

Specialized's FSR engineer is clearly a very happy man



5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME

JASON CHAMBERLAIN

➔ Meet Mr Stumpjumper, the engineer who has worked on every Specialized FSR project

Where do you see the mountain bike industry heading?

More specialisation, no pun intended. People seem to have a much better idea of what they want for the way they ride. Cross-country riders want light and stiff; downhill and freeriders want supple suspension; slopestyle demands manoeuvrability, and lots of people love 29ers. Then there is the all-mountain rider who wants it all in one bike... Whatever style you like to ride, Specialized makes a bike for exactly that.

What do you consider to be your most important innovation?

I have worked on everything from the original Enduros, Demo, Big Hit, SX Trail, hardtails, every Stumpjumper FSR, to the Epic, and each one features something that I was excited about at the time of design.

The Demo 9 was so groundbreaking with its huge forgings and linkage design. The Epic design was the first race-specific, no-lockout-required Brain bike and has seen minimal refinement over the years, which is a testament to the design.

Where is your favourite place to ride?

Whistler and Vancouver's North Shore. Could there really be any other answer?

Who has influenced you the most?

I ride with people who push the envelope of the sport. In fact, I work with two incredible product managers, Brandon Sloan and Joe Buckley, who have heavily influenced my riding and designs.

What's been your highlight of the past year?

Getting my twelfth US patent for frame design elements. It has also been incredible to see my bikes ridden by some of the greatest riders in virtually every MTB video. And stomping The Manager at Whistler.

“Lego was particularly significant in helping me think like an engineer and expand my creativity”

You obviously spend a lot of time around bikes, but how much time do you actually get to ride them?

Here at Specialized, riding bikes is a way of life, as you'd expect it to be – I ride my bike to work, and every day at lunch we all road ride or I sneak some Trials riding in. I try to get out at least once a week to testing mountain bikes in the Santa Cruz mountains as well.

What do you see as the key product trend or development for the 2009 model year?

You are probably hoping for some exciting answer like gearboxes, 650B wheels or flat-proof tyres. In reality, though, I think that light weight will be the biggest trend in 2009.

Our number one goal, year after year, is lower weight, no matter what category or component it may be. We are always doing exciting things with materials and designs to reduce weight while meeting our high performance standards.

How did you get hooked into biking?

I grew up on a bike and gravitated toward Trials riding. I can't remember an exact moment, but I have always been passionate about riding. I became obsessed with the bike itself when I was a kid and saw the latest aero bikes in an issue of *Popular Science Magazine*. I was just fascinated with the designs in that article. In fact, I still have the magazine today.

Is it true that Lego Technic is important to your design R&D, and does it really make all the difference?

It isn't critical to the R&D process, but it is helpful in making the design tangible. I think Lego was more significant in helping me think like an engineer and expand my creativity. I started building with the 'Expert Builder' Lego when I was eight, although the box said it was for age nine and up. I assumed I was a real genius. I remember Lego even had a rear axle differential, which I still think is one of the most ingenious mechanisms ever imagined. Lego inspired me to think mechanically and is likely responsible for making me who I am.

