



IDENTITI METTLE SRAM GX

£3,599.99 Seriously capable bulletproof bomber

Although our Guy has been on the Mettle frame for a year now, we wanted to put one of Identiti's cheapest complete builds through the wringer to see how it would hold up as a package.

The frame

Identiti have hit the nail right on the head when it comes to their numbers. Our 5ft 8in tester rode the small Mettle, which offers up a reach of 440mm, making it closer to many brands' medium frames in terms of length. This, coupled with the 435mm chainstays, helps to provide a nicely neutral rider position, but the stays are still short enough to make it easy to get the front wheel airborne. While the 65-degree head angle isn't crazy slack it still gives a confident feel when the going gets steep, and the 75-degree seat angle is a bonus when climbing.

Delivering the 160mm of rear wheel travel is a solidly-built four-bar Horst Link back end, while a metric RockShox Deluxe shock takes care of damping duties. Boost axle spacing and some clever design features mean there's plenty of mud

clearance. It's a nice touch that all of the pivot hardware on the Mettle requires the same 5mm Allen key for ease of maintenance.

The kit

While SRAM's GX Eagle 12-speed drivetrain is a real highlight, the rest of the kit, though well-considered, is decent rather than drool-worthy. The dual-piston SRAM Level brakes feel a little undergunned for the job, and while the Gusset saddle is comfortable, its cover has a tendency to snag your shorts when you're moving around on the bike.

The ride

It took us a little bit of experimenting to get the rear end feeling just right. We found that running just under 35 per cent sag, with two volume spacers fitted in the Deluxe shock, gave us decent grip through loose turns but meant the bike still handled the big thumps when we really opened things up, which is exactly where the Mettle thrives. Climbing is a relatively painless affair too, thanks to the easy-to-reach lever on the shock which firms the suspension up.

While RockShox's Yari fork lacks the 'Charger 2' damper found in the more refined and smoother but pricier Lyrik, it still soaks up the worst hits without transferring

SPEC

Frame Aluminium, 160mm (6.3in) travel
Fork RockShox Yari RC Solo Air, 160mm (6.3in) travel
Shock RockShox Deluxe RT3
Drivetrain SRAM GX Eagle (1x12)
Wheelset Halo Vapour 35 wheels, Schwalbe Magic Mary TrailStar (f) and Schwalbe Nobby Nic TrailStar (r) 27.5x2.35in tyres
Brakes SRAM Level TL, 180mm rotors
Bar/stem Gusset Slade, 780mm/Gusset Magnum, 50mm
Seatpost/saddle KS LEV Integra 150mm dropper/Gusset R-Series Black Jack
Weight 14.48kg (31.9lb), small size without pedals



The Mettle frame will handle everything you can throw at it and has a well-balanced suspension feel



SRAM's 12-speed GX Eagle transmission is a spec highlight

too much chatter or buzz through to your hands and arms. Identiti's smart decision to spec a Schwalbe Magic Mary tyre up front further bolsters the Mettle's downhill credentials and ensures steering accuracy when dealing with muddy conditions. We found that the SRAM Level brakes lacked the punch and power required on particularly long or steep brake-dragging descents. Fitting larger rotors would help, but SRAM's more powerful four-piston Guides or Codes would be a better choice, though they'd no doubt bump the price up a touch.

There's a surefooted robustness to the feel of the Mettle. The stiffness of the chassis gives an urgency to split-second changes of direction, but thankfully doesn't rattle you about when tackling seriously bumpy trails. It also underlines the solid, built-to-last feel, which gives you peace of mind when you're throwing nothing but abuse at the bike. **ROB WEAVER**
www.ison-distribution.com

MBUK VERDICT

Surefooted heavy-hitter that's built to last, but could do with more powerful brakes