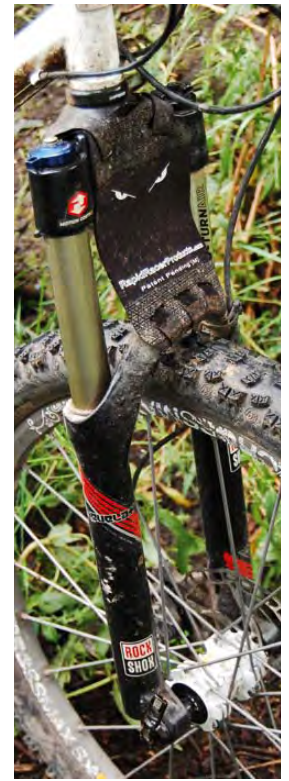




What a sensible cockpit.



Uppy-downny post.



Plenty burly enough.

BEN

BIKES



Cannondale Prophet



Diamondback Bandito



Genesis Alplitude

GENESIS ALPITUDE

Price: £1499.99
 From: Madison www.genesisbikes.co.uk
 Weight: 29.5lb



From when I first read the opening lines of the marketing spiel about the Alitude I could sense that the Genesis guys were on the right wavelength: “check the map for the biggest climbs... to access the most challenging descents.” This bike is fun enough on contouring trails and blasting around the safe confines of trail centre Scalextric but its heart lies in the steep stuff.

Unless you live somewhere with a ski lift you have to do some climbing. And if you want to reach the top of ‘worthwhile’ descents you have to do quite a bit of climbing. I’m pleased to say that the Alitude is one of the finest climbing hardtails I’ve ever ridden. It’s equally surefooted on steady fireroad climbs and narrower, rougher trails. The steep 73.5° seat angle (which is even steeper with the fork wound down) keeps the front end planted and weight perfectly balanced on the bike for seated climbing. My lungs and legs gave up before the bike ever did.

Once at the top of the climb it’s time to dial out the Rock Shox Revelation 409 Air fork’s travel to 140mm, drop the saddle and go for it. The appropriately slack 67.5° head angle, the ample standover and the low-slung 12.2in BB height really did give the bike a ‘bring it on’ attitude. The Alitude will ride down the steepest things you can find.

140mm feels like the perfect amount of travel to have on a hardcore hardtail such as this. Ample protection from whacks without too much pitch and wallow or steepening-up on repeated stutter-bump on-the-brakes descents. The fork itself is OK, especially considering the bike’s price tag, and it’s plenty stiff enough but could feel a bit overactive when really ragging it hard.

The two major things I’ve changed have been the wheels and the seatpost. I’ve put Mavic Crossmax SX wheels on because they’re tubeless-ready. (If it was my money I’d probably have gone for a Stan’s No Tubes conversion system in the existing DT/Shimano wheelsset.)

and the Gravity Dropper seatpost has been (ugly, but) brilliant.

The ride of the frame is definitely more on the sprightly rather than leaden side. This, combined with the overactive fork, meant it didn’t quite hold its line over rough ground as well as high speeds as other stouter steel bikes (the Cotic BFe for example) but the Alitude is a bit nimbler on the slow-speed techy stuff. The relatively long 23.3in top tube helped keep my weight spread-out and balanced. The low BB kept my weight low; which helped get me around tight switchbacks as well as avoiding endos.

The Alitude also seemed to have that ‘Energizer Bunny’ quality of a sprightly riding steel bike. Even after numerous rough and sketchy descents I wasn’t left feeling overly beat-up or knackered. I wanted to go up and do another one. And another one. Although I never really did much mileage during days out on the Alitude, I bagged a whole lotta height gain.

If I have to nitpick (and I do as it’s part of my job): the supplied handlebars and seat post were cheap and nasty; a 19.5in size should be available for lanky gets; Continental Mountain King tyres aren’t aggro enough for this bike; I don’t like white bikes. And that’s it. That’s not bad after seven months being ridden by a fussy bugger like myself.

Conclusion

The Genesis Alitude is pretty much ready to rock off-the-peg (change those bars before you leave the shop). The geometry is dialed for the whole steep-up steep-down ‘All Mountain’ riding thang. But the best thing about this bike is its sprightly feel. While it may hold you back a few mph on the faster rough descents (hey, get a full susser) it also keeps body fatigue at bay so you can play on the steep stuff until the sun goes down – and then you can unpack your lights and keep playing.