



**BIKE
OF THE
YEAR**

BEST SUB £2500 FULL SUSS LONG TRAVEL BIKE

Want a bit more beef behind your riding? Need the confidence boost and control that will keep you relaxed and ready for anything when you're pushing your limits way out in the middle of nowhere? These are the big bikes that'll take you all the way out there and bring you back with a big grin on your face.

SANTA CRUZ HECKLER X PIKE

A new and improved update of a MTB classic

£2468

Complete bike

Jungle 01423 780088 www.santacruz bikes.co.uk

Tested: WMB69



Santa Cruz's Heckler is one of the all-time classic bikes. Directly descended from one of the first proper full suss trail bikes – the Tazmon – we were slightly nervous when we got a world exclusive ride on the latest generation Heckler. What if it wasn't any good? What if single pivot bikes finally felt obsolete in a world of legally protected linkages and smart shocks? It was a scary moment.

Well we needn't have worried. Subtly updated geometry, a new

smoothly organic frame structure and increased travel immediately made us feel both instantly at home and totally ready to let rip straight away.

No need to bugger about with shocks or other shenanigans, just simple, totally intuitive get on and go communication wherever we headed. It was light and responsive enough to kick hard on climbs, and also stiff and sturdy enough to fly serious drops and hang your hopes on the last sideknob of tyre tread when you needed to.

Whoever rode it, from crag to cross country to flat-out wooded riverside singletrack suddenly seemed to be going much faster than usual – and with a much bigger grin, too. It's just that kind of instantly engaging and infectious super enjoyable bike.

Given the quality and pedigree it doesn't cost a fortune either, and it comes in some cracking colours this year. No wonder it was our first 'perfect 10' score in 12 months and one of our favourite bikes of the year.