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BIKE TEST

WE RATE THE RIGS YOU WANT TO RIDE



Top: Super deep CNC linkages lay down drop-softening, ground-sucking suspension flow

Middle: Marble anodising is love or hate, but the frame detailing is all just love

Bottom: Really big tyres might be a bit of a squeeze through here, though...



Ellsworth Rogue

£1,299
(frame & shock)

Impeccably balanced full-on freeriding fare

Ellsworth's Dare has been around for a while and even company boss Tony Ellsworth admitted it was being pulled in too many directions by increasing freeride and DH demands. That's why they've taken it out of the loop temporarily and introduced the Rogue as their full-on freerider rig.

The chassis

Few companies spend as much time and attention on designing and building their bikes as Ellsworth, and the new Rogue is plainly well thought-out.

The head tube is custom drawn and then machined inside and out to support the deep cup headset without adding excess weight. The internal bore is even tapered for easy cup removal. Elsewhere the box gusset for the rocker link has a guide tube machined through it for perfect alignment, while the rocker itself is an incredible piece of deep machine sculpted architecture, almost as long as the chainstays. The mainframe tubes run through a whole parade of custom formed shapes including a deep trough in the down tube to give clearance for piggyback shock chambers, and box or plate gussets reinforce every corner of the frameset.

Practically, you get a conventional bottle cage mount for drink or bottle battery duty, enough room to squeeze a 2.5in tyre through and shimmed 10 or 12mm thru axle dropouts. There's also an ISCG mount on the bottom bracket

for single ring set-ups. We could go on and on but basically the whole bike is carved and curved to the Nth degree for both engineering and aesthetic glory, all coated in a tough marble or plain black anodised finish.

The detail

Ellsworth match their obsessive attention to detail with a top quality Fox shock absorber. The DHX 5.0 rear shock can be set up almost any way you can imagine but performed beautifully with only minimal tinkering.

Other kit isn't an issue as the Rogue will be a DIY from frame deal, but for the record, the Fox 36 fork up front needed all the damping fully open as per usual but it just ruled the brutal square edged hits and firmly-anchored boulders of the Bootleg trails.

We were also impressed by Easton's new Havoc Freeride wheels – stout 28mm rims mix with fat bodied disc hubs into which straight pull spokes thread directly.

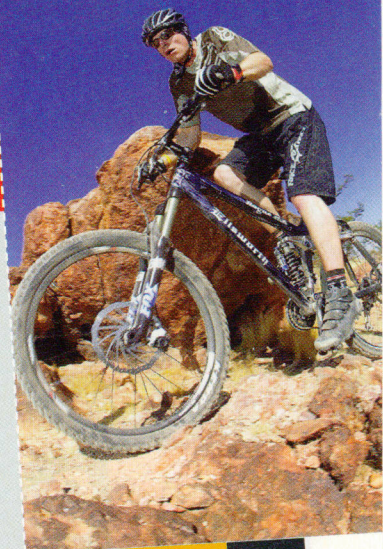
The ride

Some bikes just feel right as soon as you ride them. Even dragging up the fireroad climb into the rocky gulleys of Bootleg, the Rogue was perfectly behaved. Not fast – it weighs 34lb (15.5kg) – but not baggy, bobby or sluggish. With some height behind us the fun really began, though. The 8in (203mm) travel rear end rolls beautifully through compressions, over sharp rock edges and off drops with no kickback

or disturbance through the pedals. In fact it boosts you out of every rough section with a real surge and it just flew along the rollercoaster trails.

Handling balance was impeccable too, sitting deep into its sag and sucking the grip out of every corner or braking ripple. You might struggle fitting really big tyres in the rear end, but it's so supple that the 2.35s we ran were more than enough to nail everything on. Tracking is good too, thanks to that super deep linkage, and production bikes with a bolt thru axle will be significantly stiffer. Rider weight is pushed forward down the long top tube by the steep seat tube and it means you can run a tiny stem for ultra light steering through the slack head. It certainly never felt cumbersome even on the skinniest rocky ridge lines at walking pace. Basically, as long as you let the brakes go and allowed the bike to flow, it just smoothly accelerated out of any trouble we got into.

That pretty much characterised our whole experience of the Rogue; masses of speed through mental situations without any moments of nervousness or even mild concern. Pitch perfect suspension front to rear, with a yawning depth of pedal isolated rear travel when you need it, but no trace of it when you're just rolling along. Ellsworth have dropped prices by almost 20 per cent for 2006, while actually bringing production in-house for better QC, making the Rogue and its brothers serious bargains all of a sudden.



Mountain Biking UK VERDICT

9

SPEC	9/10
DESCENDING	9/10
FREERIDING	10/10
SINGLETRACK	8/10
VALUE	8/10

SO GOOD

- Beautiful construction and finishing quality
- Bin of bottomless feeling but superbly balanced linkage suspension
- Total pedalling and braking isolation for uninterrupted flow
- New reduced price

NO GOOD

- 2.5 inch tyres will be a squeeze in muddy conditions
- No XS or XL sizes yet