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Under Test: Ellsworth Enlightenment 29

Posted: June 25th, 2010 by Shannon Mominee

The first detail everyone notices on the Ellsworth Enlightenment 29 is of course the frame shape. Swoopy with clean lines, plenty of standover clearance, and subtle, yet tasteful graphics placed sparingly on the glossy-black, carbon fiber frame. Take a closer look, and the detail in craftsmanship only gets better. The integrated headset compliments the internal shift cable and internal hydraulic hose routing. The interchangeable dropouts can accommodate geared or single speed use, plus the driveside seatstay separates for using a belt drive system. Other details not immediately apparent are just as impressive.



In these days of environmental awareness and the ever-increasing use of newly formulated chemicals and techniques, it's important to feel good about the process that your bike frame is made under. Taking a look at the Ellsworth website, I was impressed they included video of their manufacturing facility and process. Wind and solar energy powers the machines creating the frames, with enough energy to spare and pump into the grid.

Ellsworth's Rare Earth Carbon Fiber used for the Enlightenment 29 is certified and tracked all the way through it being acquired, to when it is laid creating the frame to prevent any substitution in material. They also take care during the sanding process to capture dust before it becomes airborne, and filter the water used before it's returned into the system.

The carbon shapes and lay patterns tossed out my preconceived notions of how the Enlightenment would ride. Looking at the bike, I thought it was going to be a super stiff arrow with a harsh, pounding ride. Turns out that the frame rides rather smooth and has some forgiveness to it when hitting rocks. It's a nice balance of a firm platform and cornering control, with shock and vibration absorption. I like that the steering does not become twitchy on the downhill, and it rails through corners at speed as long as the 2.1 Kenda Small Block Eights retain their grip.





At 24.2lbs, for my size large tester with Shimano XT pedals, the Enlightenment lives up to its name. The parts package consists of SRAM X-9 shifters and derailleurs, TruVativ Noir crankset, Fox F29 RLC Fit fork, Avid Elixir S brakes with 160mm rotors front and rear, Easton Monkey Lite SL bar, WTB saddle, and Thompson post and stem.

Ellsworth's own 29" wheelset is pretty badass. Their 29mm wide, tapered wall rim creates a wide footprint, and is laced with 24 spokes in a 2-cross pattern for the front and 32 spoke, 3-cross pattern in the rear. The 15mm thru axle stiffens the frontend and is easy to use. I wish my bike personal had it. Weighing in at 1,745g, the wheels are still pretty light and equal the competition.

So far I'm really digging the bike, and enjoy pedaling it through the trees. I may swap the front tire for something that grabs in the corners better and put a wider bar on, but other than that the rest is golden.

Interested in learning more about this bike? What do YOU want to see in the final review? Leave a reply below to let us know!

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One Response to “Under Test: Ellsworth Enlightenment 29”

biff242 Says:

[June 27th, 2010 at 6:15 pm](#)

I test rode an Enlightenment at an Ellsworth demo event last weekend, and loved it.

What I didn't get to test, though, was how it worked as a single-speed rig — if you could set up the ss drops and try them out, that would be awesome! If it weren't an Ellsworth, I'd be a little concerned that they were just a little bit of an afterthought, but it would still be cool to hear some details — like whether they require readjustment of the disc brake after changing a tire, or whether they will hold up well to the sort of forces that a clydesdale like me applies when mashing uphill with only one gear.

Thanks!

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