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Bicycle Review: Ellsworth Glimpse

August 7th, 2010 by mountainbiketales
 American Boutique Brand Goes Global



Change Is In The Air

Whereas once the words "Made in Taiwan" were a red flag to be suspect of quality and the name Ellsworth was synonymous with "Made in the USA", the 2010 Glimpse turns such traditions on their proverbial head. There is simply no denying the reality that Asian manufacturing processes have improved in leaps and bounds in recent years, often times with work-environments and product quality superior to that of anywhere else on the globe. Couple this to the fact that lower overhead means savings that can be passed down to the customer and Ellsworth's decision to take things abroad becomes incredibly clear.

Going Global

Like all Ellsworth models, the Glimpse is actually born right here in the USA as its seamless aluminum tubeset is spec'ed and drawn in the States before being shipped off for welding and assembly at a factory in Taiwan. Brand purists drawn to the boutique ideal of everything being hand-built domestically needn't fear any detectable changes in quality or construction with the Glimpse as test riders unaware of the model's back story had no trouble believing this was but another of Ellsworth's custom builds.

Specs

The Ellsworth Glimpse spec sheet reads pretty well with Fox suspension providing the terrain-leveling task (32 Float R fork & Float R shock). Aside from an Easton Monkey Lite XC bar and WTB saddle, the entire drivetrain/ cockpit controls (including brakes and levers) goes the way of the Shimano SLX group. Lastly Kenda Nevegals are the chosen [tire](#) wrapped on Ellsworth's proprietary All Mountain hoops.

All told our medium test bike weighed in at 28.2 pounds with pedals (not included) and a bike identical to ours can be had for \$3,298.95.

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At a Glimpse

While 5-inches of [suspension](#) travel is certainly no longer big-hit territory, the Glimpse is one of those holdouts that treats its numbers big and meaty. Marketing guys would tell you in a heartbeat that this bike represents the definition of all-mountain and more conservative riders would know at a passing glance that this bike is intended to conquer rough terrain, high speed descents, and ugly rock gardens.

These realities are only strengthened in person thanks to beefy [rocker arms](#) working the brand's patented Instant Center Tracking (ICT) linkage and a 69-degree headtube angle. If such evidence weren't enough, the Ellsworth catalog slaps the Glimpse squarely between the cross-country category and big-hit section.

Climbing into the saddle reveals a firm chassis with a nice focused cockpit and a surprisingly rearward bias of the rider's weight. Even still the reach to the bars is comfortable with none of the torture rack treatment one associates with a cross-country configuration.

The Ride

If asked to describe the Glimpse riding experience in a single word, that word would be *firm*. A stout chassis coupled to a linkage that doesn't over exaggerate terrain imperfections results in a bike that seems to like to pound across the trail rather than bounce through it. In case you suspect this to be a complaint, rest assured that thanks to a lack of pro-pedal option, this rigidity works to the bike's advantage by turning pedal mashes into bursts of forward acceleration with minimal flex, squirming or bobbing.

Of course the downside is that we were never able to find the magic set up for small bump compliance. The reality about the ICT system is that it works almost too well in that it has a tendency to force the fork into double-duty. As such take your time with initial setup and don't be afraid to delve into high rear-sag territory (we were running 25% on choppy trails).

Whereas small bump compliance isn't remarkable, the bike's ability to handle square edge lips, ugly ledges, g-outs, flat landings, and boulder hops is spot on. We found that any jolt rough enough to get the suspension moving past the first-inch of its travel was devoured before it could transmit harshness to the rider. What this means to most of us is prepare to find yourself seeking out the ugly lines! Half the fun of the Glimpse experience is deviating from the main line into the rough stuff. Additionally, since the bike thrives on gobbling up the nasties, it doesn't take long to start feeling comfortable with picking up the pace even on unfamiliar terrain. We took our test [bike](#) up to one of the most exposed root laden trails we know of and found pushing the upper gears of the middle chain ring an absolute hoot.

The extreme rearward bias of the rider weight doesn't do the Glimpse too many favors in the climbing department as a failure to consciously put some weight on the front [wheel](#) can result in wandering. However, traction is never a problem. On the flip side, high-speed descents are stellar. Just like when pushing big-gears on the flats, the Glimpse refuses to be tossed off line when the ground points downward. Stay seated, look far ahead, and trust in the chassis to take care of the rest.

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Odds & Ends

The Shimano SLX [drivetrain](#) is a perfect spec for this bike's intended application and don't be afraid to lube up the cables even when new when it starts to feel a little stiff on the thumbs. Were it ours to keep, we would give serious consideration to swapping out the stem for something even shorter to compensate for the rearward seating position. Improved climbing prowess and slightly more confidence against wash-outs when flat-cornering would be welcome in exchange for a bit of the bike's impressive downhill manners. Finally, be sure to take Ellsworth's sizing chart seriously or head to your [dealer](#) and try one on for size before plunking down your cash. As with Fuji's bikes, we found that the Glimpse tends to run on the large side of the sizing scale. In other words, this is no time to experiment with going up a frame size bigger than you're used to.

Conclusion

The Ellsworth Glimpse has a lot going for it if your rides tend to take you into speeds that start to unsettle lesser trail [bikes](#). Sure it could be pressed into duty as a hard-pack singletrack cruiser but the rigidity of the chassis and particularly the ICT linkage aren't fully revealed until the going gets rough or the speeds start increasing. Concerns that this model can't boast being hand-built in the USA are moot thanks to impeccable quality assurance and the fact that this particular bike comes in at a cost of roughly half that of its catalog-mates is proof that change can be good.

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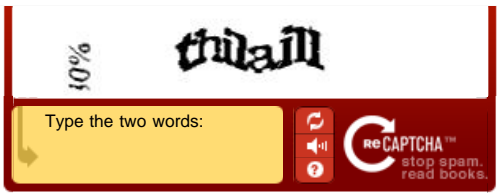
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