

**TESTED**



TONY NOLAN

## SANTA CRUZ HECKLER

Price Frame: \$2295/Complete: \$5900 Contact Neezy, (07) 3371 3229

Intended use

XC/RACE TRAIL ALL-MTN FR DH 4X/JUMP

For a company with such a large reputation it's amazing to discover Santa Cruz is just 40 dedicated staff. The Santa Cruz Heckler has been around for years and meant many things to many proud owners. Santa Cruz describes its Heckler as "designed for those people who, as kids, were continually breaking their toys" and "somewhere between cross-country snappy and freeride burly".

### FRAME & BUILD

Despite all of the current suspension platform innovations (many pioneered on other frames designed by Santa Cruz) the Heckler is still proudly and robustly single-pivot, sporting over 5.5 inches of rear travel (143mm). There is a lot to be said for the simplicity of this design. Its easy maintenance and servicing is just one aspect. The Heckler displays the kind of loving finish you'd expect from an in-house frame build. The welds are smooth and neat at the joins and 6069 aluminium tubing looks tough but sleek. We tested an attractive anodised silver frame. The Heckler is tall and favours a fairly upright body position but

descends with equal competence – a genuine all-round performer. Avid Juicy 7s gave this Heckler plenty of braking power and the bike was well balanced under sudden and heavy braking. There was a little low-speed braking noise but this didn't affect performance.

### SPEC

The Heckler we tested came with a Factory 5th Element Air shock as mentioned, which was fantastically plush. But they aren't commercially available so we'll stop right there. As with the Ventana the adjustable-travel (4 to 6-inch) Maverick DUC32 air fork was responsible for keeping the front wheel

**“Although it begs to be subjected to aggressive riding, the bike is not intimidating.”** – Imogen Smith, *AMB* tester

there is plenty of room to throw your weight around through technical riding sections. Longish chainstays (43cm) keep the bike nicely balanced. At 33.6cm the bottom bracket gives plenty of clearance over rocks and roots but isn't high enough to destabilise the bike (but the inclusion of an integrated bottle opener on the rear left-hand drop-out might!).

under control. It is a great fork, well suited to all-mountain riding – light, stiff and plush. Enough said. Santa Cruz have a number of build kits on offer, including a range of rear shocks and forks, so keep in mind the spec we tested can be changed and will depend on what you want to tackle on your Heckler. The "Super X Sram Disc" kit featuring largely Sram X-9 drivetrain and Avid Juicy 7s performed impeccably, never missing a beat.

### RIDE

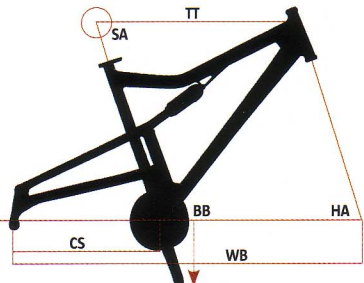
The Heckler has a fairly steep head angle of 69 degrees. This makes the bike a little twitchy in the front-end, and looks a little out of place on the do-anything Santa Cruz. But it does mean it really can claim to climb and corner like a trail bike – nimble and responsive through fast and tight corners. The rear-end tracks really well through corners and rocky terrain and the super-stiff rear swingarm can handle some pretty serious terrain if you feel like testing it. Pedal efficiency is great and down to two things: the pivot position and a nifty silver polished (and limited-edition) 5th Element Air shock. And no, you can't get one (we asked!). The Heckler climbs and

### VERDICT

The Heckler is easily loved. We found that although it begs to be subjected to very aggressive riding, the bike itself is not intimidating. Santa Cruz have labelled the Heckler all-around, but that could be said of the rider as well as the bike – anybody will enjoy riding this machine. The suspension is plush, efficient and forgiving. The steepish head angle can take getting used to but the Heckler is truly capable when it comes to rough or technical terrain. A quality high-end all-mountain ride suiting the rider who likes the confidence of a big-hitter but needs a bike that's light and comfortable enough to pedal all day. ▶



13.7kg



### GEOMETRY

Measurements in mm

	S - 20.6"	M - 22.5"	L - 23.3"
TT	523.24	571.5	591.82
CS	434.34	434.34	434.34
WB	1038.86	1082	1102.36
BB	335.28	335.28	335.28
HA	69°	69°	69°
SA	71.5°	71.5°	71.5°