



MBA SHOOTOUT JAMIS VS. REDLINE 1X THROW DOWN

JAMIS EXILE 29'er

The bike that's called a double negative is sold with Crank Brothers Eggbeater pedals and is ready to ride off the showroom floor. Reynolds 631 air-dardened double-butted chromoly main tubes increase in stiffness and actually elevate the steel's strength when welded. The stays use a generic double-butted chromoly material, which is also used to construct the unicrown fork. Slotted, rear entry dropouts with chain tension set screws accept a bolt-on, BMX-style rear hub. The disk brake tabs are slotted to let the brake caliper be easily moved to match a change in the wheel's axle clamp position. The CNC-machined aluminum derailleur hanger is sandwiched between the hub and thread-on axle nut and is removable. If it's removed and left off, make certain to cut down the axle extension as well.

JAMIS SHOP NOTES

A full Easton EA30 seatpost, stem and riser bar cockpit spec is a nice bonus. It's topped with a one-shape-pleases-all Wilderness Trail Bikes Rocket V Comp saddle. The WTB Mototec bolt-on grips were irritating at first. You tug really hard on the bar when climbing on single-speeders, and the grips twisted easily on the bar. Tightening the plastic grip end clamps did little to help. After a few rides, the rubber starts to cement to the bar and the grips mostly stay put — but not like the real thing from ODI.

Jamis adds a quick-release seat collar to the top of the seat tube. The TruVativ FireX single-speed crank includes an outer guide. It helps keep the chain on the ring and your bell bottoms from getting eaten by the chain.

Schrader valve tubes are an odd choice. It's a problem in that as soon as you need to fix a flat on the trail, suddenly everyone has lost their Schrader adapters.

HAMMERING SINGLETRACK

When hammering singletrack (Or since they are rigid bikes, is that getting hammered by singletrack?) the ride isn't as brutal as you would think. Aboard a single-speed, you have one simple purpose—to keep pedaling and to maintain enough momentum to stay on top of the gear. You would think that since the bikes have very similar wheels, steel frames with rigid forks, and similar geometry, that the rides would be almost identical. Far from it!

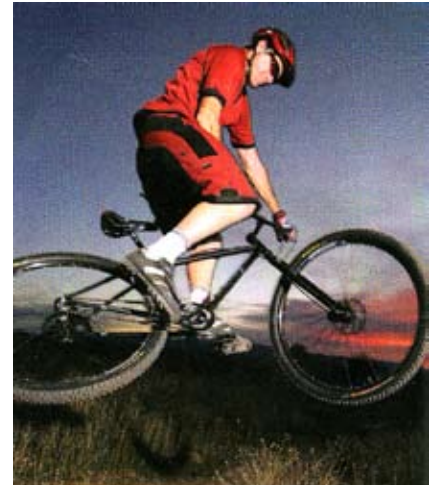
First of all, the gearing on the Jamis is woefully wrong. A 33x16 ratio is way too tall for a 29-inch mountain bike with only one gear. You need the extreme boxing badness of Dominic Cruz to climb this gearing. Most of us aren't that crazy. Before you leave the dealer, work out a deal on a 20-toothriver from ACS, (626) 657-2211. They go for around \$20.



Look Ahead: Trail conditions like this are where the more stable feel of the Jamis Exile 29'er absolute ruled. It's possible to descend a rigid fork at speed, but you better have an idea of what's coming up ahead well in advance of getting there.



Axle nuts: Jamis included a CNC-machined derailleur hanger that gets clamped between the axle nut and rear entry dropout. Single-speed devotees will want to remove it. Remember to carry a 15-millimeter wrench on your rides.



No bumps up here: The Jamis' higher degree of impact forgiveness made it the more fun bike to play around on. There is a certain beauty to being aboard a bike that is so bare-bones basic.

SIMILAR BUT SO DIFFERENT

Both Redline and Jamis beg for an out-of-the-saddle attack style of riding. (Remember, it's your only option aboard a single speed.) In that sense, they are the same. Yet the Redline still turns sharper and has a livelier feel in any singletrack situation. How can that be? After all, they have almost the exact same geometry. But what the specs don't reveal and what few 29-inch bike builders realize is that you need to tweak the geometry to take back the increase in trail caused by the 29-inch wheel's greater radius. Intense and Niner do it with a steeper head angle, while Redline and FRM take care of it with more fork axle offset. The Jamis still has geometry that is tuned for 26-inch wheels.

Don't feel too bad for the Jamis rider, though. The Jamis frame absorbs impacts much better than the Redline. The Exile 29'er is more in control and more forgiving than the Monocog Flight 29'er when bounding across braking bumps and suare-edged holes. It almost does away with the pain that a 40-something, ex-Stingray rider feels in his arthritic joints after being pounded with a rigid fork. Almost.

If you do switch to a suspension fork somewhere doen the road, we highly recommend the FRM Airway 29'er fork. While the FRM will not change the turning geometry of the Redline, it will speed things up on the Jamis enough to put you in handling heaven.

EXTREME SINGLETRACK'N

Your life will change forever as soon as you throw a leg over either the Redline or Jamis. The Monocog Flight 29'er retails for \$100 less than the Exile 29'er, but it doesn't have pedals. While Jamis gives you a set of Eggbeaters, the stock gearing is all off. What both bikes do offer for right around \$1000 is one of the best times you could ever ask for.

Do you remember how extreme it was the first time you ventured into the dirt aboard that Stingray? The excitement is still there, and all it takes is a Redline or Jamis to unleash it.