

CANNONDALE RUSH 3

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK LAMBERT

First introduced in 2006 Cannondale's Rush line-up now comprises of 10 different models including two female-specific models and three new-for-'07 carbon framed versions.

The Rush 3 is the top dog amongst the alloy-framed range although it is only the component selection that makes it so as they all share the same basic frame. Cold forged blocks of alloy make up much of the front portion of the swingarm where it bolts to the front triangle via a simple single pivot. The rear drop outs are also cold forged while the upper shock mount is CNC machined. Cannondale's special double welding process and extensive smoothing of the welds make for a very clean almost seamless front end.

The Rush 3 is available in two colours: Jet Black with Patriot Blue/Charcoal Grey highlights and the Vredestein Team Replica colour that we tested. A second version of this model is the Rush 3z, identical in spec except a Fox F100 fork is bolted to the front end instead of the Lefty fork. Fox's updated RP23 shock is fitted and allows the rider to switch the Propedal damping on or off and choose three levels of compression damping. FSA's tasty new polished Afterburner crankset mates to a SRAM drivetrain and Avid's Juicy 7 brakes handle stopping duties. The Rush 3 rolls on a Mavic Crossland UST tubeless wheelset topped with Maxxis Crossmark UST tyres.

Out of the box the Vredestein Team Replica colours looked just as sweet as the bikes Kashi rides and the frame has a high polish with a clearcoat to it that should keep it looking that way for the season. Set up was simple and top marks should go to Cannondale for including some of the most comprehensive set-up literature we've seen for any bike in a long while. In addition to the usual component manuals there were no fewer than three separate guides on how to set up the suspension on the Rush, plus a specific manual detailing the Rush frame and small parts. A couple of our 180cm testers could have used heavier fork springs based on the set up guide, but as they almost had the seat post at full extension on this medium frame they would have better suited a large instead.

The 23.6 inch top tube puts the rider in a relaxed efficient pedalling position without being too stretched out racer-style. The FSA bars are wide and comfortable, immediately making any new rider climbing aboard feel instantly at home. It takes precisely 17 seconds of pedalling to stop staring at the single-sided Lefty and forget it's even there. Unfortunately you'll continually have to endure stares and comments from other riders that have never seen one in the flesh!

The Rush accelerates as though it weighs less, helped in part by a firm pedalling platform and partly by the quick rolling Maxxis Crossmark tyres. When we really wanted to hammer we'd switch

the Propedal setting to position 2 or the firmest 3 setting, but generally ran the Propedal switched off at all other times. Loose climbs were best handled seated to attain best traction as out of the saddle efforts sometimes resulted in the rear tyre breaking loose. At the front the Lefty fork had few knobs to twiddle once the main spring pressure was set. Rebound damping and lock-out being the extent of them. Unfortunately the lock-out doesn't feature a blow-off so you'd best save it for smooth surfaces, and remember to switch it back to active before it gets rough.

We encountered a couple of mishaps with the bikes drivetrain during our test, although both were really freak incidents. The first being a snapped chain, and without the proper Shimano joining pin it snapped several more times. It was replaced with a SRAM chain for the remainder of the test and ran trouble free. The second incident is worth mentioning purely for the coincidence. On two separate three hour rides on exactly the same gravel road hill climb the rear tyre managed to lob a stone into the front derailleur and stop it from shifting. Flipping the bike over soon dislodged it, but kind of weird nonetheless.

With 110mm of travel front and rear the Rush 3 has a cross country feel about it on the trail, some small bump compliance is traded off for a 'tight' responsive feel encouraging the ride to click up another gear and push it that bit harder. The 69



> The one-piece stem acts as the fork steer tube and saves around 150g over the two-piece set up. Cannondale multi tool is an optional extra.



> You'll need an adaptor to mount the Rush on your roofrack but removing the wheel is a simple case of undoing the axle bolt and loosening the two calliper bolts in their slotted mounts.



> Tyre clearance is decent for the Maxxis Crossmark 2.1

degree head angle sounds quite relaxed on paper for a bike of this nature but it never felt lazy or slow and is best described as not feeling twitchy or nervous like similar travel bikes with 70-71 degree head angles can. The laterally and torsionally stiff combination of the Lefty fork, integrated stem/steerer and FSA bars provides precise steering and feedback to the rider. This is not a front end that wanders and twists through the rough stuff; it goes precisely where it is pointed.

On higher speed rough trails the Rush let's you know it is operating with barely more than four inches of travel, but for a focussed rider this is where it really excels. That front end will go exactly where you point it. The Lefty easily rivalled the torsional stiffness of any 20mm thru-axle forks we've ridden. Deciding to change your line mid way through a corner and steer across ruts was never an issue. Of course this couldn't be achieved without a good set of tyres and the

Maxxis Crossmarks performed excellently in the dry and sometimes loose conditions we encountered during the test period. The lateral stiffness of the chassis really came into play in these circumstances providing a solid stable platform from which the rider can literally carve up the trail. It was this ability that meant several riders found they were breathing harder on the descents than the uphill as they attempted to explore the Rush's handling limits. It is for this reason we'd opt for the Lefty fork over the Fox, as it significantly contributes to the bike's handling characteristics.

The Cannondale Rush 3 is a more than capable enduro bike. The simplicity of the single pivot will benefit riders that ride often in all conditions with less maintenance. It's a strong pedaller and rewards a skilled rider with precise handling. Trail riders with some finesse that don't need a six inch travel trail bike to cover their bad lines could also find a happy home aboard the Rush.

SPECIFICATIONS – Cannondale Rush 3

FRAME	6061-T6 Aluminium
REAR SHOCK	Fox RP23
FORK	Lefty Speed Bonded DLR2
STEM	Cannondale XC3 Si 31.8mm
HANDLEBAR	FSA XC280 riser
GRIPS	Cannondale V-Tech
HEADSET	Cannondale Headshok Si
SHIFTERS	SRAM X-7
FRONT DERAILLEUR	Shimano LX
REAR DERAILLEUR	SRAM X-9
CRANKSET	FSA Afterburner MegaExo
WHEELSET	Mavic Crossland UST
CASSETTE	SRAM PG-970 11-34
CHAIN	Shimano HG53
BRAKES	Avid Juicy 7 w/ 160mm rotors
SEAT POST	Cannondale C3 2014 Alloy
SADDLE	Fizik Nisene II Sport
PEDALS	Crank Brothers Eggbeater
TYRES	Maxxis Crossmark XC UST 2.1
COLOUR	Vredestein Team Replica
WEIGHT AS TESTED	13.3kg (29.3lb)
SIZE TESTED	Medium
REAR TRAVEL	4.4 inches (110mm)
FRONT TRAVEL	4.4 inches (110mm)
RRP	\$5700
BIKE SUPPLIED BY	Cyclexpress www.cyclexpress.co.nz www.cannondale.com

