



Price: \$3290 (frame)
Sizes: S, M (tested), L
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SANTA CRUZ BLUR 4X

Okay, so what were our initial impressions?

It's so good to see bike/frame designs evolve instead of just reinventing themselves season to season. Santa Cruz's Blur is one of the great success stories here. Add a constantly expanding line of off shoots to the Blur stable and the evolution is all too evident. I was lucky enough to be able to jump on board and test one of the 1st Blur XC's in the country when doing time at the not so AMB* a few years back. While the original Blur felt like it had loads more travel than it's stated 4.5 inches, it seemed more like a trail bike than an XC machine. But there was always the doubt in my mind that it wouldn't last too long under hard riding. Come 2006, the Blur 4X is the gravity fed bastard spawn. Bring it on...

What's the overall finish like?

When we looked in the 4X test, we figured a pretty dialled bike would make it's way down from the crew at Neezy. Come delivery, the Blur 4X came decked to the hilt. Pike Airs, Chris King headset, DT Swiss FR hubs, Avid Juicy stoppers, Raceface and eThirteen bits and the list goes on and on... The attention to details is epic, and finish is all class, from smooth welds right down to the silver satin anodising. While it may look pretty similar to the Blur XC from afar, make no mistake, the tubeset is beefed up throughout. From an almost VPFree rear swing arm (a 2.5" tire goes in easy!) to a well gusseted and thicker walled main frame (the downtube is almost an inch thicker in diameter).

What was the ride like out on the trail?

1st things 1st, learn to set up the 5th air shock and Pike airs from the start. Then you can begin to appreciate the laid back head angle (68.5° as measured with a 4-inch fork) that suits higher speed and bigger hits. It's rocks a relatively long wheel base for it's size making

it so stable it's ridiculous. Bring on some speed and you'll quickly work out where this bike excels. Corners. And it rails. Period. Lean it over and the low BB and slack angles make it the fastest cornering machine I've ridden in a long time. Pump berms and transitions with gusto, the Blur laps it up! Add the VPP system with platform tuned 5th element air suspension and you have a bike that can take the hard knocks with the small and you get to keep on pedalling regardless. While I wasn't ever that keen on locking out the forks, I was pleasantly surprised by the Pike's ability to hammer a long fireroad locked out and not be brutally harsh. Still, why lock em when they're meant to go up and down.

How did it ride compared with 4X bikes?

It's up there with the best in this 'genre', but it's abilities go far beyond simply the 4X realm and allow it to step into virtually any area of MTB you can throw it at/down/across/over. While it does pack a little more weight than some of the specific 4X machines out there, the Blurs solid build will see it out there on the track for more than one season (and the rhythms and the singletracks and the streets...) and is a super tough competitor to any hardtail race machine on the track.

What kind of rider is the Santa Cruz most suited?

The Blur will suit any rider after a premium ride on a premium brand bike keen to go fast as hell on an all around trail demon. Much lighter than most of the bigger freeride bikes out there it can still hang on the rough stuff thanks to the well sized wheel base. I'm ready to claim the Blur 4X as the new king of all around trail bikes for those keen to smash it up a little more than worry about excess grams. You might as well know that this is the end result or production version of Rennie's and Vories beefed up Blurs that they've been railing on for the last couple of seasons.

What were the bikes drawbacks?

The price... You can get yourself a KTM for the dollars involved! But you gotta pay to play and if you like to buy one bike and keep it for a number of years, it may well be a good choice. The set up on the rear 5th Air is a touch and go affair. Read the documentation and be prepared to get it right over time with a bit of experimentation! The bike will be very 2 faced otherwise... With a low BB and a fair chunk more weight than a regular Blur, some crew may find it a handful on epic trail rides especially if you don't work your pedalling through the rough stuff with some thought.

What were some of the Blurs strong points?

It's hella fun to ride anywhere and everywhere. That's gotta be a good thing... The laid back steering and seating makes it feel like a big travel machine. Wind the solid Pike Airs up to full travel out on the trail and you'll let the cranks clear rock gardens a little better. Jump it, aim it DH, carve up the corners, whatever, the Blur 4X is a weapon, plus it stops. Thanks Juicy 7's. And props to whoever spec'd bars that ain't too wide!

What would we change or add to the bike?

The stem could probably be a little beefier, seeing as the rest of the bike is rock solid! Plus the grips, you gotta run gloves if it's hot and youre hands are sweaty, a lot more grip would be cool. I'd go for a lower profile/tread tire also, to make it an all round rocket on harder pack surfaces and I'd also go Stans No Tubes and forget pinch flats for good. Aside that, a few stickers plastered over it would be sweet, plus get it covered in dirt ASAP... And I'd love to throw a coil over or Fox Air in just to check it out even though they ain't spec'd for the Blur, but don't tell the guys from Neezy! [Holmes]