

PORN BIKE

At Cove they love sturdy bikes. And a joke also, given the fact that the name for their 140mm model. This has been taken from a well known sex mag from the seventies, which played a big role in the sexual revolution of the Americans. The Hustler therefore must free the biker from fears and complexes. Curious if this philosophy on two wheels had the same effect on us? Then just read along...

Cove is a small Canadian brand that is quite well known on the other side of the Atlantic, but here it will not ring many bike bells just yet. Luckily Canadian Dirt Imports, an importer with passion, decided to bring this brand to our region. At Cove they are strong believers of "keep it simple". Ultra light materials and complex constructions are not in their interest. Simple, strong and effective: that's how a mountainbike should be in their point of view. And with their products you must be able to make a step beyond the normal boundaries. Logical you might think, because the Cove Workshop lies near Vancouver at the foot of well known Bike Walhalla Whistler!

The Company philosophy is well illustrated with the Hustler, which with its travel of 140mm is.... the smallest fully in their range. Its designers even position it as an XC model, where we in Europe would position it in the All Mountain or Enduro-light category without any hesitation. Just take a look at the over-dimensioned, square Easton Rad Tubing, its geometry and the weight (still little over 3 Kg). For the suspension Cove uses a system based on the well known "Faux Bar Linkage"-principle. This is a "four bar linkage"-suspension where the pivot point nearest to the rear axle is positioned on the standing rear fork and not on the horizontal one, like with the "real" FBL-systems who also work with the Horst-Link system. The same concept is being used for many years by Kona by the way. Further on the Hustler is equipped with a Fox RP23 shock with a very evolved hydraulic system and a Pro Pedal anti-bob system which can be adjusted in three settings.

The prices are not bad at all: for this frame you'll pay € 1799, and that is not bad at all if you keep the quality of this "made in Canada" creation in mind! The importer also offers a "Gold Series"-version in their portfolio (the one we tested). This one doesn't only stand out with the matt black colour and Gold Decals, but also through the exceptionally high-end equipment (SRAM X.0 gold, RaceFace Deus gold, SunRingle wheels with golden hubs, etc. etc.). This version will be yours for € 4999. And if you're not a fan of the golden details, you would be happy to read that the frame is available in 4 different colours.

Globetrotter

The least you can say is that our test bike has seen a big part of the world during the test period. We took it to the best single trails of Jamaica and after that we took it with us to Sicily. But even in the most unusual surroundings this bike succeeded in making quite an impression. Although the birth certificate might have been signed in British Columbia, near the North Shore Trails and woods of Vancouver, the Hustler proved to be a very polyvalent bike that immediately felt right at home on almost every terrain. And not just in the descents! Thanks to the Fox-suspension (with adjustable travel in front and lock-out option front and rear) "our" Cove left a very strong impression with climbing as well as descending. Even with the suspension "open" this bike showed tremendous amounts of traction on the slopes. Also the weight was very well distributed over both wheels, so perfect even that we seldom felt the need to limit the travel of the fork to be able to climb faster. Even with the full 140mm available the Cove never lifted the front and the steering always stayed precise enough to negotiate your way around obstacles. And due to the fact that the rear shock almost doesn't face any "pedal-bob", the Hustler is a very versatile bike and well suited for lovers of long mountain tours who are not afraid of long climbs. Only when you want to accelerate you notice that this is not a light weight, despite the very expensive (and therefore light) components that are being used.

In the descents the Hustler is extremely stable, which could result in the rider going faster than he might have intended at first. We wouldn't call the handling playful, and also the Hustler isn't a big fan of hairpins: there it has the tendency to turn a bit wide, a logical result of the fork angle. But in the end its handling is very normal for a bike that chooses stability and versatility over pure performance in the descents. You mustn't treat the Hustler as a big Enduro- or Freeride MTB. The geometry isn't build for that. In those circumstances you will be standing straight on the pedals and placing your pelvis behind the saddle. But the suspension will take all the blows extremely efficient. In some views it looks like the Hustler has been designed for light enduro races in the Belgium Ardennes or nice, technical descents in the mountains.

On flat grounds the accelerations are very adequate for a bike of this type. And the Hustler also has little trouble maintaining the speed. This Canadian doesn't shy away for the better Marathon jobs, but

in that case we would advise you to put some other wheels and tires on: the Continental Mountain King 2.4 on this test bike didn't really help.

Overall the handling of this bike reminded us of another All Mountain model from British Columbia, the Rocky Mountain Altitude (see our test in O2 Bikers nr. 154). But where the Altitude eventually seemed to prefer climbing over descending, the Hustler shows a much better balance in that field and will therefore answer much better to the needs of a true All Mountain. Therewith this is certainly one of the best MTB's in this segment.

+ Versatile, finishing, suspension / - (to) well-behaved handling

For whom? For the biker looking for a polyvalent MTB which he can use in the Belgium Ardennes, but can easily take to the Alps as well.