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WHAT MOUNTAIN BIKE AWARDS SECOND 07

SANTA CRUZ HECKLER

SINGLE PIVOT SURVIVOR

WORLD EXCLUSIVE! Santa Cruz Heckler FIRST RIDE

After a decade of suspension technology development have Santa Cruz finally got the perfect trail bike? We ask Rob Roskopp, just before we rob his new Heckler...

Words Matt Skinner, Gary Kesterson Photos Jonny Gowler & Stackflip

Rob Roskopp, the man behind Santa Cruz Bicycles, has never been scared to take risks. He basically had the Santa Cruz bicycles brand from a standing start in 1993 and proceeded to step into the industry with a full suspension bike. It was still the almost mythical where the hardtail ruled as full sus had generally been mush, but was ever so slowly evolving into a viable and serious technology. Roskopp, together with his partners Mike Marquez and Richard Novak (president of Santa Cruz Skateboards), saw that production of a high performing full suspension mountain bike was on the cusp of coming of age and this could be Santa Cruz's ticket to ride. After some initial work with bike designer Tom Morris, the single-pivot Santa Cruz Tazman was born, and with it a high class lineage that has remained undeniable ever since.

But the single-pivot was not the end of mountain bike suspension, merely the beginning of its story, as it had its own inherent problems: chain growth and pedal kick back, brake jack, and, depending on the pivot's relation to the rear axle and the chain line, suspension squat or extension when under power. As other manufacturers caught up with Santa Cruz and the optimisation of the single-pivot design failed to fully eradicate all of these characteristics, Roskopp looked around once more for the solution and Santa Cruz's next competition advantage, resurrecting the Virtual Pivot Point (VPP) design originally owned by Outland Technologies.

"When the VPP first came out at Interbike in 1999, I thought, 'Holy cow: this thing is really cool'" said Roskopp. "It solved all the things that we were trying to address with a single-pivot, and accomplished things that we couldn't make our systems do." The VPP allowed Santa Cruz to step ahead once more in terms of performance, and first broke into being on their V10 downhill race bike, as used by Brit DH pro Steve Peat to become World Cup Champ last year. It has since spread its wings into freeride, XC race, 4X and trail configurations. But the humble single-pivot itself has never truly gone away. Santa Cruz have until this day always had at least one single-pivot in its line up, but for 2007 they have completely overhauled and revamped their line up.

Single minded

For other companies, the pressure to return to the single-pivot design has been prompted in part by the need to circumvent the patent minefield. With the stranglehold on patent ownership arguably stifling suspension innovation as much as

After 24 years at the SC helm, Rob has retired from the single speed racing of 07 and now prefers Rob Roskopp right

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