

NOVEMBER 22

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE...

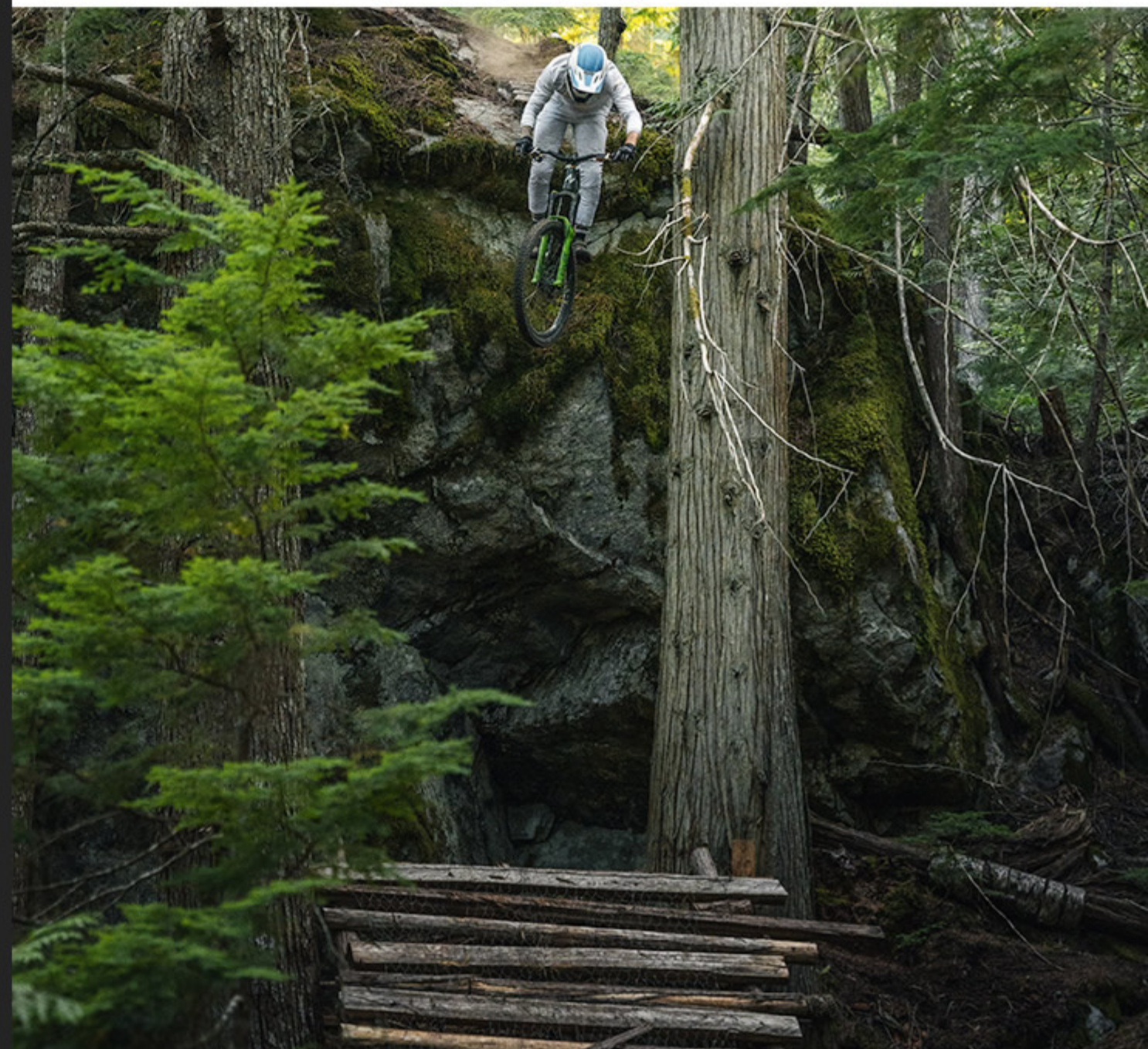
Issue 72 is go! We talked to Scottish ripper Lewis Buchanan about riding, racing, injuries and pushing limits. We returned to the only ex you want to see again, the Merida Ex Enduro and pedalled to the end of the world to visit Cabane de Chanrion, possibly Europe's most remote mountain hut. We dive deep into oval chainring in

TechFocus with AbsoluteBlack and Clive talks about the weight distribution game. Furthermore there is kit on test from Peatys', RideWrap, Tackx, Rimpact, MET, Continental, Merida, Stanton and many more. Of course there are the regulars like Light Box and Movie Night are of course also present so dig in and enjoy!

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- LEWIS BUCHANAN INTERVIEW -
EUROPE'S MOST REMOTE HUT? / THE EX YOU WANT TO SEE AGAIN
TRAIL GUIDE BIKEPARK VERBIER / TECHNIQUE, TESTS & MORE!

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FRONT COVER RIDER LEWIS BUCHANAN
FRONT COVER PHOTO STUART COSTELLO

COMPETITION



TECH FOCUS -
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EDITORIAL



TECHNIQUE -
THE WEIGHTING GAME



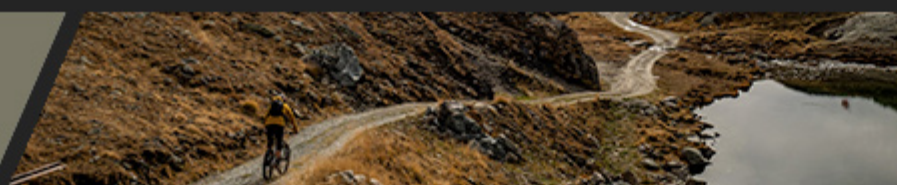
LEWIS BUCHANAN
INTERVIEW



TRIED AND TESTED



EUROPE'S MOST
REMOTE HUT



LIGHTBOX



THE MERIDA EX



MOVIE NIGHT



TRAILGUIDE
BIKEPARK VERBIER



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CONTENTS

PUBLISHING EDITOR

Rou Chater
rou@nextelement.co.uk

EDITOR

Jarno Hoogland
Jarno.Hoogland@imbikemag.com

TECHNIQUE EDITOR

Clive Forth
clive@mtbskills.co.uk

TEST TEAM

testteam@imbikemag.com

WEB EDITOR

Julia Bigio
julia@imbikemag.com

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

Soren Rickards
Julia Bigio

DESIGN

Karen Gardner
hello@karengardnercreative.co.uk

ADVERTISING SALES

Anastasia Pankina
anastasia@imbikemag.com

IT DIRECTOR

Alex Chater
alex@nextelement.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

Rou Chater, Mike Sterling,
Adrian Reed, The Angry Insider

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RIDER JARNO HOOGLAND
PHOTO JULIA BIGIO
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October is a time of letting go. No more lush green, no more flip flops, the end of high alpine riding and gone are the days of riding after work. But letting go is not always a bad thing.

Whenever you let go, it ends up bringing you other things that you couldn't imagine.

Recently I let go on a more personal level too. Nothing dramatic, but as a guide and long term biker I am used to creating the plans and holding the map. I basically always know where I am and what's to come.

But last week I found myself in a beat up Iveco 4x4 in the remote Italian backcountry, following a guy who I just met that morning. And it was surprisingly fun. At first I still kept whipping out the phone to see where we were, but with absolutely no reception in this part of the world I quickly dropped that reflex.

After a few runs, I knew I could rely on his line choice and started to trust the vague description of features to come. A bag of tricks and 160mm travel helped with that of course, not to mention the Rimpact rim protection I had on test. But, by the end of the day I was totally comfortable with not having a clue where I was. A strange but nice experience. I should do more of that.

Mother Nature is also letting go these months. Still, autumn is my favorite season to be honest. The bike trails are empty and until the first dump of snow arrives, big descents are still on the menu. With the help of a couple thousand Lumens you can still ride after dark, and it's in these weeks the colors are mind blowing.

But first, we have Issue 72 in front of us. Crammed once again with two wheeled adventures, interviews and product reviews. Enjoy the fruits of our labor, and grab the bike to go ride!

Jarno Hoogland

Publishing Editor

RIDERS JARNO & SOREN PHOTO JULIA BIGIO
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INTERVIEW

LEWIS BUCHANAN

WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND / LEWIS BUCHANAN
PHOTOS ALEX HOLOWKO & STUART COSTELLO

As far as riders goes, Lewis Buchanan is one of the most versatile and skilled bike riders in the world. A Tweed Valley local that found his way up to podiums on DH races, Enduro World Series events and keeps your eyes (and that of 30k other subscribers on YouTube) locked on his riding adventures. The only rider to have cojones big enough to tackle the RedBull Hardline course on his Enduro bike and to pull the plug on racing the EWS mid season. We managed to sit him down for an interview, read and enjoy!

" LIFE HAS BEEN AWESOME, I HAVE BEEN DOING EXACTLY WHAT I LOVE WHICH IS RIDING MY BIKE IN COOL ASS LOCATIONS "

So, for those that don't know, who is Lewis?

My name is Lewis Buchanan, I am 29 years old and a Professional MTB Rider from Scotland. I have been riding since I was around 10 years old and turned professional when I was 16, so I have been at it for quite some time. I ride for Norco bicycles, DHaRCO, PNW, TRP, Ride Concepts, DVO, NS Billet, Maxxis, Enve Composites.

How's life treating you these days?

Life has been awesome, I have been doing exactly what I love which is riding my bike in cool ass locations and have also just taken a month off to spend some time in Canada chilling, but I have still been working hard on some new brand deals for 2023-2024.

You've been riding and racing on two wheels for quite some time now. Tell us about how you got started?

Yeah so I started racing when I was 11 years old, before that my good friend Robbie already was riding and suggested that I give it a go as it was super fun. I did exactly that and I was hooked on the enjoyment it gave me. It just snowballed from there and turning pro all happened really quickly and at such a young age.

When did you start racing Enduro and was it hard to adapt coming from a DH background?

I started racing enduro in 2016. I wanted a change from WC DH and a new motivation and felt like if I could find that then it would relight the fire to be committed and I could get back to being super competitive.



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MERIDA 



"THE TRAINING FOR ENDURO IS MORE INTENSE AND REQUIRES A LOT MORE COMMITMENT AND TIME, BUT IT REALLY GAVE ME GOOD DISCIPLINE AND A STRONG HEAD."

It was a bold move but I worked super hard in the off season in 2016 and came out swinging at any Enduro race I did from Scottish/National events to EWS and was certainly a cool thing to feel. The training for enduro is more intense and requires a lot more commitment and time, but it really gave me good discipline and a strong head.

Over time you had plenty of misfortune with injuries. Which injuries did you have and how did they shape you as a rider and person?

I have had my fair share indeed. I have had broken wrists, dislocated shoulder, broken ankle, broken leg, broken coccyx but those were just little bumps in the road compared to the injury I got in 2016.

What happened then?

I was doing a photoshoot when I fell and broke my elbow. It was a nasty compound fracture (the bone was sticking out my arm!) and it kept me off the bike for around 9 months I think.

I got told I would probably not return to world level competition again by my surgeon. That's incredibly hard to hear as a pro rider. I got addicted to the pain meds and honestly was very depressed throughout the healing process. It was a dark time but somehow managed to get back on the path. I worked super hard on my rehab and strength to get it back to normal but I was just never able to get it back to 100%. To this day I still can't straighten my left arm fully.

How does that affect your riding these days?

I had to totally change up my cockpit set up (bar height/fork steerer height/stem length/stack height etc). But now it's a completely natural feeling for me,



" IT HAS HONESTLY SHAPED ME TO BE MENTALLY STRONG AND JUST ACCEPT THAT IT'S PART OF WHAT I DO "

and I just roll with it. It's how you bounce back from it that really matters and being able to continue on without it affecting you mentally.. I have been through a lot of adversity but it has honestly shaped me to be mentally strong and just accept that it's part of what I do and I accept that sometimes you get hurt.

Your ankles took a pretty big beating in 2021, did you manage to recover over last winter?

Yeah so when I competed in Red Bull Hardline, I cased a few jumps during practice and also had a nasty crash which broke my coccyx and also smashed my ankles on some rocks. I struggled to walk during that event and even months after the event. I never did get them checked out but I think it was just deep bruising, so I recovered over the winter by taking plenty of rest. They're good to go again now!

You worked together with a lot of brands before settling with Norco last year, how did that deal come about?

Yeah I feel like sometimes you have to try different things before you feel like you land with a brand/company that you feel super comfy with. Norco for me has been awesome and they have been chill to work with and really stoked on me and my riding and content. We began discussions towards the tail end of 2020 and I think my transition from racing full time, to being more about creating content and doing the odd race was appealing to them and it just worked out. We signed a 1 year deal and then at the end of 2020 I resigned with them till the end of 2023.



Besides the regular racing in the EWS you started to push your YouTube content more and more. When did you start filming for YouTube and what was that like?

I made a little push at the Youtube game in 2020. I saw it as a cool opportunity to share my experience when I signed with Forbidden in 2020 and it honestly paid off. It worked out amazing and I know I did such a good job at marketing that bike and people loved the behind the scenes and it kind of blew up honestly. Since then I have applied much the same attitude towards my relationship with Norco and I share my experiences wherever I go.

"I SAW IT AS A COOL OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCE"



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MAGURA

" IT'S GREAT TO SHARE AN INSIGHT IN MY LIFE AND I LIKE THE EDITING AND CREATING PART OF IT TOO. "

Currently you have a more than decent following of over 30k subscribers, that didn't appear out of nowhere. How did you build the following?

In the end it's the same way you get race results. Just plain old hard work. Create video's regularly, stay original and make the quality as good as you can get. Modern camera's really make life a lot easier with this though! For me the Youtube platform is not a money maker, but it is pretty handy as far as reaching a particular audience and it's a cool way to connect with people. I do bring in a little revenue from it but I don't rely on it and I mainly make the videos because I enjoy it. It's great to share an insight in my life and I like the editing and creating part of it too.

One of the most disappointing things for me personally this year was to not see your name on the Red Bull Hardline Riders list. After killing it in 2021 on your enduro bike, I was keen to see what you'd be able to pull off on a big bike. How come you weren't on the list?

Yeah I wish I knew haha! I didn't get an invite and I don't really know what went on. Personally I feel like I deserved to be there after last year and I even covered the whole experience on YouTube too. This year it looked like there was a stacked field, but there were people taking part this year that didn't even manage to finish last year's event. I even heard that someone got an invite, showed up, walked the track and chose to head home as it was a bit much. I don't want to be sour about it, but it didn't make much sense.





" I DEFINITELY OVERCAME SOME FEARS OUT THERE AND WHEN I GO BACK I KNOW I WILL BE EVEN MORE COMFY! "

I would love to be in it next year and hopefully all the dots line up and I can be there.

What was it like tackling that course on such an underpowered bike?

It was challenging but the bike was really capable. I had 170mm in the rear and a big DH fork up front. I would have liked at least 200mm in the rear but I was pressed with time and couldn't sort out a DH bike before

the event. So I just stuck a big double crown fork on the front and off I went! I actually never even got to ride the bike until the first practice day at Hardline...which is rather gnarly to think of haha.

Being the extreme allround rider you are, from Hardline to DH world cup to EWS is there a chance we'll ever see you doing an XCO race?

I can confidently say I will never compete in an XCO event haha. It is not my cup of tea.

In one of the video's of your trip to the Redbull Rampage site, you mention you

have a fear of heights. How does that work out in a place like Utah?

I am terrified of heights, but once I am on my bike I feel more comfy. I definitely overcame some fears out there and when I go back I know I will be even more comfy!

How do you deal with fear in general?

I don't really know how to deal with it. I think being nervous is a good thing and having some fear is good. It shows you care and I guess it is kind of thrilling and gives you a good buzz. When you push the envelope it's just part of the experience. I just go with it now and let it flow these days haha.



" THE PHYSICAL/MENTAL DEMAND THAT IT TAKES THESE DAYS TO RACE AT EWS LEVEL IS INCREDIBLE AND MY HEART WAS JUST NOT IN IT. "

The whole mental game of being a pro rider can be tricky. Between training hard, race pressure and pleasing sponsors, it must be hard to keep enjoying riding bikes. This summer we saw you pull out of the Whistler EWS for just that reason. How do you look back at that decision?

That was a huge moment in my career for me honestly. I got half way through practice but I felt so fatigued mentally and I was not enjoying the stages. The physical/mental demand that it takes these days to race at EWS level is incredible and my heart was just not in it. I don't really enjoy the Enduro racing anymore and I think it is really hard to get any good marketing or content out of the EWS unless you are winning or on the podium every weekend. So I made the choice to pull out of the race and not do the remaining events towards the tail end of the year. Instead I went to the US and did a project with Enve and met the whole crew and then went to Utah to film some YouTube stuff and that worked out much better. You might see me at an E-EWS but I am certain you won't see me at any EWS in 2023.

You've created some great YouTube content after that, riding with Remy (Metallier) and visiting the Rampage site. Besides the YT content, are you working on something bigger like a video part of sorts?

That has been all super fun and I will continue to do that. Remy is a really good friend and we chat a lot over the phone about ideas and sponsorship stuff and

"IT IS REALLY TOUGH AND BESIDES BIG MOUNTAIN SKILLS YOU NEED A BIG BAG OF TRICKS TOO."

and just bouncing ideas back and forth and the dude is someone I take a lot of inspiration from. In 2023 I am planning on a video project and it is going to be a huge focus of mine so stay tuned for that!

The first thing that came to mind when you mentioned you went to Utah for a shoot, was Rampage. Are you secretly training for Rampage?

I am not, it was a work related trip for a project and some extra content. Hardline is one thing, but when I was at the Rampage site it was crystal clear that that event is of a whole new level!

If you receive an invite would you go?

I would, but to get into Rampage is another thing. It is really tough and besides big mountain skills you need a big bag of tricks too. So much has to line up and I am humble enough to say I am nowhere near that yet...but hey in the future never say never.

What was it like seeing the terrain up close and finding your way on the bike yourself?

It was insane, I have so much respect for the locals there and what they ride and the guys that compete in Rampage. It is completely different to anything at home, the terrain is loose and the exposure is dangerous but the features and lines are so fun. I will for sure be back next year to do some bigger stuff!

We're entering the 'off season' right now. What do you have planned in the next few months?

I have some cool content planned for my new Norco Range VLT E-bike. I am stoked to share my experience on that and get up to some antics on that.





" I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS FUN FOR YOU AND WHAT YOU PERSONALLY THINK YOU ARE GOOD AT DOING. "

I am going to get a DH bike built and spend a lot of time on that and riding across the UK on that. I will be doing a lot of planning also for 2023 as far as trips to new locations.

Do you have any tips for up and coming racers or wannabe YouTubers?

I think it's Important to focus on what is fun for you and what you personally think you are good at doing. If you enjoy whatever it may be...racing or creating YouTube content, then put all your efforts into them. Nothing happens over night but persistence/consistency and hard work will pay off. I think I spent maybe too long listening to what other people wanted or thought I should do and I never listened to myself or what I really truly enjoyed doing, but that's part of learning and I know I have landed in a position that I am super happy with and doing.

Is there anything else you'd like to say / share?

Thanks for hitting me up to do this interview and I am stoked that I am able to share some of my experiences and thoughts on certain things.

Cheers Lewis!

If you want to stay updated on his antics, give him a follow on

<https://www.youtube.com/c/LewisBuchanan>

<https://www.instagram.com/lewbuchanan/>

CABANE CHANRION

EUROPE'S MOST REMOTE MOUNTAIN HUT?

Mountain huts. Shelters hidden deep into the high alpine, and far away from civilization. There is a big tradition in building huts in the European alps, as resting places for hikers, climbers and adventurers. Many of them are on extremely hard to reach places and served as a place to seek shelter when the weather turned, or to enable ambitious mountaineers to reach more remote peaks.





" AS ALL OF THE BUILDING MATERIALS HAD TO BE BROUGHT UP BY EITHER MANPOWER OR DONKEYS, THEY TRIED TO SOURCE AS MUCH OF THE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS ON SITE. "

Driving force behind the construction of these huts has been the Alpine Clubs of the various countries. As early as 1863 the Swiss Alpine Club was founded, and in their first year they constructed 38 huts across the high alpine. Interesting fact: the club was a men only affair until 1980(!), when they merged with the Women's Swiss Alpine Club.

These days, there are over 150 huts spread out over the Swiss alps, with a total capacity of 9000 beds. In the early beginnings the huts were primitive and served mainly as a shelter. As all of the building materials had to be brought up by either manpower or donkeys, they tried to source as much of the construction materials on site. Toilets were outhouses, and mainly consisted of a shed to give some privacy and a seat above a cliff to dispose of the number 1's and 2's. Showering or taking a bath was considered expendable and there were no separate sleeping quarters. Mountaineering was not for the faint of heart those days.

Over time, construction techniques have progressed leaps and bounds. The use of glass, steel and better insulation made it possible to offer a lot more comfort and with helicopters coming into play, moving big materials was a lot easier too. Locations moved to more and more accessible spots and nowadays many of them can be reached within a 1 or 2 hour hike from the nearest parking spot.





"AN UPDATE WAS LONG OVERDUE AS VISITORS DEMANDS INCREASED AND THE ORIGINAL STRUCTURE WAS DUE FOR A RENOVATION."

CABANE DE CHANRION

The Cabane de Chanrion however, is still one of the more remote huts you find in Europe. Situated at the very end of the Val de Bagne, you can literally see Italy when you're sitting down for breakfast. The altitude is another thing you can't miss, at 2462m you definitely feel the lack of oxygen when walking up the stairs.

When it comes to history, the Cabane de Chanrion has plenty. Constructed way back in 1890, it was first purely made of wood. It housed the military back in the first world war, who had a love hate relationship with its remote location and stunning views. In 1938 however the wooden structure was transformed into a massive stone building, which is still standing today.

One of the biggest changes that happened to the landscape was the construction of the Mauvoisin dam and the lake it created in 1958. The dam (which is the 8th biggest dam in the

world) was built as part of a hydroelectric project that now gives an impressive 948 million KWh each year, and gave birth to the impressive 5km long lake that accompanies you on your ride to the hut.

Up to 2019 the hut remained largely unchanged from its original construction, but an update was long overdue as visitors demands increased and the original structure was due for a renovation. The big renovation added 40 extra beds to the capacity, in smaller bedrooms suited for 4 people. Also the water storage capacity was enlarged with 6000 liters, to ensure the hut had enough water during the winter months.



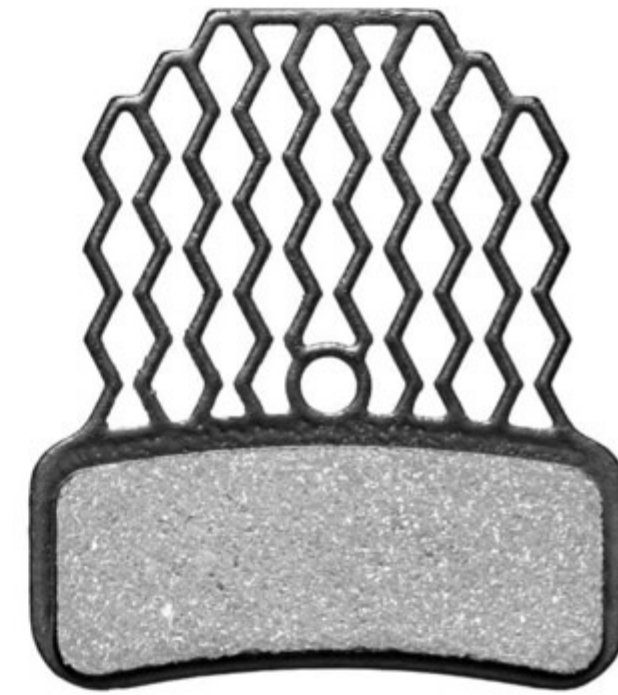
BIKES AND LUNCHES

The best route to reach this breathtaking place takes you out 15km from the nearest parking and up just over 800m vertical. Fit riders take about 3,5 hours but if you're blessed with some Lithium Ion support you can cut it down to 2,5. If you're based in Verbier, you can even grab the bus from Le Chable station (it's free with a Tourism VIP card you can get at the Tourist Office).

For many years the hut had most of its visitors overnight as the hike to the hut was too far to just do in one day for most people. But in the last 10 years, the mountain bike has gained popularity and the warden saw more and more people on fat tire bikes show up for lunch. And with the rise of the E-MTB, the hut is easier to reach than ever.

"THE HIKE TO THE HUT WAS TOO FAR TO JUST DO IN ONE DAY FOR MOST PEOPLE."

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" THE ENORMOUS BLUE LAKE ACCOMPANIES YOU FOR 5 KILOMETERS AS YOU CRUISE YOUR WAY DOWN PAST WATERFALLS AND GLACIER VIEWS. "

The additional customers are very welcome, especially after the costly renovation. And to make it an even better destination, they added 12 bike stands with integrated charging points for E-MTB's. That way you can turbo your way up to the hut, have lunch with a view and return to a fully charged ride. How good is that?

WILDERNESS

"What about the riding?" you might ask. Well, most high alpine places are hard to reach. Elite mountain bike trails only with a good bit of hike-a-bike thrown in. But when the Mauvoisin dam was created, the original hiking trail got flooded and a maintenance road was built. It's a proper 4x4 track and not open to the public to drive on, but it's an awesome off-road route accessible for even the novice mountain biker.

It starts off with an impressive tunnel with 12 'windows' carved out in the rock to give you a view as you ride through the mountain. Once you pop out on the other side, the enormous blue lake accompanies you for 5 kilometers as you cruise your way down past waterfalls and glacier views.

Once you reach the end of the lake, all signs of human life seem to disappear (with the exception of the jeep track that is). The mountains are towering around you as you start the 800m ascend towards the hut. No matter how many times you've been in the high alpine, this stuff never gets boring.





THE ONLY **EX** YOU WANT TO SEE AGAIN

There are beginnings and endings, and usually when it ends there are some good reasons for that. Rarely do you want to linger in the past, and return to your ex on a regular basis. But the Merida Ex is a different story.

WORDS ADRIAN REED
PHOTOS MERIDA EX ENDURO

" THERE WAS BEER ON SITE, TOGETHER WITH ANYTHING ELSE YOU MIGHT NEED TO NOT STARVE OR DEHYDRATE. "

We're not talking about some washed up relationship, but a full weekend of racing in Exmoor with catered meals, drinks and camping for the weekend included. Timed descent stages. Epic trails. Great food. Good people. The type of ex you want to see again. Besides main sponsor Merida, Shimano is also a supporter of the event and present with a team of mechanics providing support to everyone. Entry numbers are limited to 100 riders, which make for a very unique and low-key format.

ARRIVAL AT BASECAMP

Bossington is situated on Exmoor's coast just over a hill from the small town of Minehead. Here I find the Campground on a small enclosed grassy pitch. The local Village Hall housed the catering & the 'mission control' hub for all the race timing and event admin. The campground gives you a great view on the surrounding hills, including Dunkery Beacon - the 519m high summit that marks the highest point on Exmoor and the start for some of the timed stages.

While packing for the event I found myself in a bit of a hurry, so instead of reading the brief I got from the organisation I packed a random array of bike kit, camping gear and provisions to survive off the grid for a weekend. Beers, snacks, food, water, toothpaste. Most of it totally unnecessary, as the organisation is excellent. There was beer on site, together with anything else you might need to not starve or dehydrate. Bring your camp kit and you're good to go!





" I CAME UP WITH A SOLID STRATEGY: HAVE YOUR BIKE LOADED LAST. IT'LL BE FIRST OUT OF THE VAN AND YOU'LL BE SWIFTLY ONTO THE FIRST STAGE! "

MORNING RITUALS

Tired legs are slow to get moving in the morning but a tasty cooked breakfast is a good incentive for them. A short line-up formed at the breakfast bar for the full-english buffet, but if dinner for breakfast isn't your thing there were a plethora of fruity, cereally style options to choose from too.

You could even drop in on the pre-ride Yoga class if your morning routine would allow time, but I was always too late to the party. Watching others fold and bend themselves in various shapes did however offer me a reminder to at least stretch my legs before heading out.

Pre-ride briefing was suitably 'brief' - just a 'what to remember' chat. Great, because we're here to ride bikes after all! There were paper maps available showing distances, elevation and in depth explanations about some of the singletrack gems we were about to ride only were available for the event.

It did make me feel quite special and privileged.

The morning started with an uplift to the first stage. The perfect way to start the day if you ask me, although it was a bit of a scramble to get the bikes carefully stacked into the back of a van. Somehow they squeezed two dozen enduro rigs in each van, without any scratches or transport damage done. I'm sure they're great at Tetris too! After arriving at the top it became a guessing game, which van would eject your bike. After standing around and being in everyone's way for a little bit, I came up with a solid strategy: have your bike loaded last. It'll be first out of the van and you'll be swiftly onto the first stage!



" THE MOST FUN SECTIONS TO RACE BLIND WERE THE TIGHT CORNERS IN THE FOREST. LOAMY GOODNESS ALL THE WAY TO THE FINISH LINE! "

AGAINST THE CLOCK

It was stated during the briefings that the Merida EX Enduro is more a fun event and less a race. Not only does this help create the special vibe of the event, it also helps with getting access to the trails on privately owned land and within the Exmoor national park. Either way, with 24 stages (3 of which were night stages!) plotted out from Bossington, it is a lot of miles against the clock whether you take it seriously or not. The blind racing format means no track walk, no pracky runs - one shot at it & make it count!

The region is well known for its quality dirt, the trails are a mix of loam, rocks, roots. A few stages kicked-off with open grassy turns on hilltops before dropping into forest where steep rooty and technical sections were waiting for you. To me, the most fun sections to race blind were the tight corners in the forest. Loamy goodness all the way to the finish line! All the trails were packed full of features and the weather gods were on our side. With a sprinkle of rain making the soil grippy and dust free.

Race day number one was action packed, and I was glad to make it down all the stages without stacking it. Riding trails is one thing, but once the clock starts ticking you switch into a different gear I didn't even know I had! With the sunlight fading behind the hills of south wales, we were ready to drop into the night stage which is sponsored by Exposure lights. There were demo riding lights available courtesy and I managed to get my hands on their latest Zenith MK2 at 2100 lumens and Six Pack MK12 5250 lumens.



The broad beams and brightness made it feel like I was racing down in daylight! Not sure if seeing the trail clearly made my race time much better though, often it's better to not see the scary stuff.

Night racing really was one of the highlights of the weekend. I rarely ride at night (note to self, change that!) and racing through the pitch dark is at another level. Your focus is set to 110 and even the tamer trails become fun and challenging. To top it off, the organisers set up a BBQ in an old stone barn just a short roll down the hill from the finish line. Beers included of course. What a way to end the day!

**" RACING THROUGH
THE PITCH DARK
IS AT ANOTHER
LEVEL. "**

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"IT WAS NOT MARSHALLED ENTIRELY TO TOP, NO ONE KNOWS HOW MANY RIDERS REALLY CLEARED THE AWFULLY STEEP CLIMB, I KNOW I WAS NOT ONE OF THEM."

TEA & BISCUITS

On day two my legs started to protest. It was the biggest day of racing for the whole weekend and my body felt like a cardboard box. Right after stage 4 my legs turned to slush and I was wondering how I was going to survive the remaining 5 stages. I whipped out the map and was happy to see it told me I was one timed stage away from a refuel. We all know that lunch stops are critical!

The lunch stop was a buzz. Bikes and helmets cluttered a narrow cul-de-sac lane which would otherwise be empty and silent. Hefty looking bikers holding tiny little teacups & saucers was a sight to see too. There was a continuous flow of cake and sandwiches being served out on fancy multi-tier serving stands. Proper china plates for the sandwiches too, posh!

All that food and tea preceded a brutal climb nicknamed 'the vominator' (exactly what's needed after a couple rounds of tuna sandwiches). With the climb in mind I gobbled down a full-fat Coke from the ice bucket before setting off. Grab the sugars while you can! You could even opt for a shot of Gaviscon and a few jelly sweets for the pocket if you were particularly sugar deprived. Prizes were to be awarded to anyone who made the climb in one go with 'zero dabs'. It was not marshalled entirely to top, no one knows how many riders really cleared the awfully steep climb, I know I was not one of them.





"THE UPS WERE A BIT MORE BEARABLE AND FUELLED BY BANTER AND HECKLING WE SUPPORTED EACH OTHER TO THE TOP."

I pushed most of the way up, struggling with my cardboard box body and legs made from jelly. Perhaps they should do a prize for people that didn't put their feet on the pedals!

TOGETHER WE SUFFER, ALONE WE RIDE

My rider number was 101 - the very last number registered - and I was surprised that I spent quite some time suffering alone on the climbs. Considering that together we were some 100 riders out in the hills

following the same route I thought I could find some support along the way. Without distraction it was hard to ignore the fatigue, legs were tired even just pushing the bike. It was hard to imagine I was racing, it felt more like survival at times!

But queueing at stages, I felt the nervous excitement watching the riders in front drop in for their run. Each rider was cheered on by the rest of the pilots waiting for their descent. I too pedalled hard out of the gate, harder than I thought I could, and I was often left wondering: what powers the motor? Who is steering this vessel? The can of Monster Energy I downed 5 hours ago - is it still working? I think it was, because I exhausted

myself on the 'downs' enough to leave me spent for the 'ups'. I couldn't help it. Trails were too much fun, the vibes were good and the competitive spirit was real. Later on the weekend as more people started to feel like cardboard boxes, the clan of riders pushing their bikes grew. Now the ups were a bit more bearable and fuelled by banter and heckling we supported each other to the top.

ABANDONING THE EX

Day three. It was great hanging out with the ex, but by now I knew why we split. My sleeping bag had some magic magnetic properties that I could barely defy, but I managed to summon my body for a feeding in the breakfast tent. As the day progressed I regained some strength. Miracles do exist, I thought to myself as I reached the final climb of the weekend.



" THERE'S THAT SPECIAL EX FEELING. SHATTERED AFTER THE DAYS RIDING, BIKERS EVERYWHERE AND ALL IN GOOD SPIRITS. "

My legs and lungs were on fire, and I still needed to do the long pedal up 'n over to the final stage of the weekend. Along a high ridge you could see for miles out over the channel. Inland I could even pick out Dunkery Beacon and Hopcott woods where all the race action had taken place. Moving at a good pace, the thought of a cold beer pushed me to pedal a little harder. I must say I was a little sad that I'd soon be smashing down the last descent of the event. When rolling back into camp feeling there's that special Ex feeling. Shattered after the days riding, bikers everywhere and all in good spirits. I headed to mission control to hand in my wristband for the last time. I felt relieved as I moved to the buffet where a huge spread of food had been put out. I piled a plate with caloric goodness and headed to the marquee to watch the most talented riders amongst us receive their prize.

Not only the fastest of the event got their moment of honours though. Many prizes were awarded throughout the weekend for random feats. Undeterred one guy lost his chain halfway through the day, another crashed, broke 3 toes and a rib. While I was out there uninjured and without mechanicals pondering if I could continue they had pressed on regardless. Now that's character! With the organisers and staff of the EX putting on such a great show I still considered myself to be a winner despite all my suffering along the way. In the end, it's the riding that counts and I had a blast. What a unique experience of trails, people and laughs. Do yourself a favour, go see your Ex next year!

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TRAIL GUIDE

BIKEPARK VERBIER

It's mid october, the weather is absolutely brilliant and we're keen for a couple days of riding in big mountains. We scout the usual destinations, but although there is no sign of snow, most of the bikeparks are already closed. The lifts are being serviced for the winter season while bikepark staff are on chomage (benefits) waiting for their ski teacher jobs to kick off.



“ WE WERE AFTER SOMETHING NICE, NOT TOO FAR, CHAIRLIFTS, BIKEPARK TRAILS AND THE ODD ENDURO LOOP. ”



Finale might be a good option, but the idea of the long drive south to then squeeze yourself in mud caked shuttle vans put us off immediately. We were after something nice, not too far, chairlifts, bikepark trails and the odd enduro loop. A quick google learned that the Swiss resort of Verbier is just all that, and they're open until the last weekend of October!

SUNNY SOUTH

The mountain town of Verbier is located in the very southern part of Switzerland, right next to the French and Italian border. Although the majority of Switzerland is German speaking, this part of the peak

infested country is 100% French spoken. Verbier itself however is a very international resort home to many nationalities. Even if you just speak English you'll manage just fine.

Winter time, the ski resort is home to some of the best off piste skiing in the world. It's no surprise that this is the home resort for the Freeride World Tour (Rampage on ski's and snowboards) for many years now. But also for the more casual skier there are plenty of wide, well groomed pistes at your disposal.

But, those winter adventure days are still a few weeks away, and we benefit from the many sun hours

this part of the world has to offer. Although the village itself is at 1500m altitude, on the drive up you can see the lower valleys surrounded with vineyards and fruit orchards. A good sign for dust loving mountain bikers!

THE VILLAGE

There are a bunch of different ways to reach the Verbier Bike Park. It's about 1,5h drive from Geneva Airport and even the train will take you right up the lower village of Le Chable. Situated at the bottom of the mountain that houses Verbier, this might be the easiest spot to park your car if you're driving.

Higher up in Verbier town there are some parking spots available and the big Perrin parking lot always has a spot for you if you insist on parking up top.

The Le Chable long term parking has a dedicated campervan area, right next to the skatepark where you can park up for just 1,50 CHF per day. Toilets and fresh water are present and it's just a 1 minute pedal to the gondola up to the village of Verbier. Make sure to pay your tourist tax at the local Tourist Office, as it gives you the VIP Pass! Besides many other discounts, the VIP pass gives you a whopping 50% off on the lift pass for the day, making it only 25 CHF!

New for this year, is that the Le Chable - Verbier gondola is officially listed as public transport. This means that the first lift is at 5:15 am and the last lift down runs at 11:50 pm! With several trails running between the two towns you can literally ride until your arms fall off.

TRAILS, TRAILS TRAILS!

Kicking things off with the bikepark, we headed straight up to the top of the Fontanet. The 2470m high spot is the starting point of the brand new green trail called 'Tsenelle' which loosely translates to caterpillar in the local dialect. A stunning swooping run that is a holler for every level of rider, ending up at the Dahu restaurant. Although classified as a green, I'd definitely recommend taking a run down, even if it's just for the views on the Grand Combin (4314m) and its glacier.

Next up is the red track called Rodze and moving into the Woay. Starting from the same point as the green but snaking its way back towards Verbier town.

“ WITH SEVERAL TRAILS RUNNING BETWEEN THE TWO TOWNS YOU CAN LITERALLY RIDE UNTIL YOUR ARMS FALL OFF. ”



“ BIG JUMPS, PROPER DROPS AND AS YOU GET LOWER INTO THE FOREST SOME PRETTY GNARLY SECTIONS ”



That means a good 1000m of descending on anything you can think of. Berms, rocks, roots and jumps. Definitely on the darker side of red if I would be pressed to rate it, but lots of fun nonetheless.

It's high time for an espresso and we pop in the funky looking Arctic Juice & Cafe to get our caffeine shot sorted. On the way we pass by two Ferrari's that could be at home at a car show, instead they're just from guests that are staying at the iconic W hotel. Yup Verbier has it all, even the ultra luxurious W. Prices start at 500 CHF a night in case you wondered.

MOAR IS MOAR BETTER!

Boosted by the caffeine we boost back up the brand new gondola again. Time to chill with a lap on the blue line before moving into the wilder stuff. Starting just off the Ruinettes lift, the 2.4km long track snakes down the mountainside. An unending serpent of berms spits you out right at the Golf course (what a view that place has, have to remember this for when I get too old for biking).

We're already getting a bit hungry, but decided to move into the proper big bike stuff...on our enduro bikes. With the progression of technology, I've often proclaimed that modern bikes are so capable, proper DH rigs are becoming obsolete. I hereby officially retract that statement. Beep me, the Tire's Fire is what you call a proper DH race track and 200mm travel is no excess luxury on this one.

Big jumps, proper drops and as you get lower into the forest some pretty gnarly sections where you have to puzzle a bit before you can lock into a line choice. Awesome to see such a track still available in a time where everything is smoothened and flattened out.



We took it steady and focussed on making our way down in one piece.

PITSTOP

That Tire's Fire track definitely worked up an appetite, but first we had to make a pitstop at the local bike shop. Turns out you don't have enough brake pads even when you think you do. No biggie though, with numerous shops to choose from you can find spares without a problem. We pop into Backside to grab some supplies and ask for lunch recommendations. Turns out the Ice Cube at the top of the Medran lift has some of the best burgers and views in town. Decision made!

" TURNS OUT
YOU DON'T
HAVE ENOUGH
BRAKE PADS
EVEN WHEN
YOU THINK
YOU DO. "

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“ WE WERE AFTER SOMETHING NICE, NOT TOO FAR, CHAIRLIFTS, BIKEPARK TRAILS AND THE ODD ENDURO LOOP. ”

Munching on our burgers while bobbing our heads to the funky beats at the Ice Cube, we whip out the free bike map. We heard some good things about the 'enduro' trails Verbier has to offer, so let's have a look. As we are already in October, the Bruson lift is unfortunately no longer running. A shame as it would enable you to do a wide variety of rides, including the epic Col de Mille descent. A 1800m singletrack downhill that requires just over 900m of climbing. Good deal in my opinion!

We leave that trail for another time, and decide to

ride another gem called Schlerondes. Also known under nr 5 on the Enduro Map (follow the link for the map view). Instead of pedalling out from the lunch spot as the route suggests, we opt to grab the chair one more time and do another session of the green track. It can't hurt to warm up after overfeeding and those new brake pads could use some bedding in.

LET IT BOIL!

Bellies fed, we drop into the green while the autumn sun lights up the glaciers in the background. It's hard

to focus with a backdrop like that. Once we leave the manicured twists and turns of the bike park, focus becomes mandatory. The Schlerondes descent is easy to find and judging by the tracks an obvious locals favourite.

The further we go, the steeper it gets. Boy am I happy I did that little pit stop before lunch as my brakes are boiling halfway already! Along the high pastures we follow the singletrack down to the valley floor passing by charismatic wooden barns and farm houses. What a dream to own one of these!

“ FROM BIG ROCKY SECTIONS TO AN INCREDIBLE BIT WHERE YOU HAVE PERFECT TIGHT TURN AFTER TIGHT TURN ”



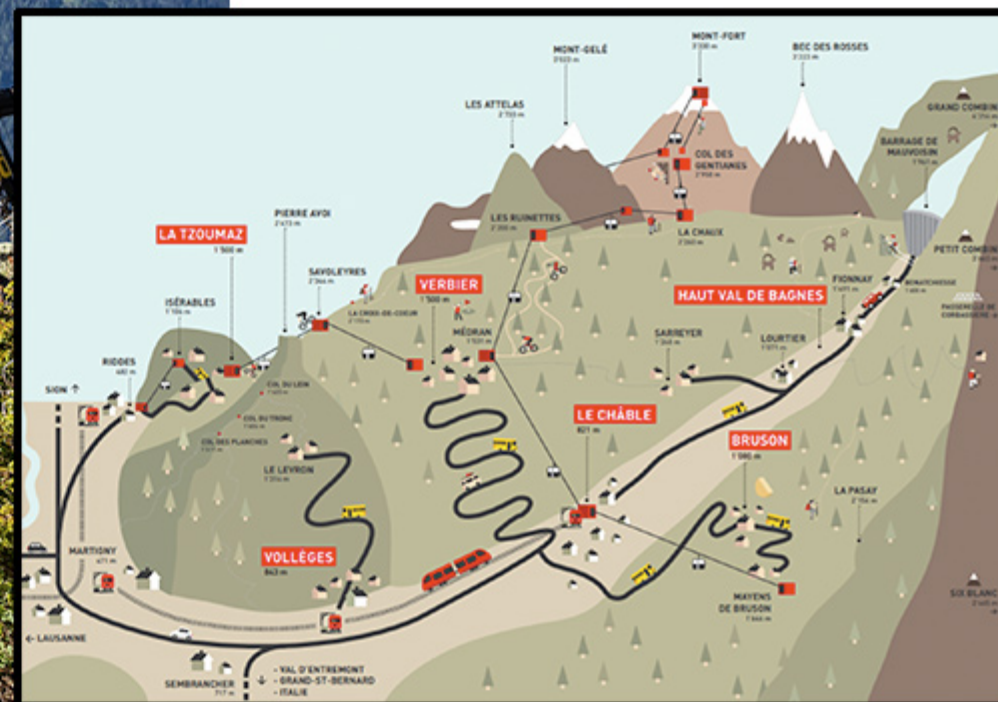
Steepness aside, this run is a beaut! From big rocky sections to an incredible bit where you have perfect tight turn after tight turn, this thing is a dream come true. With virtually no climbing either! Halleluja.

As we roll into Le Chable the sun is setting behind the mountain peaks. What a day and to know we only scratched the surface. This spot definitely goes on the list of places to ride again. Great infrastructure, trails and especially for Switzerland very friendly prices.

Want more information on the Verbier Bike park and surrounding areas?

www.verbier.ch

<https://verbierbikepark.ch>





WORDS JARNO HOOGLAND / DR BORUT FONDA PHOTOS ABSOLUTEBLACK

ABSOLUTEBLACK

TECH FOCUS

When it comes to pedalling dynamics, we have seen a lot over the centuries. From the single speed contraptions like the Penny Farthings in the late 1800's up to modern multi geared wonders of technology we have in the modern day, riders and engineers have always been working on optimising power transfer from the riders legs into forward motion. Lighter equipment, less rolling resistance and optimal seat height have all been examined closely over time bringing the top athletes to bigger and bigger achievements.



**" ALTHOUGH OFTEN IMITATED,
ABSOLUTEBLACK REMAINS THE ABSOLUTE
KING WHEN IT COMES TO THE OVAL
CHAINRING AFTERMARKET. "**

Back in 2014 a company called absoluteBLACK saw the light and made a wave in the cycling industry introducing their oval shaped chainrings. Fast forward to 2022 and you can see all the big names offering some kind of non round chainring in their product portfolio. Although often imitated, absoluteBLACK remains the absolute king when it comes to the oval chainring aftermarket.

We took some time to sit down with the masterminds of pedalling perfection and ask everything you wanted to know and more! Dr Borut Fonda, lead scientist at absoluteBLACK Science Lab helped to answer our questions.

First question that comes to mind is, of course, what's wrong with round chainring?

Well, round is just not the best shape, as human biodynamics make it impossible to deliver torque evenly through a pedal stroke. There will always be certain parts of the stroke that see a dip in power output, but by adapting the shape of the chainring you can compensate, resulting in less effort involved in pedalling.

In more detail, the human body uses skeletal muscles to generate force on the pedals, predominantly during the downstroke. Each skeletal muscle has a unique characteristic that doesn't allow even muscular force throughout its contraction. For example, peak joint power from the knee occurs at around 70 degrees crank angle (0 is at 12 o'clock), whilst the hip peaks well beyond 90 degrees crank angle.

After doing extensive research, we discovered that a power profile throughout a crank cycle is not even, but peaks somewhere around 110 degrees of crank cycle.



" ITS POTENTIAL WAS HINDERED FOR ALL THOSE YEARS BY LACK OF ADEQUATE MEASURING EQUIPMENT AND DATA "

With that information at hand we started designing oval chainrings to perfectly fit a specific riding style and involve the hip joint to a larger extent, which essentially takes the load off the knee and adds to mechanical effectiveness. The major axis orientation (that is when the chainring's diameter is the largest) matches the power profile of a cyclist to reduce power losses and transfers the load from the knee to the hip.

Measurements were carried out on thousands of recreational road & mtb riders and hundreds of professional riders, including the entire Pro Tour Team UAE

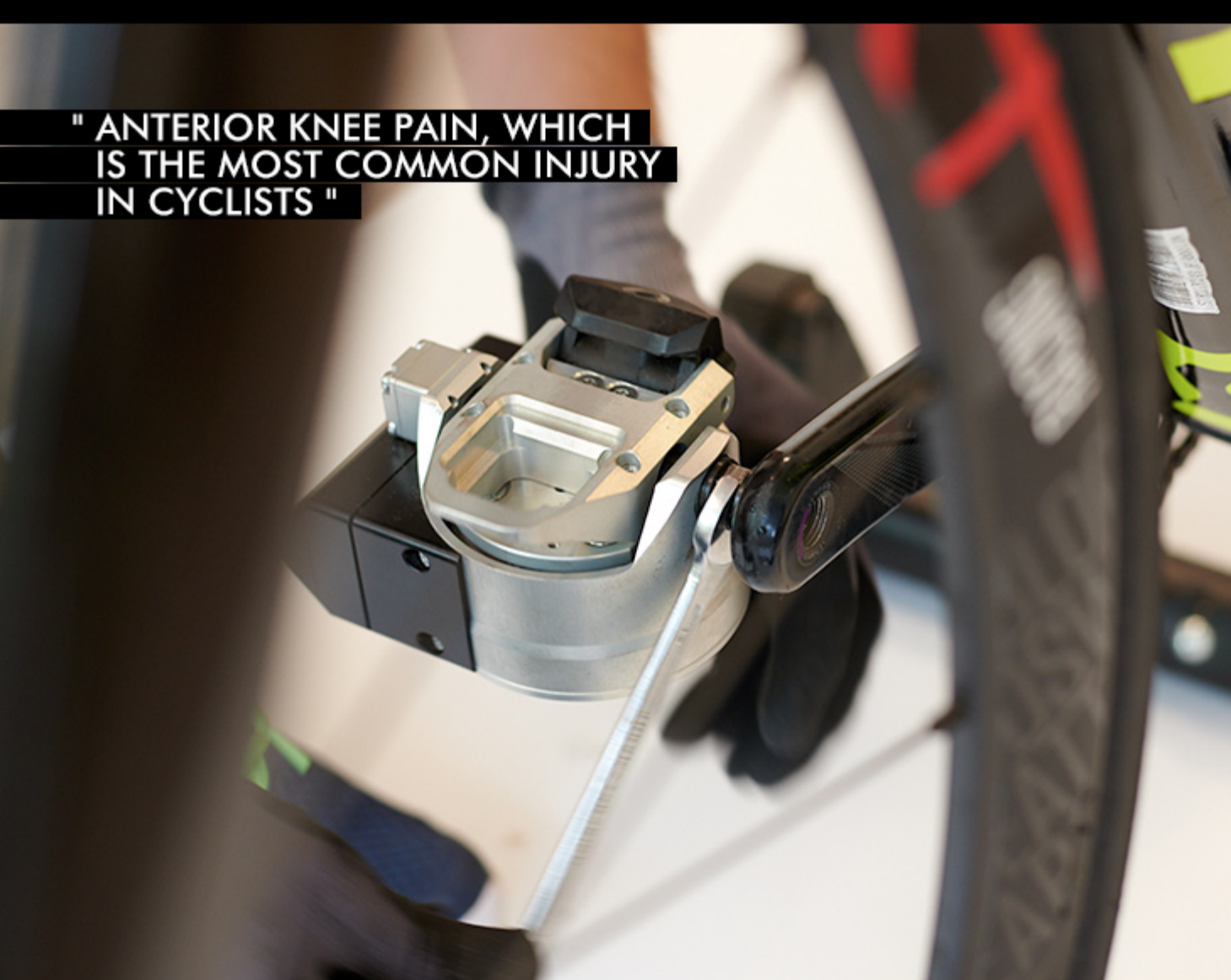
where we officially delivered their scientific biomechanical optimization services with our Science Lab. With such a wealth of data we were able to precisely design the chainrings that are able to increase the most mechanical effectiveness – which means you perceive it as having less effort going at the same speed compared to round.

Wait, didn't Shimano do something like that in the 80's?

For the riders that have been around for longer, the oval rings bring back flashbacks of the flop called Biopace from Shimano.

Interestingly enough the idea for oval chainrings originates from as far back as 1894. Despite that, Biopace (from 1980's) somehow became the synonym for all non-round chainrings including "oval". Interestingly, Biopace was not even oval, but a complex non round shape which delivered weird pedalling motion, and for some users, even knee pain. The oval chainring is not a new idea by any stretch of imagination, but its potential was hindered for all those years by lack of adequate measuring equipment and data, which would allow it to perfect the design and deliver on performance promises. It was only during the last decade that ovals have gained popularity, thanks to our continuous efforts and compelling data from our Science laboratory.

" ANTERIOR KNEE PAIN, WHICH
IS THE MOST COMMON INJURY
IN CYCLISTS "



So do you know why Biopace resulted in knee issues?

Reason for the knee pain was simply its wrong "oval" shape and most importantly timing (major axis of oval vs crank position). The same problem is present in the patent from 1894 we mentioned earlier. One of the main reasons for knee pain are shear forces between the tibia and the patella (knee cap) and between the patella and femur. They result in anterior knee pain, which is the most common injury in cyclists. Biopace's unfortunate design actually emphasised loads where the knee shear forces are the largest, resulting in overloading of the knee and knee pain.

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" IT COULD BE APPROPRIATELY DESCRIBED AS ACHIEVING A HIGHER MAXIMUM POWER OUTPUT DURING AN ALL-OUT SPRINT. "

I'm not a racer, would I still benefit from oval rings?

Well the conclusion is that, a perfectly designed oval chainring can significantly improve pedalling effectiveness and metabolic efficiency when compared to a round chainring. In simple terms, this means you will waste less force that does not contribute to moving the crank around, allowing you to achieve the same speed with less effort vs round chainring. Even if you're not racing, it is nice to be able to climb using less energy, leaving more in the tank for the descents or for doing longer rides.

I've heard someone say oval rings give you more power. Is this the case?

We should first define what 'more power' actually means. It could be appropriately described as achieving a higher maximum power output during an all-out sprint. Although it has been shown in the past that oval chainrings may improve, to some degree, sprinting performance, this is not the real performance benefit. What cyclists are unknowingly referring to, is actually the effectiveness of pedalling and efficiency. With absoluteBLACK oval chainrings, we demonstrated that cyclists exhibit 9% more

effective pedal stroke by applying less force to the pedals that doesn't contribute to power. Riders are simply applying less muscular force input for a given power output (vs round rings), or in other words, it allows them to pedal at higher power outputs with the same effort as with round rings before. It also results in improved efficiency, which is a metabolic measure (the ratio between the mechanical work and energy expenditure). So in short, it is more that cyclists improve their efficiency when using absoluteBLACK oval chainrings, not so much improving their peak power output.

Aside from biomechanical advantages, are they better or worse for drivetrain efficiency?

Drivetrain efficiency is not affected by the chainring's shape. It mainly depends on the chain friction itself and we worked on that issue with our groundbreaking GRAPHENlube. It is used by several Pro Tour teams saving them over 7 Watts in frictional losses. We are looking at the problem holistically and approach it mechanically and biomechanically.

That all sounds pretty amazing, but are there any drawbacks to the design? Are they heavier than conventional chainrings for example?

Aside from the fact that you can't really hide the oval shape, there are only advantages. They don't bear the weight penalty versus the oem round chainrings.

There are numerous brands out there these days offering non round chainrings. How does your design set itself apart from the competition?

Apart from our world-renowned aesthetics and quality, the real difference is in our own Science Lab.

The wealth of data we have collected using proprietary technology, allowed us to create oval chainrings that are as good as they can be. The data is the key to success with a product like this and as far as we know, we are the only company out there, which has its own Science Laboratory giving us capability to measure, assess and repeatedly test the products. While other companies treat "oval chainrings" as a trendy add-on to their portfolio, we have been living and breathing drivetrain optimization for more than 7 years now. This is also the reason why we used our Science Lab to provide scientific biomechanical optimization services to several Pro Tour teams including UAE Team Emirates, helping them optimise pedalling efficiency.


With the benefits scientifically proven and quite profound, why only the specialists are designing these systems, why isn't Shimano or Sram doing it as standard?

In our opinion, there are few reasons for this. Round chainrings are simply easier and cheaper in mass production. Front derailleur is also faster and easier to set up with round chainrings, which for OEM bike builders, where every second matters on the production line, is very important. Time is money. Taking plastic Press-fit bottom brackets as an example. They were not created for better performance but for faster and easier assembly on the production line, as they don't require precise threads and bb shell faces on the frame. For those reasons alone, it may take some time until we see

them fully mainstream. It is really a performance upgrade product, but it is not crucial for the bike build in very-tight margin OEM business', where 1\$ makes or breaks a deal.

Final question, how long does it take to get used to an oval ring?

When you hop on your bike with a brand new absoluteBLACK oval ring, you will feel a subtle difference. It really depends on the person, some will not notice it after only 10 min but most riders get used to the new chainring in



" WHEN YOU HOP ON YOUR BIKE WITH A BRAND NEW ABSOLUTEBLACK OVAL RING, YOU WILL FEEL A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE. "

one or two rides and then the feeling completely fades away and becomes a new "normal". If you really can't get along with your new oval ring, you can always use our 30 day satisfaction policy! Using this occasion, please remember to always use a brand new chain with your new chainring to maximise drivetrain life.

Thanks. That was very helpful and really explains what the fuss is all about the oval chainring hype.

If you want to know more about oval chainrings or absoluteBLACK as a company, visit their website here:

<https://absoluteblack.cc/>



TECHNIQUE

THE WEIGHTING GAME

Pump up your riding

This issue it's about time we delve deeper into the subject of pumping, pressure, and unweighting the bike. When it comes to putting words into action then this is a topic fraught with controversy and confusion. Thanks to the various lingo used to describe a sensation and a technique, the outcome on the trail can be very different from the intention of the tutor. When used to good effect, riders will gain free speed and progression along the trail will seem effortless. But get it wrong and you will kiss that free speed goodbye and take a beating in the process.

You may be familiar with the common terms of pump, press, bounce, weight, and unweight, the usual skills basics stuff. So where and when do we deploy these techniques? If, like me, you have ever seen someone bouncing the bike up and down on the smallest of bumps trying to get that pumping free speed then you may be wondering if they are bouncing to the latest Holy Goof tune. It's not just a case of bouncing the fork and flexing the legs, as per most things skills related it is all about playing the right card at just the right time.

" YOU WILL GET HUNG UP AND BEATEN UP BY EVERY LUMP, BUMP, ROOT, AND ROCK THAT MOTHER EARTH CAN THROW YOUR WAY. "

As I have mentioned in previous features the trail and terrain will do a lot of the work for us, the undulations will give you a cue when to move. But get it wrong and you will get hung up and beaten up by every lump, bump, root, and rock that mother earth can throw your way. When it comes to the size of these shapes then we find it's the more medium size features that are generally easier to work with.

The feeling through the bike from medium-size compressions and crests is obvious enough to respond to, but not so overwhelming that gravity will get one over on you should your timing not be 100%. To get the best out of big undulations (pumping through compressions, and keeping the bike on the trail over crests) we have to move in what often feels like slow-motion, in these situations the speed is higher and the consequences over crests are of a greater magnitude. The small sharp and harsh shapes mean we have to move lightning fast, their scale and





associated speeds don't mean that you will get off lightly if your timing isn't perfect, on the contrary. Small harsh hits punish us the most, both uphill as well as down.

Let's throw some fresh jargon in here to help you visualize the process, think 'bike to the body; ' and 'body to the bike', also consider 'holes' and 'highs'. I'm talking about being 'proactive' or 'reactive'. The terrain wants to move the bike when the wheels are on the ground. The body can either pre-empt this and move or react to the shape and move as you take the hit (holes).

" THINK 'BIKE
TO THE BODY; '
AND 'BODY TO
THE BIKE' "

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" THEY WILL BEND AT THE KNEES, DIPPING DOWN AND STANDING BACK UP JUST BEFORE ROLLING INTO THE TRANSITION "

On the highs, you will react to the sensation of the bike going light (crests/highs). It's key to always be synchronized, moving in-time relative to your speed, and the timing of your contact points (tyre to terrain) passing through the apex of the hole or high.

A good way to look at this and better understand what's going on with the body is

to watch someone on a skateboard try and pump either side of a half pipe in an effort to work their way up to the coping (the steel tube at the top edge of the ramp). The person has to pump the transitions using their legs (a common mistake on the bike is the tendency to use the arms far too much), they will bring the feet up towards the hips as they roll up the transition before stalling out. The rider will then use those compressed legs, driving the feet away as the board rolls back down through the transition. On the flat bottom of the ramp,

they will stand tall and proud with legs straight.

To gain added momentum as they cross the flat bottom of the ramp they will bend at the knees, dipping down and standing back up just before rolling into the transition, this process of weighting the board before unweighting the board as they roll uphill through the transition is all about combating gravity, the only way we can unweight ourselves momentarily is by jumping up in the air. Jumping up in the air without the bike under us is something we have all done at some point, bending at the knees before springing upwards. Now, this is where many people go wrong when trying to unweight the bike,



things are different when we are lent over on two wheels and, instead of two feet on the floor side by side we have two wheels spaced out ahead and behind our center of mass.

Weighting to unweight the bike (and visa versa) is NOT a motion where everything moves in a vertical plane. As we are moving forwards the fixed points we can visualize (think crash test dummy with the black and yellow circles on) have to move in arcs. I think all too often the message of moving the body gets lost in translation with that key bit of information missing. Lee McCormac, author of the old go-to ride manual produced with Brian Lopes now talks about rowing the bike, a pretty good way to visualize the shapes we make with arms and bars.

" IF THE FREEWHEEL PITCH HAS A DISTINCT CHANGE ON THE DOWNSLOPE THEN YOU ARE PUMPING WELL. "

What Lee is referencing is the fact that we have to consider forward momentum vs shapes in the terrain, and how we need to decelerate and accelerate the bike below us using our limbs. Just listen to the sound of the freewheel to hear the proof in the method described. If the freewheel noise stays the same pitch you are working the limbs to maintain a constant, not being slowed by the incline but also not gaining momentum from the decline (or back-slope). If the freewheel pitch has a distinct change on the downslope then you are pumping well. But, if there is no change on the upslope then you suck, rather than you sucking up the bike. Joking aside, the freewheel noise is a good indicator to go from for those of you who have noisy hubs.

In some situations, you will drive the bar away from you, in dynamic situations you have to build up the momentum by bringing the bar towards you first then thrusting it away (a series of pump track rollers give you this shape by their very nature). The reverse is also true, although it may seem counterintuitive, I'll explain. When preparing to take a hit (and the load generated from colliding into something) we do so by purposefully driving the bar forward into that obstacle before absorbing the load generated from the collision. This is exactly what you need to do through transitions in jumps. If you cower away from the collision by sucking the bar back into the body all you end up actually achieving is reducing your range of movement, in addition, you put the limbs in a range of movement where they can not produce the most amount of power. The same is true for the legs, we need to use the biggest muscles in the body to influence the overall shape of the bike, readying ourselves to take hits and preparing to push the bike back down on the trail over the high points.

" CRANK TIMING AND PEDAL POWER ARE SYNCED WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE TORSO AND ARMS "

Regardless of speed, in either a descending or climbing situation there has to be a combination of input from the upper body and lower bits, working in unison to get the desired outcome. A slow-speed climb with an obstacle in the trail is overcome with maximum efficiency when we lift the front wheel up onto the obstacle using a small power wheelie. Crank timing and pedal power are synced with a little help from the torso and arms to pick up the front wheel. The bottom bracket passes over the obstacle and without pausing we move from sitting to standing to help lift the rear wheel up onto the feature.





"WEIGHTING AND UNWEIGHTING ARE EQUALLY IMPORTANT IF WE ARE TO FLOW ALONG THE TRAIL WITH MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY."

For maximum efficiency, we keep driving the cranks round as we unweight and lift the rear wheel up, once clear of the obstacle we return to our seated position to help recover for the next effort. The pressure deployed downwards (weighting) is bare minimal in these slow-speed climbing scenarios.

The weighting refers to the pressure and effort being put through the cranks, more weight is applied on the power stroke to help lift that front wheel. The unweighting is done from the rear wheel (yes your rolling mass will now be transferred to the front wheel). By being stood up out of the saddle we give essential clearance, allowing us to bring the legs up into the body, thus lifting the rear wheel up onto the obstacle.

So with higher speeds, and in situations where we are freewheeling, weighting and

unweighting are equally important if we are to flow along the trail with maximum efficiency. Again to coin Lee's term we are 'rowing' the bars, moving in arcs and working the legs to press that rear wheel down into the lows (hits), and help suck it up into the body over the highs. The size and shape of the undulations and hits, and transitions all dictate how fast or slow we have to move. If we go back to our skateboarder there is another element to consider in transitions, the torso. As the board rolls up through the transition then the torso's angle must change from vertical. The rider is trying to keep the torso perpendicular to the ramp's surface (give or take a few degrees).



The same thing applies on the bike, if you don't let the shoulders roll back over the rear wheel then you will take the energy out of the transition and jump face thus reducing your lift. On flatter take-offs where no energy is stored in the bike and body, you may need to create this artificially by compressing the bike. This is one of those very rare sets of circumstances where we do bounce the bike. The bounce is only used when the terrain is dead smooth, and we have to generate a massive amount of lift.

" GET THE BASICS OF BODY AND BIKE TIMING RIGHT AND THE REST WILL FOLLOW. "

The Bounce - To give you an idea of just how rare an occasion this is, and the magnitude of the features I'm talking about, take a look at the final series of jumps on the RedBull Hardline track, and any one of the enormous features hopped onto by the likes of Danny MacAskill and Chris Akrigg. There should be a ban on the bounce with only a pass issued for riders who are hitting stuff that big! All rules aside, I would like to add that this does not and should not exclude the use of compression and rebound force of suspension units being used to maximum effect for even more grip, speed, and faff-free progression along the trail. Again this is advanced stuff as the timing needs to be 100% for us to synchronize our movements along with the terrain and bike to get the maximum effect of 'working' the suspension units through compressions and hits. Get the basics of body and bike timing right and the rest will follow.

Keep up the good work and we will check in with you next time for more skills and techniques insights.

TRIED AND TESTED

We're smashing through Autumn, and for this issue we managed to put our hands on the Stanton Switch9er Ti hardtail, Merida's brand new OneSixty and Orbea's Rallon. The test team applied the RideWrap protection kit to see how hard it really is. Furthermore, we pushed Continentals' new Kryptotal tires to the max, gave Rimpact a bashing through the rocks and built up Stanton's Switch9er Ti hardtail. We tested MET's Parachute MCR helmet and Peaty's new Puncture Plugger. Rou got a first ride review of the brand new Merida OneSixty and we tried the new MTB clothing brand Spada.

BIKES

- 01 Merida One Sixty
- 02 Orbea Rallon
- 03 Stanton Switch9er Ti

ACCESSORIES

- 01 ACS - RideWrap Frame Protection Kit
- 02 ACS - Continental Kryptotal Fr / Re
- 03 ACS - Rimpact Pro
- 04 ACS - MET Parachute MCR
- 05 ACS - Tacx Trainer
- 06 ACS - Peaty's Puncture Plugger
- 07 ACS - Spada MTB Clothing

WORDS AND PHOTOS IMB TEST TEAM
PHOTO THIS PAGE JULIA BIGIO



BRAND MERIDA MODEL ONESIXTY 10K YEAR 2022

"BRINGS THEM
RIGHT BACK AT
THE SHARP END
OF BIKE DESIGN."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Merida

Model: OneSixty 10K

Price: starting from 4600 GBP / 5760 EUR
(Model tested 9000 GBP / 11.900 EUR)

Manufacturing giant Merida has just released its brand new 160mm travel enduro machine. Besides a brand new geometry, the frame is packed with features and options to provide their most high end enduro machine to date. It is available in 5 different build kits, 7 different colors and 5 different frame sizes.

THE PRODUCT

The brand new frame has been designed from the ground up and has a ton of changes compared to the previous model. With two models in alloy and three in carbon there is a wide range of price points served. Size wise Merida made the move away from inches, and settled on the X Short, Short, Mid, Long and X Long. This gives the rider a lot more choice as the top tube height is dramatically lowered enabling you to ride a longer bike if you are looking for more stability, or a shorter ride if you want maneuverability.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND ORBEA MODEL RALLON YEAR 2022

"A GREAT
ALLROUND
MACHINE FOR
THE ENDURO
RIDER OR
RACER."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Orbea

Model: Rallon

Price: from 4599 EUR

The Rallon is Orbea's weapon in the enduro world. Sporting 160mm travel in the rear and a full carbon frameset with flip chip adjustable geometry. Although designed around 29" wheels, it can easily be turned into a mullet setup if you're looking for a more playful ride. The Rallon is available in 4 different build specs, and as a frame only.

THE PRODUCT

We got our hands on the Rallon with top spec. Fox coil shocks in the rear and a beefy 38 in the front to take the hits. Shimano XTR all around and to finish the kit off, top of the line Race Face Carbon cranks, wheels and cockpit. While all those cool parts are nice to have, it is the frame which matters most for this review. We all know that XTR and top spec Fox works like a charm.

The carbon Rallon has a 64 degree head angle that can be steepened by 0.5 degree through the flip chip.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND STANTON

MODEL SWITCH9ER TI

YEAR 2022

"THE BUILD
QUALITY AND
FINISH IS
SECOND TO
NONE"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Stanton

Model: Switch9er Ti

Price: from 2099 GBP

Described by Stanton as the twentyniner that doesn't act like one, the Switch9er sports a progressive geometry for playful handling and technical riding. The frame is available in steel and titanium, comes with swappable dropouts, ISCG05 mounts, stealth dropper routing and the Ti version weighs in at 1.9kg while its steel brother puts 2.65kg on the scales.

THE PRODUCT

First of all, you might ask why on earth a hardtail? Are you against technology or progression? You don't enjoy the grip and comfort modern fullies provide? I know there is a lot to explain. Hardtails have a few good points that you can't really argue with. They're simple, easier to clean and maintain and there is less chance of a missed ride because of a blown shock, wonky bearings or squeaky pivot points. Riding a hard tail is hard work. Now not everyone enjoys hard work, but I personally like picking lines,

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND RIDEWRAP

MODEL FULL FRAME KIT

YEAR 2022

"IT'S AMAZING
HOW INVISIBLE
IT ACTUALLY IS."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Ridewrap

Model: Full Frame Kit

Price: 125 EUR

RideWrap offers semi custom protection for your bike. Their full frame kit offers a see through protection on all major areas of the frame and forks to prolong the life of your precious ride.

ABOUT THE BRAND

Founded in 2016 by Dan Seguin and Callum Rostron, Ridewrap is a rider based company out of Whistler BC. Born out of a desire to protect his own ride, Callum got out the scissors and a roll of protective film to create the first custom frame protection kit. After fellow riders were impressed and wanted to get their own, Callum spent many hours custom cutting frame protection. Nowadays they use high end 3d measuring tools and a partially digitized process to create their custom templates for hundreds of different brands, models and sizes.

When it comes to sustainability, there is little mentioned on the website. If you look at the nature of the product,

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND CONTINENTAL

MODEL KRYPTOTAL FR / RE

YEAR 2022

"I'D FIND IT HARD
TO BELIEVE
THERE ISN'T ANY
COMBO TO YOUR
LIKING."

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



		CASING			
TERRAIN	TRAIL	ENDURO			
	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"
	XY KRYPTOTAL	XY KRYPTOTAL	XY KRYPTOTAL	XY KRYPTOTAL	XY KRYPTOTAL
	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"
MIXED	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL
	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"
	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL	KR KRYPTOTAL
LOOSE	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL
	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"	27.5"x2.4"
	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL	AR KRYPTOTAL
MUD					
				HY KRYPTOTAL	HY KRYPTOTAL



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Continental

Model: Kryptotal Fr / Re

Price: 59,95 EUR (starting from)

Kryptotal model has the most aggressive tread pattern of Continentals' brand new MTB tire range. Front and rear specific threads are available for 27.5 and 29" wheels, three different casings and three different rubber compounds. The tires are available in a 2.4" and 2.6" width.

THE PRODUCT

When Continental launched their new tires, we were keen to get our hands on a pair. With the Athertons on the development team, we were sure the German tire Giant would come up with some good rubber.

As with many products, three seems to be the magic number in terms of compound and casing options.

The three casing options are:

Downhill: Most durable and reinforced carcass construction in gravity line up

Enduro: Durable single ply carcass construction with Apex to prevent snakebites

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



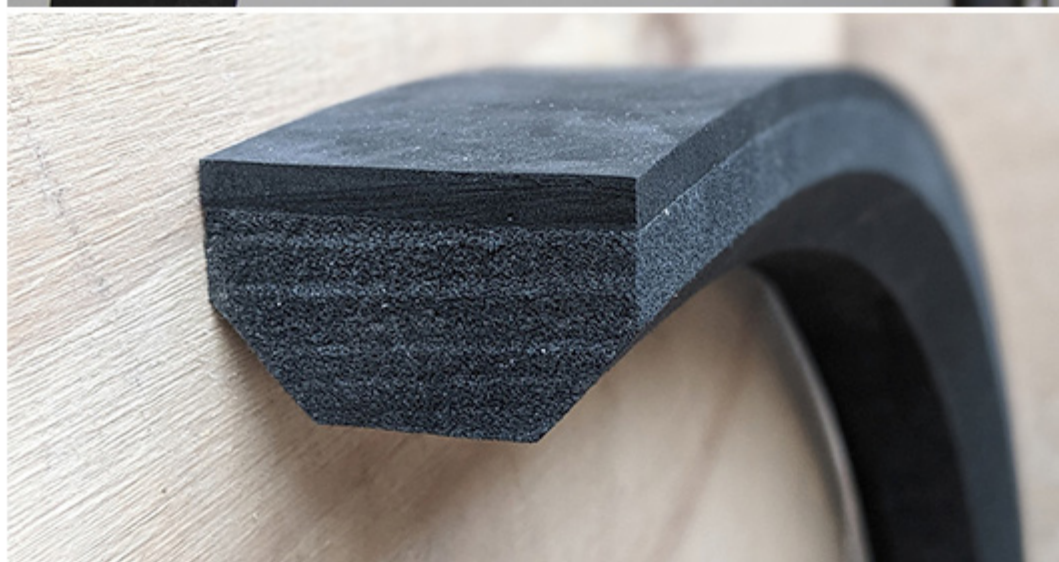
BRAND RIMPACT

MODEL PRO

YEAR 2022

" THEY ARE ONE
OF THE MOST
DURABLE TIRE
SOLUTIONS ON
THE MARKET. "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Rimpact

Model: Pro

Price: 79,99 GBP

Rimpact is a UK based company that makes high quality tire inserts. They utilise an energy sensitive layer in conjunction with foam to harden on impact and dissipate extreme forces across itself and the foam below rather than into the rim. They weigh about 160 grams per wheel for the 29" version and 150 grams for the 27.5".

THE PRODUCT

Rimpact make a variety of tire inserts tuned to suit your riding style. The EDH model is aimed for aggressive use on DH bikes and E-MTB's. The Rimpact Originals are a single density version, and their latest Rimpact Pro (on test) uses a dual density foam for better shock absorption and rim protection.

One of the cool things about Rimpact is that you are able to mix and match as you like. EDH in the rear, Pro in the front, mullet setup, whatever you want you can add them to the shopping cart.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)



BRAND MET MODEL PARACHUTE MCR YEAR 2022

"A GREAT
HELMET FOR
THOSE THAT
LIKE TO KEEP
THEIR DENTIST
BILLS LOW"

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: MET

Model: Parachute MCR

Price: 350 EUR

The MET Parachute MCR is MET's convertible full-face helmet developed for enduro, all-mountain and e-MTB riding. MCR stands for Magnetic Chinbar Release and instantly converts from full to open face helmet and back. The Parachute is available in 3 sizes and 7 colorways.

THE PRODUCT

The Parachute MCR is one of the few stylish looking convertible full face helmets available on the market. It uses an ingenious design that allows you to remove the chin piece in a matter of seconds.

Weighing in at about 850 grams it is nice and light and offers superior protection with the MIPS system. The visor is adjustable, and can be flipped upward so you can quickly stash the goggles on a climb. The magnetic Fidlock closure is intuitive to use and enables you to even close the buckle with one hand. There are 21 vents keeping your head cool on the hottest of days, and the Boa closure system

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND TACX

MODEL NEO 2T

YEAR 2022

" HAS THE
POSSIBILITY TO
ROCK LEFT AND
RIGHT A LITTLE
WHEN YOU'RE
PEDALLING,
RECREATING
THAT NATURAL
FEEL "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Tacx

Model: NEO 2T

Price: 1399 USD / 1299 EUR

The Neo 2T is Tacx top end smart trainer. With hyper accurate power and cadence measurements, and 32 integrated neodymium magnets the NEO 2T Smart ensures maximum stability, even during explosive sprints, up to 2,200 watts.

THE PRODUCT

Tacx has been on the top of the indoor cycling game as long as I can remember. Their NEO 2T however is a long long way from my first ever cable actuated torture device I used in my base3ment in the late 90's. While back then using a trainer was a spartan way bugging your neighbours, modern day trainers are the pinnacle of technology. Not only are the modern iterations ultra silent, they can simulate that road riding feeling in your pedal stroke that is almost impossible to discern from the real thing. The NEO 2T is equipped with ANT plus connectivity and Bluetooth technology and takes up 57.5 x 75 cm.

CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE



BRAND PEATY'S

MODEL PUNCTURE PLUGGER

YEAR 2022

"THE IMPROVED
DESIGN MAKES
THE WHOLE
REPAIR JOB A
FACTOR 10
EASIER AND
BETTER "

TO VISIT THEIR
WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: Peaty's

Model: Puncture Plugger

Price: 21,99 GBP / 25,99 EUR

The Holeshoot Puncture plugger is a tool to repair tire punctures in tubeless tires. It has space to store several plugs in various sizes. It's available in 12 different colors and made from high quality aluminum.

THE PRODUCT

Puncture pluggers come in many shapes and sizes, but Peaty's iteration of the tool is not just another copy paste product off the shelf. The small, cylindrical shape makes it easy to stash in a tool kit or pocket, while rubber O rings keep out any moisture. The 6,5 x 2 cm cylindre doubles as a handle and is ribbed to provide a good hold. It comes with several spare plugs in 3 mm and 1.5 mm sizes. Refills are of course available too. It's available in 12 different Chris King' style anodized colors: Black, Bourbon, Emerald, Gold, Matte Mango, Navy, Matte Punch, Red, Silver, Matte Slate, Matte Turquoise and Violet.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

BRAND SPADA

MODEL PRO ORION SHORTS & WHISTLER ORION SS JERSEY

YEAR 2022

"SPADA DID A SMASHING JOB ON THEIR NEW MTB KIT ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU KEEP THE PRICE POINT IN PERSPECTIVE"

TO VISIT THEIR WEBSITE, CLICK HERE



AT A GLANCE

Brand: SPADA

Model: Pro Orion Shorts & Whistler Orion SS Jersey

Price: 69,99 GBP (Shorts) 34,99 GBP (SS Jersey)

The Spada Whistler jersey is a lightweight breathable jersey made of 100% polyester. It has a loose fit with a slightly longer back adapted for riding. The Pro shorts are made of 95% nylon and 5% spandex, are compatible with kneepads and have zipper pockets.

THE PRODUCT

Spada might be a fresh name to your ears, but if you're at home in the motorcycle world you know the West Midlands based company has been designing softgoods for years. With plenty of experience under their belt they sat down with MTB legend Scott Beaumont and designed their first line of mountain bike clothing.

Starting with the jersey, we received their Whistler short sleeve shirt for review. Sizing and fit is spot on with a slightly longer back for when you're hunched over the bars.

[CLICK OR TAP TO READ MORE](#)

LIGHTBOX

GEE BACK IN THE GAME!
PHOTO: ATHERTON BIKES

A mountain biker is riding a trail in a forest. The rider is wearing a blue and white jersey and a blue helmet. They are approaching a wooden ramp that has a Red Bull Hardline logo on it. The logo features two red bulls facing each other with the words "Red Bull" above them and "HARDLINE" below them. The ramp is made of wooden planks and is set into a rocky, mossy forest floor. The surrounding trees are tall and thin, with moss growing on their trunks and the ground. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting a forest setting.

Red Bull
HARDLINE

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

LIGHTBOX



Lightbox

RIDING THE ATLAS IN MOROCCO
PHOTO DAN MILNER

LIGHTBOX

RIDER YT RIDER ETHAN NELL
LOCATION RED BULL RAMPAGE 2022
PHOTO PARIS GORE



Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

GLACIER VIEWS
PHOTO SOREN RICKARDS

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

LUDO MAY IN ZERMAT
PHOTO SCOR MTB

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

SCOTTY LAUGHLAND AT BEINN A'BHUIRD
PHOTO SCOTT BIKES

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

BRENDAN SEMENUK SEATGRABS AT RAMPAGE
PHOTO RAMPAGE

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

NICO VINK STYLIN' AT SUNSET
PHOTO HANNAH RETZ

Lightbox



LIGHTBOX

THE EDITOR ON THE ICONIC PILA RIDGELINE
PHOTO JULIA BIGIO

Lightbox

LIGHTBOX

NATURE'S PERFECT PICTURE FRAME
PHOTO JULIA BIGIO

Lightbox

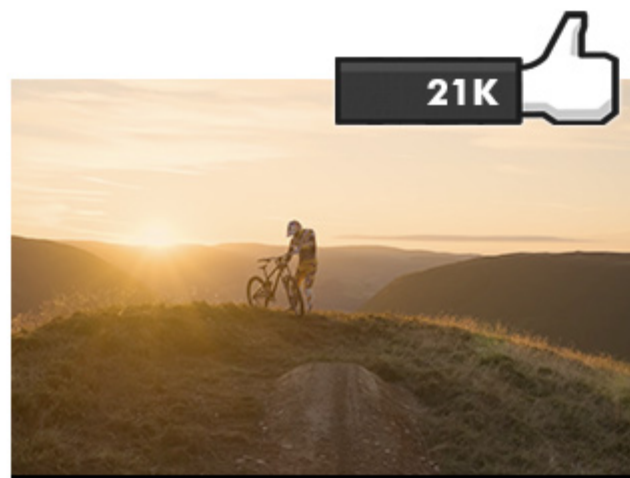
The IMB website is crammed with news and videos every day, we only show the best videos, so to make it onto the site is an achievement in itself.

These are the 4 most popular videos that have been viewed on the site as voted for by you with your thumbs up likes in the last 2 months! Check out the full list [HERE](#), and if you see a video you like on the site, give it the thumbs up, it might just help to push it onto this page!

MOVIE NIGHT

#1 GEE BACK ON THE RIDGELINE

It's his can-do attitude and the crazy locations that Gee sees as an irresistible personal challenge that have enabled him to push the boundaries of the sport time and time again. After his horrific accident, he returns once again to ride the Ridgeline.



21K


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#2 DRONE VS MTB

Watch as Remy Metaillier gets chased down the mountain by an FPV drone in some of the worlds most spectacular action sports cinematography to date. Being an industry-leader requires a creative mindset + unmatched skills on a bike this project is proof of both.



15K


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#3 TRUE STORY

Miranda Miller's journey to the upper echelon of global gravity racing has been a long and hard one, defined by years of juggling work with training and travel on her way to becoming a full-time professional racer at the age of 27.

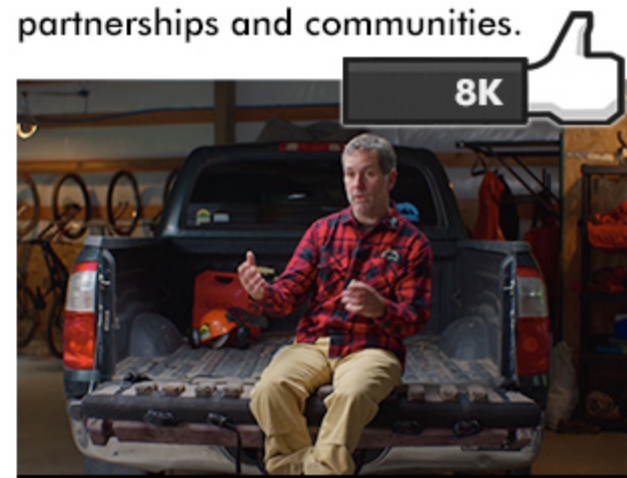


5K


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

#4 BIKETOWN

Struggling to find their seat at the table, mountain bikers have had to form unlikely partnerships in their fight to ride. Little did they know they were actually helping transform the identity of their communities. Biketown is a story of mountain bikers, unlikely partnerships and communities.



8K


[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO](#)

A mountain biker wearing a white helmet, a dark long-sleeved shirt, and yellow shorts is riding down a grassy trail. The trail is surrounded by dense green forest with tall evergreen trees. In the background, there are blue mountains under a clear sky. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

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