



Four tickets to paradise

Bikes that span the spectrum

PICK YOUR POISON. FROM EPIC COSTA Rican cross-country death marches to the burly backwoods of B.C., this quiver of new bikes spans the spectrum. We have been dutifully flogging a cross-section of the latest offerings to see how they hold up, and these four survived the beatings to tell their tales.

Trail bikes in this test include gems like Mongoose's Teocali Super, a battle-ready 6-inch bike for just 2,300 bucks, and the Niner R.I.P. 9, one of the most hyped wagon wheelers of all time. We also look at Knolly's 6.3-inch travel Delirium-T, which, although it will cost you more for a frame and shock than the ready-to-ride Mongoose, becomes worth every Canadian cent when it comes time to point and pray. Lastly, we take a second look at the latest iteration of an old standby: Giant's race-ready Anthem.

KNOLLY DELIRIUM-T \$2,595 (FRAME, SHOCK)

Back in 2002, Noel Buckley, a Vancouver-based rider who works in engineering and manufacturing, decided to build a custom, long-travel, Shore-specific bike. After a few prototypes Buckley arrived at what is now known as the V-tach. The bike impressed his friends so much, he soon had a bunch of guys asking for their own private ride. And Knolly Bikes was born.

Five years later I spent a summer testing the Delirium-T, one of three models Knolly now offers. The Delirium-T is a lighter version of Knolly's signature V-tach (7.7 inches of suspension), and comes pegged as an "all-mountain" bike, with 6.3 inches of rear suspension and adjustable head angle and wheelbase. With a 1.5-inch headtube and 40-pound weight, my test bike pushed the limits of all-mountain classification, but a lighter component package could easily put the Delirium-T in the mid-30-pound range.

Knolly's patent-pending suspension platform, called Four by 4 Linkage, aims to deal with a boatload of performance issues: uninterrupted seat tubes for unlimited range of seat height, the ability to make long travel frames in really small sizes, active suspension under braking, lateral rigidity, long-stroke shocks leading to low leverage ratios, easy maintenance, and what Knolly calls "superlative suspension performance." An ambitious mouthful for sure.

First thing I noticed about the Delirium-T was its obvious burl. Right out of the box, it looks tough. Lots of impressively crafted CNC parts (which Knolly makes in-house), custom tubes, and high-performance bearings and pivots. Second was the plush factor. The bike is super sensitive in the top end of the travel path. Third is the fairly extreme, 62-degree seat tube angle (though Knolly claims the effective seat angle is 72 degrees on a large frame), which I found a little freaky at first. A lot of the frame design, in fact, is focused on retaining an un-



interrupted seatpost, which, for myself, living in a gnarly climb/gnarly downhill land, comes as a welcome feature.

On the trail, I fell in love with this bike. It climbed incredibly well, despite its heft. When I got to descend, however, it was game on, and the Delirium performed like a bike with much more than 6.3 inches of travel. Eight-foot drops failed to bottom out the bike. In fact, in three months of riding I was unable to clank the sucker. Everything Knolly set out to do appears to be on point. Incredible tracking and lateral stability, good geometry (I didn't adjust mine too much as I was quite content with the slackest setting for my neck in the woods), minimal brake jack and pedal feedback. All in all, quite the ride. —MITCHELL SCOTT

HIGHS

Well thought out, purpose-built design; stiff side-to-side; super plush

LOWS

Expensive; high weight-to-travel ratio

MORE INFO:
866-795-4954;
KNOLLYBIKES.COM