

bike test

Scott Ransom LTD /// \$6,825; 800-292-5874; scottusa.com

If James Bond ever swung a leg over a mountain bike, it would have to be the Scott Ransom LTD. The carbon fiber frame boasts as much technology as any gadget ever created by officer *Q* of the British Secret Service. Just imagine communist diamond smugglers trying to escape through rough alpine singletrack. Bond would surely jump cyclocross style onto the Ransom—tuxedo and all—flip the handlebar-mounted switch from locked out to the full 165 millimeters of rear travel and blast down an exposed ridgeline, drifting through corners as fist-sized rocks fall hundreds of feet into the trailside abyss. The communists would be aboard Russian titanium hardtails; there'd be no escaping Bond.

The Ransom is that unique. Scott starts with its CR1 lay-up process, where the layers of carbon fiber are tensioned as they're applied to a removable bladder. The design boosts strength by pre-stressing the junctions prone to fatigue. According to Scott, the resulting 7-pound frame and rear shock is stronger than the aluminum version (which is available with a different build kit for \$3,150).

The real technology is found within the proprietary Equalizer rear shock. Three travel modes, adjustable via handlebar-mounted switch, use two separate positive air chambers. In the full 165-millimeter setting, oil flows into both chambers; in the 90-millimeter setting oil only

flows into one. Both chambers are closed off to oil flow in lockout mode.

Through varying amounts of rear sag and changing spring rates, the three travel settings give the bike different bottom bracket heights and three distinct ride qualities. No matter what the setting, the Ransom's 45-inch wheelbase and 68-degree head angle offers solid, yet snappy handling.

The Equalizer's speed-sensitive damping prevented the suspension from spiking after hard hits and the pedal-platform option improved efficiency. But platform damping was nearly worthless on the Ransom. It was much easier to flip the handlebar-mounted switch to the 90-millimeters travel setting or lock it out completely than it was to reach down to the shock and activate the platform damping.

At nearly seven grand, it's one of the most expensive bikes going. But its sub-30-pound weight, brutally efficient ride and incredible versatility also make it one of the best machines for long hours in the saddle over rugged terrain. Just make no mistake, the quick geometry makes this machine more of a long-legged XC bike than a light-duty freeride sled. —*Dain Zaffke*

