

GT

A typical cross-country bike used to be a hardtail. These days, four, five, or even six inches of travel is considered an average mountain bike.

When it was time to ride at the GT press camp in Engleberg, Switzerland, I went right for the six-inch Sanction and Force, two bikes that fill in the space between ride and freeride.

First the Sanction: It's got rock-guarded double chainrings, front and rear Maxle thru-axles, and a head angle that verges into DH territory at around 67°. This stuff puts the bike on the gnarly end of the six-inch trail bike spectrum. Impressions? I want as big a bike as I can get less than 32lbs., and this fits that bill. By adding dual thru-axles the bike is much more responsive and capable of burly maneuvers. The weight is kept lower with modern aluminum forming techniques like the monocoque top tube and hydroformed downtube. The result is a good compromise.

Then I rode the Force, on the other end of the six-inch travel spectrum. It's claimed to be two pounds lighter than the Sanction, has regular quick-release wheels, and steeper geometry with a 69° head angle. The Force handles the really-really tight switchbacks better than the Sanction, and it climbed two pounds lighter as well.

Both bikes pedaled well uphill. The I-Drive suspension design finds a good home on these longer travel trail bikes. I have to say I was impressed.

In shorter travel, these days a bike with four inches of travel is more of a race bike, where low weight is the unholy grail. GT has got the Marathon, an under-25lb. four-inch carbon suspension bike, which is quite swoopy in the way the carbon is formed. And if you want to keep it light and simple, there's a new carbon Zaskar hardtail. —Maurice

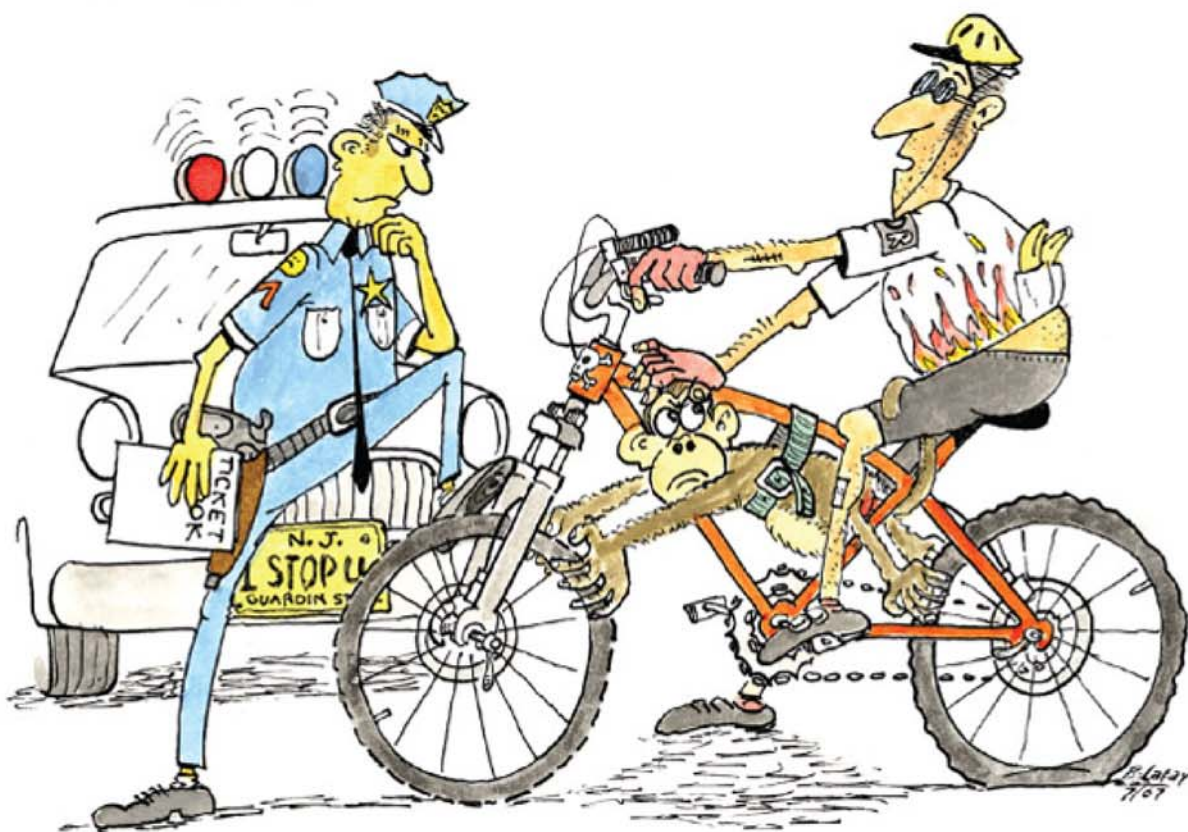


Illustration by Bob Lafay

"SIR, MY MONKEY WILL AUTOMATICALLY RETAIN THE WHEEL IF THE QUICK RELEASE FAILS"

IS NEW JERSEY NUTS?

The state of New Jersey has legislation in the works that would effectively ban the sale of bikes with quick-release wheels—yes, in other words, just about any adult bike worth riding. Apparently in an effort to prevent injuries to children, and sparked by recent lawsuits against Wal-Mart and Dynacraft over faulty wheels, a bill was introduced with the intent to tighten regulations on children's bikes; the Bicycle Product Suppliers Association (BPSA) has had representatives working with the New Jersey State Assembly for over a year to make sure the law made sense. But in a move that surprised many in the industry, a version of the law that includes adult bikes in the quick-release ban was recently approved by the Assembly.

The bill allows for quick-releases to be used if a secondary retention device that engages automatically is also used. Sounds fine, except that no such system exists on shop floors as of yet. There is

a wheel-retention system called CLIX, from Montague Inventive Technologies, which includes an automatic secondary retention, but it is not currently available on any stock bikes (although it will be soon on some models from Trek and Pacific).

The legislation is currently being considered in the New Jersey Senate, so if you live in that state, contact your local Senators and ask if they're nuts. You can go to the League of American Bicyclists' website (www.bikeleague.org) to find out how. —Karen Brooks

RAFFLE WINNER

It's hard to beat winning a brand new bike—just ask Brad Rue of Monte Vista, CO, who will soon be outfitted with a lovely Bianchi Rita 29er singlespeed worth \$1400. Who will be our next lucky winner? Who knows, but it won't be you unless you go to page 96 and get your entry in for the next bike on the docket, a Trek Fuel EX7.