

fresh produce_ first look



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SANTA CRUZ BLUR TRC

Now this is one fast trail bike.

Mike was still bleating on about his old Blur 4X as we drove out of the Dirt office. We headed north, A40, M50, M5, M6, A59, right to Clitheroe, little shimmy around the town and onto the moors. Destination? Dog and Partridge. Reason? The all-new Santa Cruz Blur TRC.

What was it about the previous Blur that had got my editor so worked up? Maybe it was its upbeat nature, not XC and not DH, a bike that by default (come on it wasn't the quickest 4X) was ahead of its game. It was basically an overbuilt, low slack trail bike for playing hard.

Even Santa Cruz had this to say of their old 4X. "The end product is an overbuilt frame designed for a life of abuse, forming the basis of a rock-stable bike that can stick the ugliest lines as well as carve turns between gates with total conviction. For a bike to tackle sketchy terrain without investing in the extra weight and wallow of super-long travel rigs."

It was everything that they described and had it got a bit more travel and lighter weight it would be a pretty up to date trail bike of today. This bike, the Blur TRC is NOT like its predecessor, but it is incredibly advanced and very much a trail bike for trail use. The previous 115mm of travel has moved up to 125mm and the 68.5° head angle has dropped to 68° (although I measured it at 66.5° on the test bike). But boy it's pretty close in terms of numbers.

Why then are two bikes so close in numbers yet so different? Strengthening its cause that the 4X was always a hard-hitting trail bike with the wrong badge Mike Ferrentino (then of Bike magazine) once said this. "As a trail bike, set up with a four-inch fork, the Blur 4X has a few quirks. One, it is heavier by about a pound and a half than the regular Blur. Two, the bottom bracket is low, and this can cause some pedal smacking fun in the rocks. Three, even with a short-ish travel fork, the head angle is slack. Climbing switchbacks and trials-speed slow terrain requires an adjustment in riding style. But, dear God, it is stable."

Low, slack and stable then. Hold on, there's more: "Our large model frame has a rock-solid 44.5" wheelbase. With a longer travel fork, such as the 5.6" travel Pike Air on our test bike, the wheelbase can stretch out to an even 45". At that length, with the head angle at least another degree slacker, we doubt that anything (earthquake, hurricane, act of congress, whatever) could throw the bike off its line. It is very, very, very stable."



I'm just trying to establish a bit of background to the TRc. Stable see. In short the old 4X has metamorphosed into the new TRc, but true to its name and subtitle –TRAIL – does everything that is expected of it and is a gigantic two and a half pounds lighter (the carbon construction must help with that). Design meanwhile and visual is light years ahead of the old bike, but then it is nearly three times the price of the old aluminium frame. Three years on Ferrentino now works for Santa Cruz and he describes the TRc as, "the kind of trail bike a hucker could love, and it's the sort of bike that big burly freaks who corner hard...would absolutely love."

After two days on the Lancashire/Yorkshire borders the feeling was very upbeat about the TRc and I genuinely enjoyed every minute of riding it. I also had the pleasure of a having a few pints with the man behind the reviews. As a trail or trail centre bike it is light, fast to climb with a balanced geometry. Its only problem is that being of similar angles to some longer travel bikes simply enables you to attack in a similar fashion. And it's there that it becomes slightly out of its depth.

Even without a chain device the TRc was quiet. Suspension wise the tune was good on the shock,

always offering a plenty of support. The chainstay shorter than the old 4X makes the bike lively and manoeuvrable. Pedal input results in crazy fast take-off on this bike. Up front the Fox fork needed a bit of low speed as there was a slight tendency of forward movement under braking, but even with a 50mm stem the amount of room was good for a large.

Had I had more time I would have loved to try the physically bigger Blur LT at 5.5"/140mm and a pound heavier – the bike that Neil Donoghue won the opening Gravity Enduro series (Elite category) on with a Fox 36 fork. In a large the LT is higher, shorter and steeper so in a way the TRc could well have a more attacking poise to it. Who knows? What I do know is that first thoughts are a super fun bike to ride. Always fast and so beautifully created. Who mentioned 4X?

Blur TRc frame with Fox RP23
(2012 with Kashima coating) £2699
www.santacruz bikes.co.uk

Go to www.dirtmountainbike.com and search for 'Santa Cruz Blur TRc first look' for our...errr...first look video.



Is it a monster? No it's our Billy, of one time 'down and out on a hardtail' fame, now lording it on a carbon five grand build. Whatever next?

