

HEAD OF THE HOUSE

Our Favorite Rides

BACK FOR ITS SECOND YEAR, OUR HEAD OF THE HOUSE AWARD ISSUE HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING ENDEAVOR ONCE AGAIN. WE'RE CONSTANTLY BEING ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT BIKES WE RECOMMEND, WHAT OUR FAVORITE BIKES HAVE BEEN AND IF WE HAD TO BUY A BIKE, WHAT WOULD IT BE. WE SENT OUT A SPREAD SHEET TO BOTH STAFF AND NON-STAFF TEST RIDERS FOR THEIR VOTES BASED ON BIKES WE'VE RIDDEN OVER THE PAST YEAR. WHAT YOU'LL SEE ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES IS A CATEGORY WINNER PLUS TWO RUNNER UPS SELECTED FROM OUR FAVORITE BIKES THAT WE'VE RIDDEN IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. NO POLITICS, NO PRE-CONCEIVED NOTIONS AND NO HOLDS-BARRED. THESE ARE SELECTIONS BASED PURELY ON OUR COMBINED TRAIL EXPERIENCES.

The challenge began long before we started taking votes. First we had to narrow down categories and decide how to divide up the splintering factions of mountain bikes. The first and only easy choice was the Downhill category – our bread and butter. Our next category seems to be the industry's most popular niche and one of our favorites as well, the All Mountain (AM) category. Stepping down in travel and weight, we enter the Trail category. No doubt this is probably the most popular segment in the off-road in terms of bikes sales and riders. It's also a category that has seen huge advancements thanks to material and geometry evolution from their bigger AM brothers. This year we added a new category and are hoping to see this segment continue to gain momentum. Women's bikes are definitely not as common as their male counterparts but we're hoping that each year more brands will see the need for developing truly capable women's-specific bikes – preferably ones that have more than 120 mm of travel and 68-degree head angles.

DOWNHILL should be a no-brainer for our readers and this category is a special one for us. Our passion is deep in gravity-fueled bikes and for this reason it is our headlining award. Bikes built to withstand the harshest abuse and burliest of terrain, downhill bikes are the crème-de-la-crème in our world.

ALL MOUNTAIN is where lines started to get drawn and the conference table began to ache. While enduro is the hottest catch phrase since 27.5, we took a stand that there are no enduro bikes, only enduro races. We realize only a small minority of riders actually race enduro, so we asked, 'does calling a bike an enduro bike alienate riders from buying those bikes since they don't race enduro? What if they just want a 150-180 mm travel bike to slay manly trails?' All Mountain it is.

TRAIL was another category with much deliberation. While some may say Trail and All Mountain could be synonymous with each other, or just called "mountain biking," we felt that bikes in the Trail category were a bit different. Trail bikes have steeper geometry, are geared more towards riders who head out on multi-hour rides, climb a bit more, live in smoother, flatter terrain or are more concerned with pedaling efficiency and weight. We concentrated on the 120-140 mm travel range for bikes in this category.

WOMEN SPECIFIC bikes have made quite a leap over the last few years. Although their selection is still heavily leaning towards the entry-level or XC side of the spectrum, we're hoping that as more aggressive female riders cast their votes with dollar bills, the industry will adapt and offer aggressive trail bikes to meet their needs.



TRANSITION PATROL

IF YOU READ OUR REVIEW OF THE PATROL in our last issue, (Apr-15) it should come as no surprise that this bike is taking the gold. Transition is sticking a big finger in the air as they are one of the most affordable bikes in contention and the only aluminum bike to take a Head of the House title. Transition is a small, rider-owned company that puts their passion on the line. They have a firm grasp on the scene and what their clients want, which is the same thing they want - to have a damn good time on bikes, by pedaling to the top of a mountain and destroying said mountain on the way down!

Taking advantage of the newly accessible Horst Link patent, Transition created their Giddy Up Link to improve on an already popular bike design. With 155 mm of rear travel and a 160 mm Pike up front, the Patrol is definitely ready and willing to be pointed down whatever you can find. Combine that with geometry that is almost identical to the famed Iron Horse Sunday and you've got a sub-30-pound trail bike that is heavily biased for the downs. From the first time we laid this bike over in a corner we knew it was special. The Patrol easily pops off trail features and will give you super-hero confidence when it comes time to twist those hips into a corner.

While the 65-degree head angle, super low BB (13.5-in.) and 46.49-inch wheelbase (medium) may not be the best tool for everyone's needs, we felt the insane confidence, fair price and incredibly playful demeanor make the Patrol this year's All Mountain Bike of the Year. Bring on the nastiness.

Price: \$5,999;

Weight: 29.2 lbs.;

Contact: transitionbikes.com



Sorry to let you down but the Enve wheels do not come spec'd on this bike for the above price. We just picked our favorite bike to test these awesome wheels on!



LEIGHT

