

TESTING, TESTING 1-2-3



2010 FOX RP23

WITH EVEN BETTER BIG HIT PERFORMANCE, THE 2010 RP23 TRULY SETS THE STANDARD FOR AIR SHOCKS.

Few would dispute that the Fox RP23 is the king of air shocks - its smooth performance is really second to none. You'll find it specced on all kinds of rigs; cross country racers all the way through to freeride bikes. Over the past couple of years we've started to see this shock used more and more on bikes built for hard riding, as manufacturers realise just how good the bump-eating performance is for such a lightweight unit. Through the use of a high volume air sleeve (which can be retrofitted to any Fox air shock) manufacturers can attain near coil-like performance for a fraction of the weight. For 2010 Fox have reworked the RP23 to make it even better suited to hard riding and to increase the level of control on big impacts. We were lucky enough to get our mitts on the very first 2010 RP23 in Australia, direct from Fox themselves. Wetting our pants with excitement, we bolted it into our Pivot Mach 5 and headed to the trails.

On initial inspection the new RP23 doesn't look too different from last year's model - there are same external adjustments (ProPedal, ProPedal threshold and rebound), and the shock body is identical. The only indication that some internal tweaking has taken place comes from one sticker that proudly declares 'Boost Valve' and another that indicates the level of 'Velocity Tune'. Inside, however, things are a little different. The big news is the introduction of Boost Valve technology, a feature previously only found on Fox's DHX gravity oriented rear suspension. Unlike the externally adjustable Boost Valve settings on DHX shocks, the

RP23's Boost Valve is factory preset.

Hitting the trail the benefits of the Boost Valve are immediately noticeable. On square-edged hits and flat drops our 2009 model RP23 had a tendency to hit bottom pretty hard (a common trait of large volume air shocks). With the 2010 version this is no longer an issue; on harsh impacts the Boost Valve kicks in and increases the level of compression damping perfectly. Parts of the trail which previously brought a hard 'clunk' of bottom out could now be tackled without a worry. The other area we noticed significant improvement was small bump response when we had the ProPedal engaged. Even when running the firmer ProPedal settings the shock reacted to smaller impacts with extreme suppleness. While the pedalling characteristics of our Pivot mean that we rarely felt the need to activate the ProPedal, on bikes with less efficient pedalling the responsiveness of the new shock will be of real benefit. Other areas of the performance were characteristically brilliant. The rebound adjustment range is wide and usable, and the suspension stroke seamlessly smooth without ever feeling wallowy.

Overall impressions then? Just perfect! The new Boost Valve really allows you to make the most of the RP23's capabilities for hard riding. With such impressive performance we can't help but think Fox may have shot themselves in the foot; we really don't see the need for the DHX Air shocks now that the RP23 is so capable. At the opposite end of the spectrum the improved small bump response makes the RP23 an even better cross country shock than ever before. Full marks to Fox. CHRIS SOUTHWOOD



PEARL IZUMI WOOL SOCKS

If you've worn woollen socks before, no doubt you would be aware of the comfort benefits from the natural material. Most woollen socks are so thick it feels like you are putting your foot in a whole sheep, but cycling socks are thin for a reason. Pearl Izumi have done a neat job with these, they feel nice on your feet and don't bunch up or feel saggy round the toes. \$27 is more than you'd normally pay for socks, but put one or two pairs in the draw and you'll reach for them every time. MICK ROSS

\$27 **R** 4.5/5

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IXS JUDGE MALLET

A nice simple shoe with durable suede upper, loads of cushy padding and flex similar to that of skate shoe. In the dry they give a good feel of the pedal letting you manoeuvre the bike easily into those more difficult trick positions. The upper styling might be a bit basic but, paired with the bold red soles these are a great pair of shoes for any dirt jumper, downhill or slopestyler. JAMES HALL

\$99 **R** 4/5

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P 5/5 **E** 2.5/5 **V** 4.5/5
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