

## Mountain Biking by 198

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### 2008 Ellsworth Evolve Final Review

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### **2008 Ellsworth Evolve Review**

Over the past 6 weeks I have been putting a serious amount of ride time on the 4 inch travel 29er bike from [Ellsworth Bikes](http://www.ellsworthbikes.com) (www.ellsworthbikes.com) called the Evolve. The bike sent for

review was part of the Project Pink program that you can read more about on this and get the full specs of this build on this [preview post](#).

## **About The Evolve**

When the push for 29er full suspension bikes came to Tony Ellsworth's door, he only had one goal in mind. As he said in his interview, [www.mtbtrailreview.com/blog/exclusive-interview-with-tony-ellsworth/brands/](http://www.mtbtrailreview.com/blog/exclusive-interview-with-tony-ellsworth/brands/), Tony was only interested in building a 29er frame as long as it still rode like an Ellsworth. If the bike did not meet his standards, it was not going into production. What came out of this idea was the Evolve. On the Evolve you will find Ellsworth's own, patented ICT (Instant Center Tracking) suspension design, a custom tuned Fox Float shock and a lot of finishing touches that really bring this frame over the top.

## **What Is Instant Center Tracking (ICT)?**

For the technical explanation on how ICT works, (explained better than I can), check out the Ellsworth Bikes website, or use this link... [www.ellsworthbikes.com/flash/ICT/main.html](http://www.ellsworthbikes.com/flash/ICT/main.html). According to Ellsworth, the ICT linkage gives you better bump absorption, better traction/control and less energy loss under a fully active suspension by having the virtual pivot follow the chainline. For more information, check out the tutorials on the Ellsworth site.

## **What Is Different About The Fox Float?**

It is stripped of all of the ProPedal that Fox ships as standard on all of their current RP23's. That was fine with me...I don't use ProPedal on any frame I have ridden. I prefer the traction on climbs and if I wanted to be on a hardtail...I would ride one.

## **The Evolve Frame**

The Evolve is a great looking bike. From the machining on the rockers to the welds...this bike attracts attention. More importantly, the Ellsworth Evolve has an incredible amount of stand over clearance (claimed 29.3 inches on the large)...especially when you consider it is a 29er frame. On top of that...the top tube is drawn so that you have more knee clearance while riding. I really liked this feature. The 24.7" top tube seemed to fit perfectly (6'2") and with the 110mm stem provided with the build...all was set for a xc machine.

## **How Does It Ride?**

All of this explanation and graphs are great...but what you are really reading this review for is to see how this bike rode.

### **Climbing/Flats**

The first thing I noticed was how fast this bike accelerates. As soon as you are on the pedals, the bike takes off. This same acceleration transfers to the climbing arena as the bike climbs up technical sections with ease. There was very little pedal induced feedback (even out of the

saddle) while climbing, but the suspension still sucked up the hits without any real traction loss. When you added this performance to the 29er wheel platform, the bike flat out rocked the climbs and pedaling sections of trail. The larger wheels soaked up the hits and the fully active suspension did its job. The bike did seem to be stiffer in the first 1/3 of the travel with the real plush feeling after that initial stiffness. This helped with the pedaling efficiency of the frame. With this build sitting right at 30 lbs., the weight did not become an issue, but for the true xc riders out there...you will want to build it up lighter. The Kenda Nevevals are known for their rolling resistance. They grip well, but you pay for that in other areas. A lighter, faster rolling tire would have made this bike even faster.

## **Downhills**

The bike is capable downhill, but as with any 4 inch travel frame...downhill is normally where you find its limitations. On your pure xc singletrack, this bike performed. When the dh's got really rough, it was very apparent that this bike is an cross country bike and not an all mountain monster. For me, the 4 inch travel 29er frame category is leaning towards two camps...xc and am. This frame lends itself towards the xc/racer camp and that is where it performs its best. On drops and super rocky technical sections, the Fox F29 and bike were not as stable. On fast/flowy north Georgia singletrack, the Evolve was incredibly fast. That initial stiffness in the travel showed up on the downhills as well. Once the suspension sat in the travel past that 1/3 stroke on the downhill, the linkage was very plush and forgiving.

## **Overall**

The Evolve performs perfectly for exactly what it is built for...fast xc riding. The bike is pedal efficient and tough enough to handle any cross country trail that you throw at it.

## **The Good**

- Beautiful frame with boutique styling
- Fast climber
- Efficient pedaling design
- American made
- Low center of gravity makes the rider feel in the bike instead of on top of it
- Race-able frame when built up light (can get in the 26 lbs range without getting crazy)

## **The Bad**

- Expensive - \$2,195.00 (2009 MSRP)
- Small bump absorption (first 1/3 of travel)

If you are looking for an incredibly fast cross country machine...take the Evolve for a test ride. You will not be disappointed. This bike performs flawlessly for what it was designed for...fast, hammering xc singletrack. I had some friends throw a leg over the ride during this test session and on our local trails... and the Evolve was hard to beat. I had a really hard time packing this

bike up for return to Ellsworth, it brought my stable full circle with a bike that was a rocket for everyday riding.

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## What Are Your Experiences With 29er FS Frames?

Thank you goes out to [regularJoe](#) and [Chocolate Girl](#) for their photo contributions found below.



Ellsworth Evolve



Ellsworth Evolve



Ellsworth Evolve



Ellsworth Evolve



Ellsworth Evolve Headbadge



Ellsworth Evolve ICT Logo



Ellsworth Evolve Rockers



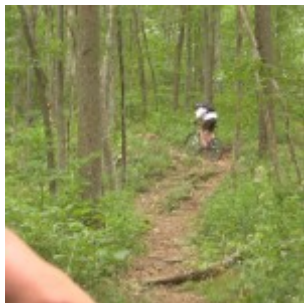
Ellsworth Evolve Gully Run



Ellsworth Evolve Climbing



Ellsworth Evolve Double Track



Ellsworth Evolve Climbing

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## This post was written by:



[198](#) - who has written 194 posts on [Mountain Biking by 198](#).

My name is Robb Sutton (aka.198)...the owner of MTB by 198. I have been involved with the sport ever since my first real mountain bike that I received as a Christmas present in 1995. Ever since then, I have been hooked (ok...obsessed) with the sport and the lifestyle. I started Mountain Biking by 198 as another outlet for my passion for the sport, but also as a way to capture its progression over time.