

AVANTI'S AGGRESSOR HAS HAD A MAKEOVER AND LOOKS SHARPER THAN EVER. IT BACKS UP ITS CLASSY APPEARANCE WITH SOLID PERFORMANCE THAT WILL APPEAL TO RACERS LOOKING FOR A BIKE THAT WON'T BLOW THE BUDGET.



AVANTI AGGRESSOR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG MADSEN

Avanti's range of mountain bikes is made up entirely of hardtails, which are divided into the elite, full-carbon framed Competitor series and a large range of more affordable alloy options. Within the alloy range of bikes, four bikes are separately categorised as race models. These are all built around Avanti's premium light weight 7005 series butted aluminium frame and are distinguished from each other by component selection and colour, with the Aggressor taking the top spot as the most highly specced and arguably the best looking.

Avanti say they have reduced the Aggressor's frame weight by 15% for 2010. Visually, it's certainly leaner in appearance than some of their recent frames, with an overall look that is minimalist and elegant. Its tubing profiles now have a slender appearance when compared with many alloy frames, and switching to an integrated headset (versus the zero-stack type used on previous bikes) has resulted in a much slimmer looking head tube. The bulky mono stay arrangement on the rear of the 08/09 version has also been done away with and replaced with sleeker, more traditional full length seat stays; interestingly, these feature rear pannier rack mounting points, suggesting a wider range of users has been kept in mind than just the competitive set. The bike's colour scheme was a hit with our testers. The subtle gold and white highlights over the glossy black paint accentuate the frame's svelte appearance and combine well with the white fork, brakes and grips. We were left wondering why Avanti stopped there; this bike is crying out for a white saddle to really complete the look.

The components package on the Aggressor features a mixture of mid to high end parts, with the best quality components intelligently specced in areas where the improved performance would be most useful and noticeable. Rockshox's 100mm travel Reba SL fork, a favourite among our testers, is certainly one of the highlights here, as are the Sram X7 shifters and an



THE ROCKSHOX REBA SL STANDS OUT AS ONE OF THE COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS ON THIS BIKE. WE WERE IMPRESSED WITH ITS SMOOTH PERFORMANCE.

X7/X9 derailleur combination. Stopping power comes courtesy of a pair of Avid Elixir 5 brakes, which include Matchmaker mounts to tidily secure the shifters and brake levers to the bar with a single clamp. Truvativ Stylo cranks with a GXP Team bottom bracket and a Sram PG950 cassette should ensure good drivetrain durability.

Avanti spec their own-brand Zero components in the cockpit area (bar, saddle, stem, seatpost and locking grips). The weight and finish of most of these parts is reasonable, but the single bolt Attack Pro post, while functional enough, stands out for being much heavier and clumsier looking than we'd expect on this type of bike. The Kenda Karma tyres featured are the wire beaded versions, which doesn't detract much from their performance but does add a little more heft. Putting the frame on a diet has helped to offset this weight penalty, with the bike's total weight still coming in under that of the 2009 model. Also the reduced cost of some of these components helped to keep the price down and while they may not be exotic, they function well enough and there is plenty of room for a performance focussed rider to switch out some of the parts mentioned above for relatively little expense to achieve a significant weight savings. A move that will certainly do justice to the light weight frame.

The Aggressor demonstrates plenty of the qualities that we've experienced on high end race hardtails when put to the test on the trail. In fact, one of our testers found that the bike's geometry was virtually a

THE AGGRESSOR IS IN ITS ELEMENT WHEN POINTED UPHILL. ITS CLIMBING PERFORMANCE HAS A GREAT DEAL IN COMMON WITH MUCH HIGHER PRICED HARDTAILS WE'VE RIDDEN



spot on match with his own carbon race bike, allowing for an identical fit and an opportunity to see what differences might exist between this price-point racer and the money-is-no-object version. Surprisingly, there are fewer than you might think. While there is an obvious weight difference, this isn't an area that cripples the bike's performance, since compared to many

bikes out there it's still relatively light; certainly light enough to make it a nimble and confident climber that will exceed the expectations of riders looking for a swift cross-country bike. And it will also satisfy racers that are less fussed with the expense that often accompanies the pursuit of the latest and lightest and are willing to make the compromise.

Component performance is a key area where contrasts will show up between different models of this type of bike, more so than with full suspension bikes where the effects of mechanical activity taking place in the frame itself tends to hoard our attention. The Sram transmission worked well through the test, snapping off the crisp and positive rear shifts that we're accustomed to from the X7/X9 combo, although the front shifting was a little slower than what we've experienced on Shimano systems. The Elixir 5 brakes fitted had a slightly different feel at the lever and seemingly a little less grunt than the higher end versions, but we were happy with their performance through the test period, which was characterised by unstable spring weather and often very wet, muddy trails. These conditions did see us switching out the front Karma tyre to some more aggressive rubber; while fast rolling and very well suited to dry conditions, they are quickly overwhelmed in the mud and lose most of their traction.

The component that can really make or break the ride experience on any hardtail is the suspension fork, and the Reba SL on our Aggressor is a star performer. Once set up it delivered a well balanced feel, with plenty of suppleness in the early part of the stroke, enough plushness to cope with bigger hits, and just the right amount of progressiveness to prevent it from diving or wallowing. It also steers and tracks very well, making it easier to direct and control the bike through rough terrain as the rear bucks around. While we'd hesitate to describe any hardtail as comfortable to descend on over really rough terrain, the quality fork helped to keep things stable and under control and minimised the punishment that fast choppy trails dealt out.

The Aggressor's appeal will be lost on many 'trail' riders, where at this price a recreationally orientated full suspension bike is often a more popular choice. On the other hand, this bike will be of interest to riders willing to sacrifice some of the comforts of dual suspension to get the benefits of riding a lightweight, ultra efficient bike that backs up its good looks with a well designed frame and a selection of high quality parts. If you're getting into cross country racing and looking for a capable bike on a sensible budget, the Aggressor is well worth checking out.



SPECIFICATIONS - AVANTI AGGRESSOR

FRAME	ADT 7005 UL ultralite alloy	CHAIN	Shimano HG53
FORK	Rockshox Reba SL, 100mm travel	PEDALS	Shimano SPD
STEM	Zero Attack Pro Alloy (90mm)	SEAT POST	Zero Attack Pro Alloy 31.6
HANDLEBAR	Zero Attack Pro Alloy	SADDLE	Zero Gamma-X
GRIPS	Zero lock-on	SHIFTERS	Sram X7
HEADSET	FSA integrated	REAR DERAILLEUR	Sram X9
HUBS	Shimano 525	FRONT DERAILLEUR	Sram X7
RIMS	Sun Ringle Equalizer	TYRES	Kenda Karma 2.0
CASSETTE	Sram PG950, 11-34	COLOUR	Gloss black
CRANKSET	Truvativ Stylo 3.2	WEIGHT AS TESTED	12kg (26.5lb)
BOTTOM BRACKET	Truvativ GXP Team	SIZE TESTED	Medium
BRAKES	Avid Elixir 5	RRP	\$2799
		BIKE SUPPLIED BY	Sheppard Industries