



BMC FourStroke01

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I'm a hard-tail rider, I've been riding one almost exclusively for the last 10-odd years. I like the feel of them, I like their feathery weight and I like their directness - they float under me when I'm riding well, and they buck me off when I'm not. Mostly though, I like having to work for a smooth ride. So it was with great interest that I strolled in to the bike shop to pick up the new test bike - a pimped-out, carbon dual suspension: the BMC Fourstroke 01. This bike wouldn't just be new to me because it was a dually. It would also be the first time I'd play with 2x10 SRAM and Schwalbe Rocket Rons. Leant against the shop counter, its lean and muscular body was poised like a sprinter crouched in the blocks. I knew right then and there that my idea of the perfect mountain bike would be held up to the light and seriously challenged. Would it make the trail 'too easy'? Would I yearn for my hard-tail and the precision it demanded? Would it make me a faster rider or would it be all show, no go? A smile stretched across my face, my legs went weak. I had to get this thing off road.

THE BIKE

The claimed weight of the frame and shock is 2 kilograms, which given the stiffness of the 100mm travel rear end, is awesome. While I didn't weigh the complete bike, it behaved

like it was within a kilo or so of the weight of my hardtail. The suspension platform is tried and true. In this instance it's given the fancy name, 'Advanced Pivot System', or 'APS' for short, but it's essentially a variation on the DW-link design. Whatever jargon is used to brand it or explain its behavior, if set up right, it's very effective.

The general spec is a well thought-out, and thoroughly colour-coordinated affair, with virtually every component mirroring the black/white/red colour scheme of the frame. The Easton EA90 wheels clad in Rocket Rons promised to be a solid performer. However, the bold graphics weren't to my liking, but once the wheels were turning the graphics tended to disappear!

The cockpit featured a reliable, but easily scratched, Easton EA70 bar and stem combo, and it was kept very uncluttered by the Matchmakers. I didn't like the lock-on grips at all. Although looking the part, I found the rubber too hard for my hands and noticed having to tighten them to prevent slipping far too frequently. The saddle was the very comfy Selle Italia SL XC and the post a BMC-branded one. All in all, a very decent spec.

THE RIDE

My first ride was at Stromlo - rough and raw from the hammering of rain we've

all had of late. Initially I was out of the saddle at every opportunity (part new-bike excitement, part hardtail-ethic), but I was getting too much movement in the shock, a very energy-sapping feeling. After the first ride, I put spent a fair bit of time getting the shock pressure right. It probably took the best part of a month to get it, and the fork, set up just right. Eventually though, I had it dialed, though running slightly firmer than the recommended maximum. With the ProPedal on the shock flicked on, I had a very firm ride with enough compliance so I could sit through the small roots and bumps, and with plenty of give for the big hits. With the ProPedal off, I had much more movement in the shock, perfect for fun, charging descents on social rides and general playtime on the trail. Eventually I was at one with the Fourstroke, a man with momentum - pedaling efficiently, carrying awesome speed through the corners, thanks to the stiff rear end and the awesome tyres, and gliding effortlessly and silently over anything and everything in my way.

The 100mm Fox FRL FIT fork was a perfect match for the rear shock. Though with the frame being so stiff, I did notice a bit of slop in the front end. Some of this could have been in the wheel, but I couldn't help but think that having the 15QR Thru Axle version

may have been a better choice. Some riders may also like to add on a remote lockout for the front fork, which is a simple upgrade.

I won't dwell on the SRAM X0 2x10 drivetrain - see Enduro #19 for a full review - but I will say that for me, it was nigh on flawless. Only once did it skip a beat by dropping a chain, but in its defence, it happened over a very rough and sustained descent, with a crossed chain. After some decent punishment, the crank arms are showing a fair bit of wear, but this is fairly typical for the carbon X0 crankset. The X0 brakes were, as expected, a standout.

The tyres, Schwalbe Rocket Rons, were fantastic. I found them to be far more durable, yet grippier, than Racing Ralphs which are my usual choice of rubber. I would have expected a tubeless setup to be spec'ed with this bike - it wasn't - but that said, I didn't get a single puncture, nor notice the difference.

Generally speaking, I thought that a dually might make my line choice sloppy but the BMC Fourstroke dared me to open up new and bold line choices. I sailed over obstacles head on if I liked, flick the rear end at whim and jumped most things thanks to the springiness and light-weight of the Fourstroke. I must say thought, with only the one bottle mount, I had to adjust my whole way of hydrating, not only during races, but during social rides. This involved dusting off the dreaded backpack in some instances, something I didn't enjoy. I know this is not an issue for a lot of people, but as a hard-tail rider, this took some getting used to.

For the few months that I had the BMC, I rode as much as I could to really put it to the test - the technical singletrack of the ACT; the fast, loose descents of the Blue Mountains; the sandy trails of the NSW south coast; 100km enduros and XC races. At every trail and at every race, it performed like a champion.

THE VERDICT

The Fourstroke is a very good package and once I had set the shock up to my liking I found this bike to be quite close to perfect. Sure, I could improve it by converting to



tubeless, slapping on a remote lockout and possibly going for a 15QR front fork but out of the box the Fourstroke offers plenty to shout about. It really is sleek, light and fast - a 100mm travel carbon dually for the discerning xc/marathon racer which should

be seriously considered by those looking for a rig in that range.

In fact, the Fourstroke was so good that I may have to reassess whether my garage has a place for another bike next to my faithful hardtail...

FRAME	APS carbon - 100 mm rear travel
FORK	Fox FRL FIT 100 F&R; SRAM X.0 10 speed
DERAILLEURS	SRAM X.0, 10 speed
SHIFTERS	SRAM X.0, 10 speed
RIMS	Easton EA 90 wheelset
TYRES	Schwalbe Rocket Ron's, 26 x 2.25"
BRAKES	Avid X0 hydraulic disc brakes, 6-bolt; G3 160mm rotors
CRANKSET	SRAM X.0, 42/28
HANDLEBAR	Easton EC 70, XC low rise
SEAT & POST	Selle Italia SL XC, BMC race post
RRP	\$8,295.00
CONTACT	www.bmc-racing.com