IN-STEREO

This full susser is playing a tune we think you'll like

Cube Stereo **£1679**

Massive in their homeland of Germany and getting bigger here in the UK, Cube bikes are slowly but surely heading for success. This is the result of having a no-nonsense approach to building bikes with sensible and practical as the two watch words. The Stereo is their mid-travel (5in) full suspension bike and even a cursory glance will tell you there's something unusual about this bike.

Cube know that triangles work. They work better when they're smaller. Tick that box. They also know that the best way to keep handling sweet is to keep the weight positioned as low and as centrally as possible. Tick that box too. It's a combination of these two factors, along with a rangy cockpit and open controls, that make the Stereo such an instantly likeable bike. The frame has a bit of manipulation primarily for the bottom end of the seat post, where the rear shock cuddles up to it, it is clear that Cube aren't ones for unnecessary hydroforming. The RockShox Revelation fork and Fox RP23 rear shock work so well together to smooth out the trail, you could call them marmalade and toast. The Dual Trail Control link is compact but isolates the rear shock and provides a stable but still supple rear suspension action.

For that sub-15mph trail bike trundling the Stereo seems to want you to hit the rocks and roots just so it can show you how capable it is, thankfully the steering is so light and responsive that simply thinking about picking the right line is to take it. The Stereo is in the zone for a bit of off-piste action, if you're the wild and woolly trail forging all-mountain type, and the precision of the Stereo's steering will be comforting when on narrow steep sided trails. The other place this bike will shine is in long distance marathons – somewhere where the 28.44lb weight won't make a great deal of difference. With a really nice steady pedalling feel from back in the saddle, the bike is happy to just keep making steady forward progress without you having to work too hard. If you're looking for something firmer and faster, try the almost identical 100mm travel Sting model also from Cube.

The Stereo played its funky tune loud and clear, and if we're honest in the beginning we didn't know whether to turn it up or tune out. Persistence paid off, and ultimately we loved the bike for what it does well, that steady ability that gets you to the ride's end in comfort, safety and no shortage of style.

SPEC CHECK

FRAME: 7005 Ultralite Dual Trail Control

FORK: RockShox Revelation 426 Dual Control (with Poploc 100-130mm travel)

SHOCK: Fox RP23

TRANSMISSION: Shimano Deore XT

BRAKES: Formula Oro K18 (160mm rotors)

BAR & STEM: Syntace Superforce stem and Vector Lowrider bar

SEAT POST: Syntace P6

SADDLE: Fizik Nisene

WHEELS: Mavic CrossRide Disc

TYRES: Schwalbe Fat Albert

CONTACT: Cube Bikes www.cube-bikes.co.uk

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