



2.6in tyre in the frame and a 3in one in the fork, at least in drier weather. The rims are wide enough for 2.6in tyres.

All the wheels arrived true and stayed that way. However, the Voodoo's 27.5in rear wheel was slightly out of dish, with the rim offset to the left. It didn't upset the bike's handling and isn't hard to fix, but would be a bike shop job for some.

The Voodoo has a higher-tier drivetrain than the Merida: 1x12 Shimano Deore versus 1x10 Shimano CUES. While I'm happy enough with 10-speed, the Deore cassette is wider range and the Deore shifting was noticeably better on climbs.

Brakes are similar hydraulic units from Shimano, with both bikes getting a four-piston front brake. The Merida has a larger (203mm versus 180mm) front rotor, which makes sense for a trail bike. Yet single-finger braking was also fine on the Voodoo.

Both bikes' grips are unyielding and uncomfortable. I'd swap them for ESI Chunky ones or a flared pair from Ergon. I'd love to swap the Merida's headset, too, as it has the absurd over-complication of internal cable and hose routing. But I can't think how to do that without drilling or gaffer-taping the frame – both bad ideas.

Right: The Rail compression damper is progressive rather than 'on' or 'off'

Below right: The Marzocchi Bomber Z2 fork is labelled as suitable for 29/27.5+ tyres but 29+ will also fit



Ride

Both are very capable and enjoyable trail bikes. Aside from the bigger off-piste jumps I wouldn't attempt on any bike, there was nothing on my local trails or in Dalby Forest that gave me pause. Progressive geometry puts you in a descent-ready 'attack position' and improves the odds of you staying upright.

While I had great fun on short rides, those of three hours or

Tech spec

Voodoo Loco

Price: £1,250.

Sizes: M (tested), L

Weight: 15.2kg (M, no pedals).

Frame & fork: Chrome-moly steel frame with 73mm BSA BB, 148x12mm thru-axle, UDH gear hanger, external cables (ex. seat tube) and fittings for one bottle. Marzocchi Bomber Z2 fork with 140mm travel and 110x15mm thru-axle.

Wheels: 61–622 (29x2.4in) Maxxis Minion DHR II EXO TR front tyre, 61–584 (27.5x2.4in) Maxxis Dissector EXO TR rear, 622x30/584x30 front/rear Voodoo tubeless-ready rims, 32x3 spokes, Shimano TC500 thru-axle Centerlock hubs.

Transmission: Alloy pedals, 170mm Shimano MT511–1 chainset with 32t chainring, Shimano MT501 BB, KMC X12 chain, Shimano Deore M6100 10–51t 12-speed cassette. Shimano Deore M6100 shifter and M6100 SGS Shadow+ rear derailleur. 12 ratios, 17–89in.

Braking: Shimano MT401 levers and MT420 callipers (4-piston fr), 180mm rotors.

Steering & seating: Voodoo lock-on grips, 780mm Voodoo alloy riser bar, 45mm x 3° Voodoo alloy stem, FSA Orbit ITA B headset. WTB Volt Medium saddle, 31.6mm TransX dropper with 170mm drop and no layback.

Equipment: none.

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Dimensions in millimetres and degrees

