAIN OF SPECTACULAR MOUNTAINS. YOU CAN JOIN SEVERAL CIRCULAR ROUTES OR FOCUS ON MORE ENDURO AND DOWNHILL RIDING. "**

To us, overcoming the laziness gave us one of the most incredible sunsets that I remember in many years here. It was one of those situations where silence conquers the moment, and the beauty leaves you dumb for a few minutes.

It was time to approach the central area of the island. In the area of Betancuria (a town with a lot of charm and the first capital of the Canaries), there is a chain of spectacular mountains. You can join several circular routes or focus on more Enduro and Downhill riding. To avoid mistakes, we did both.

We started the day in the statues of the Guanches (Canary aborigines), climbed and descended a series of ridges on a single trail with views of both coasts (east and west), until reaching a valley with a forest of Canary pines. Fuerteventura is known for its beaches and its desert areas, but there is much more.

My friends were amazed to see such a green area on a supposedly arid island, which especially in winter, shows how fertile it can be.

From the pine forest, another single trail to the main road, and back to Betancuria by asphalt. In general, there is very little traffic on the island which, added to the special respect for cyclists, filling you with confidence when you do have to hit the asphalt.

A pause to rest a bit and eat something in a typical Canarian restaurant, and again up a relatively steep valley, somewhat tiring, but certainly worth it. From the summit starts an exciting descent to the town of Antigua.









**" THE LANDSCAPE THERE IS IMPRESSIVE, THE MOUNTAINS ARE VERY ROCKY AND STEEP, AND THERE IS A PATH THAT GOES DOWN A VALLEY TO THE BEACH OF AJUY "**

Nearly reaching the last part of the path, Pietro had a puncture. Here you always find stretches of stones and punctures are something that can happen; it is essential to carry spare tubes on each venture. We fixed the tyre quickly and continued to our van, closing another beautiful day.

After two days, we decided to return to the same area (this time a little further south of

Betancuria) to the mountains that are above the village of Pájara. The landscape there is impressive, the mountains are very rocky and steep, and there is a path that goes down a valley to the beach of Ajuy, passing by the Church of the Virgin of the Rock. In this area, part of the film Exodus was recorded. Hollywood loves Fuerte. Last summer, for example, part of Star Wars was filmed in the southern dunes. There is no better proof that we have some filmworthy landscapes.

After a few intense days, and with just a few days until the departure of my friends,

we decided to close the photo sessions with a few panoramic snapshots near the beach...and some action. And what better area than the trail behind my house that I affectionately call The Backyard. I spent a lot of time there, and in spite of it, I never tire of the place. There is something mystical about it.

And there I was, one more day, this time in the company of my two great friends, helmets, protective gear, and photo bag on Ronny's shoulder. As you can imagine at this point I know the layout to perfection. We enjoyed it immensely, between skidding, curves and jumps. Adrenaline poured in. Overconfidence and anxiety to capture a perfect image in one of my favourite "jumps" triggered in a freak accident.



**" JUST AFTER SAYING, "COME ON, THIS IS THE LAST", WE COULD SEE THAT THE DRONE TOOK ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN AND DECIDED TO GO OFFSHORE AT FULL SPEED. "**

I crashed and hit my head hard; I was disoriented and confused. I had to ask Ronny the same thing about fifty times. After a few moments of tension and great concern, everything seemed to return to normal. Once we knew I was OK and just a bit shaken, it was time to laugh properly at what happened. If you are going to come to Fuerte with the intention of going fast, do not forget protective gear...the rocks can be savage.

Only one session near the Backyard beach was pending. There is a trail that runs along the entire coast from Cotillo to Esquinzo. Again the perfect conditions. Offshore wind, clear sky and good wavelets in the background. Ronny was super happy with the stage; he took photos from all angles. The wind began to blow hard, and he decided that it was time to land his drone. First, we did a series of photos, and just after saying, "come on, this is the last", we could see that the drone took on a life of its own and decided to go offshore at full speed.

Pietro and I looked confused as we did not understand what was happening...After a minute, again we saw it return to our area, and then it landed safely. Ronny's face showed a marked sense of relief. Due to the strong wind, the motors overheated. To cool them, the drone automatically takes power off, and the wind dragged it out to sea.







**" THERE IS AN ISLAND TO EXPLORE, AND ADVENTURE IS GUARANTEED "**

Once cooled, it was able to return, but the display showed only 1% of the battery. Luck was also with us during this last session.

This ended a month of "bike in the veins", archiving another number of moments that always remain in our minds and documented by the photos that accompany this story.

I already feel like having my friends here again. There is an island to explore, and adventure is guaranteed. I have made the decision for this sport to also become my trade. I hope you can hear about my project soon. And whoever wants to target this unforgettable experience, you know where we are. There is always space for new friends.



LIGHTBOX

IT MAY HAVE BEEN WET, BUT THE NEW PIVOT MACH 5.5 IS A  
GREAT TRAIL WEAPON WHATEVER THE WEATHER  
PHOTO STEVE BEHR/PIVOT



*Lightbox* More shots with no particular place  
to go this issue, feast your eyes!





*Lightbox*

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN FOR THE LEGENDARY TRANS PROVENCE  
PHOTO DUNCAN PHILPOTT/TRANS PROVENCE



LIGHTBOX



*Lightbox*

JORDIE LUNN BLOWS OUR MINDS ONCE AGAIN  
PHOTO STERLING LAURENCE



LIGHTBOX

*Lightbox*

TIME TO PLAN THOSE ALPINE TRIPS FOR THE SUMMER AND GET TO THE BIG MOUNTAINS  
PHOTO ADRIAN MARCOUX





*Lightbox*

E-BIKES, MAKING THE UPS NEARLY AS MUCH FUN AS THE DOWNS...  
PHOTO PHILIPP FORSTNER/BMC



LIGHTBOX



*Lightbox*

DAVID CACHON HAS BEEN OFF ON MORE ADVENTURES,  
THIS TIME THE ACTION COMES FROM MURCIA  
PHOTO FERNANDO MARMOLEJO



LIGHTBOX



*Lightbox*

LOURDES WON'T BE A RACE WE FORGET QUICKLY, BUT THIS SEASON IS UNFOLDING TO BE BOTH UNPREDICTABLE AND HUGELY EXCITING  
PHOTO JB LIAUTARD/COMMENCAL



LIGHTBOX



*Lightbox*

FORT WILLIAM WAS AS AWESOME AS EVER, BUT MINNAAR STOLE THE SHOW WITH AN INCREDIBLE RUN TO TAKE THE WIN  
PHOTO RED BULL CONTENT POOL/BARTEK WOLINSKI



The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

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# MOVIE NIGHT

## #1 TRAIL DOG

You may be faster than your mates, but faster than your dog? That's very unlikely unless you deliberately bought a pug to make you feel better about your riding. Here Tom takes his Vizla for a high speed lap of his local trails and tries to keep up with this high octane hound.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #2 THE ART OF BALANCE

Thomas Bannister lost the use of his arm ten years ago, and for many of us that may have ended our mountain bike career. Not for Tom, who after a few modifications got his bike setup dialled in and is hitting the trails in style. Inspiring stuff, and a reminder that we should all stop looking for excuses and ride our bikes more!



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #3 REMI THIRION'S HORRIFIC CRASH

I won't repeat the expletives I shouted on my first viewing of this! Remi Thirion went down hard in qualifying at Leogang, very hard, but fortunately he is going to be ok. Perhaps not the most positive video but a timely reminder that racers are human too, and the risks they take are very real and very big.



[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

## #4 FOLLOW THE FRASER:

Official 4K Trailer- Freeride is alive and well! By the time you read this the full movie will be out, following James Doerfling, Tom van Steenberg, and Kyle Norbraten as they head up the Fraser river in search of the wildest lines. Expect super steep and technical descents with plenty of style thrown in for good measure.



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THAT GOLDEN LIGHT AS YOU RIDE HOME AFTER A GREAT DAY OUT IN THE SADDLE,  
THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT!  
PHOTO FERNANDO MARMOLEJO



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