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hard charging
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pg. 106

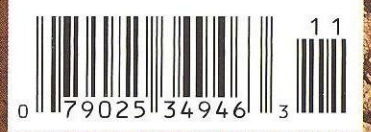
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WADE SIMMONS, FREIGHT TRAIN, WHELETER, B.C.

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BIKE TEST

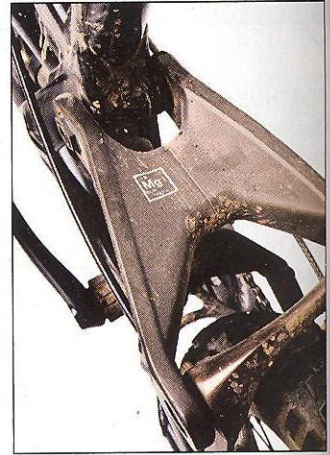
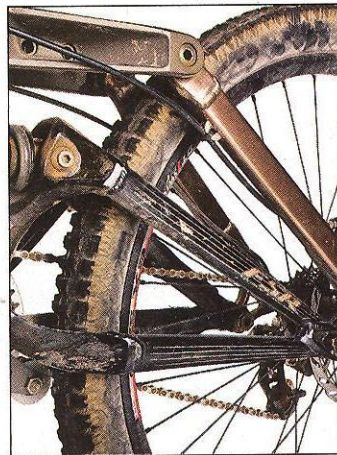
SPECIALIZED DEMO 8 II \$6,300

SOME BIKES ARE JUST MADE TO CONQUER THE BURL OF THE world. The Specialized Demo 8 is one such bike. With 8-plus inches of suspension, a stout frame and a solid component selection, the Demo leaves few questions about its intentions: High-speed romps through, over and down anything in its path.

Specialized offers two versions of the bike, the Demo 8 reviewed here and a less-expensive, shorter-travel version called the Demo 7. While the 7 is geared more toward freeride terrain, with slightly steeper angles for better slow-speed handling, the 8 is built for all-out speed and plowing through the minefields of downhill tracks.

Despite its aggressive tendencies, the Demo II weighs just 40 pounds, keeping it competitive with the fastest World Cup race rigs. Surprisingly, the bike still feels stiff and rigid during all-out assaults of steep, technical terrain. Point it straight through heinous rock gardens, stab it deep into corners or send it off the biggest booter you can find—there's very little discernable flex in this bike.

The benefits of a Horst-link suspension are well documented and the Demo didn't disappoint. It railed through braking bumps and pedaled capably with minimal pedal feedback. Although the rear triangle looks as if it were engineered by M.C.



Escher, the design allows for a lower shock placement, which helps lower the center of gravity. It also reduces standover height and allows the Demo to rock a mostly uninterrupted seat tube.

The addition of the sub-seatstay also enables Specialized to separate suspension duties: one arm controls wheel path, while the other pushes and pulls on the shock. This permits designers to fine tune the rear wheel path exactly as needed. Although many shorter-travel Specialized bikes strive for near-vertical wheel paths, the Demo, with 8.2 inches of travel, necessarily has some forward and rearward movement. By tweaking pivot placements, engineers manipulated the suspension to better absorb square-edge bumps, while remaining plush on larger hits. That split personality

also extends to the bike's trailside manners. While seemingly contradictory, the Demo is both agile and stable. Much of the bike's maneuverability stems from its low bottom bracket (14.5 inches) and short (16.7-inch) chainstays. A long toptube, however, creates a roomy cockpit and generous wheelbase. The bike is nimble at slow speeds, but still stable as you get going.

The Demo 8 is a well-balanced downhill bike, one I'd take into any number of ugly situations and expect to come out on top. To save weight, the bike uses a few lightweight parts that might not withstand long-term abuse, but overall this is a fast and agile beast, and should be put at the top of the list for anyone seeking a DH rig.

—LOU MAZZANT

HIGHS

Nimble, yet stable; plush, yet sensitive over small bumps

LOWS

Some lightweight parts, especially the rims, might not hold up to the abuse

MORE INFO:
408-779-6229;
SPECIALIZED.COM