



A 148x12mm Syntace axle keeps the rear end streamlined, but you'll need an Allen key to remove the wheel

With the 150mm drop KS LEV Integra post, we had no issues getting the saddle out of harm's way

Identiti made a last-minute substitution to the tyre spec on the Mettle GX. It now comes with the Schwalbe Magic Mary/Nobby Nic combo found on the more expensive models

SRAM Level LT brakes don't carry the cachet of the Guide units, but they certainly aren't lacking in power

IDENTITI METTLE GX

£3,599.99

SPECIFICATION

Frame Aluminium, 160mm travel
Shock RockShox Deluxe RT3
Fork RockShox Yari RC, 160mm travel
Wheels Halo hubs, Halo Vapour rims, Schwalbe Magic Mary/Nobby Nic 27.5x2.3in tyres
Drivetrain SRAM Descendant 34t chainset, SRAM GX Eagle 1x12 r-mech and shifter
Brakes SRAM Level LT, 180mm
Components Gusset Slade 760mm bar, Gusset Magnum 50mm stem, KS Lev Integra 150mm post, Gusset R-Series Black Jack saddle
Sizes S, M, L
Weight 14.63kg (32.25lb)
Contact identitibikes.com

GEOMETRY

Size tested M
 Head angle 64.9°
 Seat angle 71.8°
 BB height 338mm
 Chainstay 437mm
 Front centre 810mm
 Wheelbase 1,247mm
 Down tube 730mm
 Top tube 645mm
 Reach 465mm

When you only make a bike in three frame sizes you really need to nail the sizing. And that's exactly what Identiti has done with the Mettle — our size M test bike simply dwarfing the size L bikes from DMR and YT.

With a 1,247mm wheelbase and 465mm reach measurement the size M Mettle is perfectly proportioned and it completely takes the guesswork out of choosing the right size bike. If you're around 5ft 10in, you ride the size M, it couldn't be easier.

It's also low and slack for a 160mm travel rig, so it's not just the sizing that's on the money. The frame is nicely finished too, with small details that make a big difference, like the seatstay bridge wrapping around the seat tube to prevent mud building up on the back end. We also liked the small recess on the underside of the driveside seatstay that improves chain clearance and produces a blissfully quiet ride, even on the rowdiest trails.

Sure, the cable routing on the Mettle isn't the neatest, as it's not all concealed inside the down tube, but it's unobtrusive and at no point detracts from the ride.

SUSPENSION

We like the fact that Identiti doesn't have some bullshit name or a daft acronym for its suspension design. Instead, it just says what it is in plain English: a four-bar design with 160mm travel. All of the pivots use the same bearing size, to make everyone's lives

easier, and it's been designed around the new metric shock standard. The RockShox Deluxe comes stock on the GX build, but you can also upgrade to the Super Deluxe for an extra £100.

Keeping it RockShox at both ends is a 160mm travel Yari RC. It's not quite as good at ironing out big creases in the trail as the Lyrik on the DMR, but it feels every bit as stout.

COMPONENTS

The GX level Mettle hasn't just got any old SRAM GX on it; it's got the 12-speed Eagle version, with a massive gear range thanks to the 10-50t cassette. Combined with a relatively steep seat angle that helps keep your weight forward, and the front end down, on climbs, the Eagle lets you soar to new heights considering the bike weighs 14.63kg.

Other aspects of the specification aren't so breathtaking. The 760mm handlebar is just about wide enough, but the 50mm stem is too long for a bike with such a generous reach measurement. The two higher-priced bikes in the three-strong Mettle range both get 40mm stems, so it seems silly that the entry-level bike misses out.

Our biggest issue with the finishing kit on the Mettle, however, is the saddle. The material covering the Gusset R-Series Black Jack saddle is just too grippy, so we were continually snagging our shorts on it.

PERFORMANCE

Swapping the stock 50mm stem for a 30mm made a massive difference to the ride quality of the Mettle. Not only did it

shift our weight rearward on descents, it really allowed the bike to settle into the rear suspension, improving tracking and handling. And while we'd normally run a wider bar than a 760mm, to open up the cockpit, the extra length in the Mettle frame meant that we never felt penned in.

We experimented with different sag settings too, settling around 35 per cent, the softer set-up improving traction, while still keeping some travel in reserve for bigger hits and drops. We ran the rebound damping on the Deluxe shock fully open, so if you're lighter than 80kg, we'd highly recommend dropping the extra cash to get the Super Deluxe, as it has a wider range of rebound adjustment.

VERDICT

Identiti has done a great job with the Mettle. The proportions and angles align perfectly, and even with three frame sizes, it offers a better fit than most bikes with five. With 160mm travel, it's unashamedly a big-hit rig. It carries its 14.63kg heft well too, with more muscle than fat, so it's solid without ever feeling sluggish. Timing has helped too, as the newly released GX Eagle drivetrain enables you to spin, rather than grind, up every climb. It can't compete with YT's pricing though, so even though the sizing is better, the complete package isn't as good.

