

Bike Test

NEW YEAR'S FINEST
2016 BIKES

ON TREND

The new Trailstar is bang up to date in terms of a really long top tube, slack steering angle and plus-size tyre compatibility

STEEL YOURSELF

The skinny, low standover top tube and tapered stays give the Trailstar the trademark forgiveness and shock shrugging character of steel even when you're going full gas

SWAPSIES

The extra-long 650b+ SwopOut dropouts seen here can be swapped for regular through-axle, bolted or QR versions

DMR TRAILSTAR

FRAME Heat-treated 4130 chromoly steel **FORK** X-Fusion Sweep Roughcut HLR, 160mm (6.3in) travel **SHOCK** N/A **DRIVETRAIN** Shimano Zee w/ DMR Axe cranks and Praxis Works cassette (1x10) **WHEELSET** WTB Scraper rims on DMR Zone hubs, WTB Trailblazer 27.5x2.8in tyres **BRAKES** TRP Slate T4 (200/180mm rotors) **BAR/STEM** DMR Wingbar, 780mm/DMR Defy, 50mm **SEATPOST/SADDLE** X-Fusion Hilo SLS/DMR **WEIGHT** 14.4kg (31.8lb), medium size without pedals **PRICE** £499 (frame only), £2,600 (test build) **CONTACT** Upgrade Bikes www.upgradebikes.co.uk

SO GOOD

BMX tough, but with the shock-shrugging ride steel fans love

Super-surefooted, short stem/big fork compatible long and low geometry

ISCG mounts, traditional BB and SwopOut dropouts add versatility

NO GOOD

Super-slack seat angle reduces front end control with a longer fork

No XS or XL sizes

JARGON BUSTER

ISCG mount

Three tabs you can bolt an International Standard Chain Guide onto. ISCG and ISCG-05 spacing are slightly different.

Plus-size tyre

A new low-pressure 2.8-3in wide species that sits between regular 2.1-2.4in rubber and 3-4in fatbike tyres.

DMR's legendarily indestructible steel hardtail has been reborn as a bang-up-to-date, plus-size possible playbike that proves you don't need a rear shock to have a load of fun on technical trails. A ton of super-slack bike is less fun uphill though.

The frame

DMR have a long history of punishment proof machines. The Trailstar's short head tube is tapered, with bulged top and bottom openings to take an integrated headset. There's a big throat gusset supporting the stout double-butted down tube too. The downward kinked, double butted top tube is relatively skinny though, while the seat tube splits the difference. It also does without bottle bosses for full seat drop with a rigid post and has an exit port for an internally routed dropper.

The traditional threaded BB gets an ISCG mount and the seat clamp is forward facing to stop rear wheel spray seeping into the electroplated, corrosion resistant frame. A driveside chainstay plate and wide-spread seatstays give massive tyre clearance and enough space for smaller plus-size tyres with the appropriate extended SwopOut dropouts. At 2.8kg for a bare

frame it's definitely built for maximum strength rather than minimum effort on climbs. There are no XS or XL sizes, though the L is very long.

The kit

The Trailstar is only available as a frame so distributors Upgrade built up our sample with kit from their range of brands. DMR supplied their own heavy duty, jump bike inspired Wingbar/Defy cockpit, a Stage 1 saddle with built in inner tube holder and their new Axe single-ring cranks. A Praxis wide-range cassette completed the drivetrain. The Sweep Roughcut HLR fork and Hilo SLS dropper post came from X-Fusion, while TRP provided the four-pot Slate discs. The bike arrived fitted with a plus-size WTB wheelset but we also ran DMR's Zone wheels for part of the test period.

The ride

The fact the new Trailstar can handle smaller plus-size tyres is great for low pressure, 'smother everything in flaccid rubber' fans and adds useful versatility that's still rare on 650b bikes (though more common on 29ers). Because the sheer volume and 'lean, don't turn' character of the tyres

masks a lot of the finer points of frame feel and handling, we did most of our comparative testing with DMR's mid-width Zone wheels and a Schwalbe Nobby Nic/Rock Razor tyre combo. It's a sign of how well DMR have harnessed the naturally shock shrugging potential of the steel tubing that it still didn't feel too jarring through our feet and knees even when the fork was hitting full travel.

It's certainly no full-suspension bike and you still have to dodge potentially rim dinging rocks but the Trailstar rolls with the punches much better than the average alloy frame and better than most steel frames too. Add the well-damped long-travel fork and muscularly stiff DMR cockpit and it can be driven through normally speed-killing sections seriously hard as long as you're light enough on your feet to save the rear rim.

The supplied 160mm fork was 10mm longer than the recommended upper limit for the frame, which tipped the already slack geometry back even further. Add a long front centre and you've got a very stable, naturally self-centring steering feel that's just as speed and chaos proof as the frame feel, as long as you stay stood up. Sit



ADD A WELL-DAMPED FORK AND STIFF COCKPIT
AND IT CAN BE DRIVEN THROUGH NORMALLY
SPEED-KILLING SECTIONS SERIOUSLY HARD

down, though, and the 69.5-degree seat angle takes too much weight off the distant front end, particularly when climbing or flat tracking. The long, skinny, kinked top tube also means more mainframe twist and tracking vagueness than we'd expect from the top-spec X-Fusion fork. Cue a lot of frustrating steering fumbles and loss of lines even when we slammed the saddle forwards to steepen the

effective seat angle as much as possible. We'd stick to a 140mm fork (at most) to get the seat angle the right side of 70 degrees and keep the front wheel stuck down and gripping more predictably.

Frame softness and high weight don't do the Trailstar's performance under power any favours, and unless the trail points downwards or rolls fast you've got a trudge on your

hands. The forgiveness on landing takes some of the pop and snap out of take-off too, making this a bike best suited to big speed on big hills, not tight trick tracks. **GUY** >>

MBUK
A rock solid yet forgivingly smooth steel hardtail with enhanced versatility, but uncooperative and unresponsive on climbs





FINAL OPINION

We were hoping our pick of 2016 shakers and movers would give us the wide range of special powers that make superhero films exciting, and we weren't disappointed. But which of these mountain bike Marvels will put your pants on the outside and give you a cape of crazy capability when you hit the trails?

If you get the build right, DMR's revived Trailstar has the strength, versatility and unerring stability to redefine what you thought was possible when you drop a hardtail into the hands of gravity. At the other end of the scale, if you want the ultimate floated ride and rough terrain grip combined with surprisingly easy speed at the flick of a

lever, Scott's Genius Plus is a great advert for the latest plus-size tyres.

Specialized's Camber and Transition's Patrol share similar suspension characters and are both growers rather than immediate grabbers as a result. The harder you ride the Patrol, the more its uber-grip ride and impact swallowing suspension become clear in every hard-carved corner, blasted boulder field and long wait for your mates at the bottom of the hill. Meanwhile, the quietly spoken Camber starts with a super-easy set-up and slowly becomes your best all-round biking buddy the more you explore its efficient rough terrain speed sustain, well balanced handling and impressive technical

trail confidence. If you're after maximum thrills though, two rides stand out.

With the Bronson II, Santa Cruz have combined locked down stability and vivid feedback with firm but forgiving suspension to create a superbly visceral high-velocity trail bike. When it comes to category-redefining performance though, the new semi-carbon Whyte T-130 C Works is an addictive combination of short-travel agility and responsiveness with outstanding front end grip and suspension control that'll reset your limits and expectations on every ride. Considering the super-bling spec it's cracking value too, putting its Sweet Sixteen win beyond doubt. ⚙️

SUMMARY



WHYTE T-130 C WORKS £4,499

A seriously capable, well balanced bike that asks for a proper thrashing every time you hit the trail



SPECIALIZED CAMBER COMP 29 £2,000

Smoothly efficient all-rounder that hides an impressively capable, grin building, quiet riot character



TRANSITION PATROL 2 £3,999.95

You'll need patience if you're patrolling far, but this ultra surefooted impact eater is a proper bomber on the downs



DMR TRAILSTAR £2,600

A rock solid yet forgivingly smooth steel hardtail with enhanced versatility, but uncooperative on climbs



SCOTT GENIUS 700 TUNED PLUS £6,099

Allows some seriously reckless riding, but it's pricey and tyre choice is limited at present



SANTA CRUZ BRONSON II C S AM £3,999

If you like your trail bikes tough, tight, punchy and infectiously playful, the Bronson is a standout ride

