



PRIVATEER PERFECTION JAMIS XENITH PRO

PERFORMANCE: Jamis doesn't do flash. But it does produce really good bikes. The Xenith Pro (a 2009 Editor's Choice finalist) offers the by-now-usual features: BB30 bottom bracket, tapered steerer and so on. But a bike is more than the sum of its parts, and the Xenith's geometry and ride quality elevate it above the pack. **PARTS:** Jamis is well known for excellent parts picks and competitive prices – if you're an amateur racer, it's hard to find a better value. SRAM's 2010 Force is gram-for-dollar one of the finest component groups available. And American Classic's 420 Aero wheels are fast, light and extremely well made. – *Joe Lindsey*



HALF AND HALF JAMIS DAKAR XCT 1

MIDDLE: Jamis says its XCT 1 is half XC bike and half trail bike. It has 130mm of front and rear travel mated to a cross country suspension design. **EASY RIDER:** Jamis didn't just increase travel; compared with the XCR, the XCT 1 has slacker head tube and lower bottom bracket to increase stability and make it easier to ride on descents and over rough stuff. **NICE:** The Kinesium aluminum main triangle and suspension design are the same one's you'll find on the \$3000 XCT 3. – *M.C.*

BETTER FOR 2010 JAMIS DURANGO 1

ON A DIET: Jamis' best selling mountain bike drops some weight compared with prior year models thanks to the use of frame-forming technology typically seen on higher-end bikes. **PROPER FIT:** The Durango is available in XS through XL sizes as well as a woman specific model, ensuring that everyone can have a correctly sized bicycle. The RST fork lets you lock out its 100mm of travel to suit any terrain. – *Chris Cassidy*



is stiff enough to silence any real bitching, though it won't cause the engineers in Watsonville or Colorado Springs to lose any sleep.

The rest of the parts are solid choices. One note: Though we like the Crank Brothers Joplin Remote seatpost, the cable routing wasn't the prettiest.

THE RIDE: LIGHT AND LIVELY

It's remarkable the way 650B straddles the riding experience of 26 and 29, at one moment easily carving a tight arc around a switchback and at another providing surprising confidence and stability on a technical drop-in. Yes, there are also negatives: In general, a 650B bike isn't as responsive or light as a 26er, nor as smooth or stable as a 29er.

Truth is, the SixFiftyB2 is quite lively for a 5-inch-travel trail bike of any wheel size. The rear suspension is a single-pivot/four-bar variation that works very well, with pedaling, bump and braking performance as well as rear-end and frame stiffness all getting solid marks. The rear end isn't soak-up-every-pebble plush, but more crisp and buttoned down. The SixFiftyB2 can be slammed into corners and popped off lips almost like a 26-inch-wheeled bike, but the bigger wheels roll over obstacles, through rough terrain and down steps a touch more smoothly. Compared with the few 130mm-ish-travel

29er bikes out there, the Jamis feels more compact and agile, which surprised us because the Jamis's geometry isn't radically different than, say, that of the Specialized Stumpjumper FSR 29.

As for the broader wheel-size debate, 650B is tricky because there isn't that overt difference you find when you jump on a 29er for the first time. That said, the obvious fit for a 650B bike is a rider who is interested in the performance attributes of bigger wheels, but are faced with sizing issues on 29ers. For those simply looking for the right bike for their terrain and riding style, 650B may make the

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buying process a little longer and more complicated, but it's another choice that could ultimately lead to the perfect bike. We think the idea of something a little bigger than a 26er with some of the benefit of a 29er—but without the crazy-ass sizing and packaging challenges—makes for an appealing story for some riders. That said, a wheel size isn't a wheel size until Fox or RockShox makes a fork for it. Even so, the SixFiftyB2 is a sign that 650B could be closer to becoming a "real boy" than we think.—*Matt Phillips*