

On The Rise

The Cannondale Rize Carbon 1

The do-it-all, five-inch-travel Cannondale Rize trailbike is a mid-year release (Cannondale calls it an early 2009) that comes in five models priced from \$5600 for the top-of-the-line Rize Carbon 1 (our test bike) to \$1900 for the aluminum-framed Rize 5. All five (two carbon and three aluminum models) share the same rear suspension design, plenty of Cannondale's System Integration (SI) technology, and what Cannondale is calling their BackBone Technology.

GET A BACKBONE

Cannondale engineers believe the heart of a trailbike lies in the vicinity of the bottom bracket, seat tube and down-tube. They also believe the heart has to be strong. They addressed this on their Rush models with the Hotbox, a cold-forged component of the swingarm that acted as swingarm pivot, lower shock mount and the central post that triangulated the swingarm. On the Rize, they unveil the BackBone.

The 3D-forged BackBone combines Cannondale's BB30 SI bottom bracket, the swingarm's lower pivot, and the double-butted seat tube into a single, three dimensionally forged part. The guys with the pocket protectors say the 3D forging allows them to align the grain structure of the BackBone (this historically makes for a stronger part with a longer fatigue life), combine what is traditionally three separate pieces, and assure a more accurate alignment of the bottom bracket and the swingarm's pivot. Cannondale hopes the final result of the BackBone will be like giving their trailbike a heart transplant.



Still the one: The Cannondale Lefty is still the most unique front suspension in mountain biking. Sure to attract attention, the Lefty has a leg up on conventional forks with the way it navigates nasty terrain.

SYSTEM INTEGRATION

Cannondale has always been the leader in the design and manufacture of proprietary components (yes, that's System Integration). This commitment totally frees designers to go at it without being limited to the use of off-the-shelf components and standards. The Rize is a showcase of Cannondale SI, starting with the 3D-forged BackBone. Other SI stunners include the Lefty Max Carbon fork, Hollowgram SL cranks, Headshok SI headset/stem and the Lefty SI hub. It is a shame to mention each part so briefly, because they all



Rize

deserves a test of their own. The problem is, we have this beautiful mountain bike sitting here, and we want to ride.

GETTING A RIZE

An accomplished rider could be forgiven for believing the Rize is a cross-country race bike. The bike would be considered incredibly light for a short travel, dual-suspension cross-country race bike, and seeing that it is actually a *five-inch-travel* trailbike sweetens the deal. It is not just its light weight that gives the Rize a racer's mentality. The cockpit puts the rider in a fairly stretched-out riding position, offers only the slightest rise at the bar, and the saddle feels narrow and firm. The bike is slim between the rider's legs, with the cables, hoses, suspension swing-link and stays all tucked in tight. The Maxxis Rendez tires, while fat enough to be trailbike worthy, have a knob pattern that looks ready to roll onto a cross-country race course.

Powering out: The BackBone is not some buzzword dreamed up by the Dale's sales department. The Rize's BackBone will be more noticeable to conditioned riders who have developed a good amount of useable wattage in their legs. In other words, "Hammer, dude!" The Rize doesn't care if you push giant gears or spin your brains out. It responds with a laterally rock-solid bottom bracket (heart?) and drivetrain that never brushes the front derailleur or comes close to the chainstay during hard efforts.

Cornering: The Rize never feels quite as slack as the frame geometry numbers would have you believe, and that's good. The responsive pedaling performance would be ruined if mated to sluggish handling. Instead, you have a lively singletracker that slices, carves and pretty much holds the line you tell it to. Added credit goes to the Lefty fork. It eliminates flex issues that the new crop of 15-millimeter-thru-axle-equipped forks is trying to solve (and it has done so for years now).

Climbing: The Rize rider will bury other five-inch-travel trailbikes on long climbs. The efficient drivetrain and bike's feather weight join forces to flatten hills. Riders who push a big gear can throw the shock's ProPedal lever to firm the rear end. The rest of us will find that even with the ProPedal off, the rear end does not bob. The Rize's front end gets light as the climb's pitch turns steep. The rider has to respond by moving forward or the front wheel will easily lose contact with the trail. Move too far forward and the rear tire loses traction. Yes, it takes a little skill for the Rize to reach its potential on the climbs.

Descending: You can tell that the Rize has five inches of travel as it soaks up the hits. It doesn't chatter, adding smoothness to its downhill skills. Braking firms the rear suspension, making the great modulation of the Shimano XTR rear brake feel grabby and the tire feel like a racing slick (as it locks and skids too easily). Getting the most out of the Rize while descending requires using the rear brake lightly and timing the hardest braking before braking bumps or loose trail surfaces.

THE RIZE AND FALL

Sorry, Cannondale, but the lockout feature on your Lefty is sad. Sure, the new pushbutton activation is sweet. It is the fork's rock-solid lockout that is so 1995. There has to be a Cannondale suspension guru who can give the Lefty a blow-off circuit to take the bite out of its lockout. Either that, or why not remove the feature? The way it is now, we never used it. Never.

Our fork had 29 clicks that gave us about three rebound settings: full fast, full slow and somewhere in the middle. The rebound worked fine; it just took an awful lot of clicking to get to it.

System integration: Cannondale makes their own cranks and BB30 bottom bracket. The combo delivers enough lateral rigidity to keep the biggest gear masher happy.

A waterbottle cage can be mounted inside the frame triangle, but good luck getting a bottle (or battery) in and out of it. Mounting the bottle below the downtube isn't ideal, but at least it would be usable.

The seatpost fit so snugly into the seat tube that we found ourselves leaving it fully extended for long descents rather than mess with it. One rider joked that the quick-release clamp on the seat tube could be removed to save weight.



RIZE TO THE CHALLENGE

The American-made Rize feels too light to be taken seriously as a trailbike. It has to be fragile, right? Cannondale anticipated this concern and bestowed a lifetime frame warranty with no rider weight limit on this rocket of a trailbike. That's a lot of peace of mind for the trail rider ready to drop some serious dough.

The Rize is a trailbike that thinks it is a cross-country racer. It is light, responsive, slim and just as effective (and fun) on the forty-minute lunch loop as it is on a six-hour, I-can't-believe-I-rode-the-whole-thing epic excursion. The Rize is a trailbike with a lot of heart. □

CANNONDALE RIZE

Price	\$5600
Country of origin	U.S.A.
Weight	24.4 pounds
Hotline	(800) 726-2453
Frame tested	18" (medium)
Bottom bracket height	13.25"
Chainstay length	16.5"
Top tube length	23.5"
Head angle	68.5°
Seat angle	72.5°
Standover height	31.25"
Wheelbase	43"
Suspension travel (front)	5.1"
Suspension travel (rear)	5.1"
Frame material	Carbon fiber
Fork	Cannondale Lefty Max Carbon
Shock	Fox Float RP23
Rims	Mavic Crossmax ST UST
Tires	Maxxis Rendez (2.1")
Hub	Mavic Crossmax ST
Brakes	Shimano XTR hydraulic disc
Brake levers	Shimano XTR
Crankset	Cannondale Hollowgram BB30 SL
Shifters	Shimano XT
Front derailleur	Shimano XT
Rear derailleur	Shimano XTR
Chainrings	Cannondale SL (44/32/22)
Cassette	Shimano XT (11-34)
Pedals	Crankbrothers Smarty