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# Titus El Guapo

Nothing lost in the translation



**Spring forward:** The El Guapo is over 30 pounds with an air shock, because Titus built it tough enough to take your abuse. Changing to a coil shock would enhance the El Guapo's rear suspension performance.

**T**here was a missing link in the Titus line that the El Guapo (Spanish meaning handsome) is intended to fill. It was the gap between their black-diamond-trail shuttle runner (the Super Moto) and their well-mannered, four-inch travel trailbike (the Moto Lite). The riders who fall between the Super Moto and the Moto Lite are looking for a bike that can take the beating a Whistler Mountain Bike Park season pass can dish out without having to stand in a chair-lift line to get to the double-black-diamond trailhead.

## GOOD LOOKING

Titus kept the El Guapo simple. They licensed the proven Horst Link rear suspension from the current keeper of the patent (Specialized). The suspension pivots on a burly aluminum rocker that rocks on cartridge bearings which appear to be big enough to handle the task at hand. Forged and machined swingarm yokes finish off the no-nonsense rear end. Our El Guapo was built using Titus' Freeride Kit with

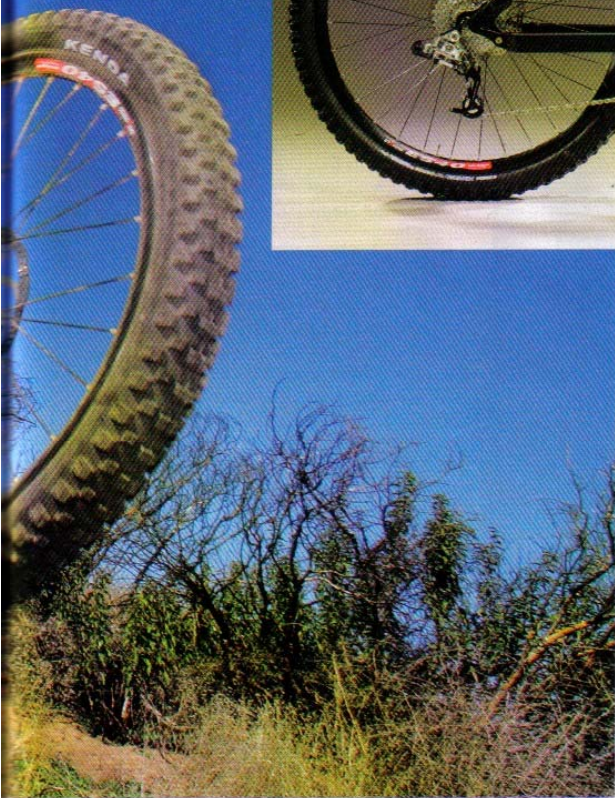
some substitutions (made by Titus, not us) that included an FSA handlebar and WTB grips.

The only thing missing from the El Guapo is clutter. After seeing a string of complicated designs roll through the MBA test fleet, it is refreshing to see such a simple approach to answering the complicated needs of riders looking for a bike that will do it all.

## A BEAUTIFUL BEAST

This is one of the most anticipated bikes of the season, so it required picking straws to determine who would get their hands on the El Guapo each test day. When the dust had settled, this is what we found out about this handsome ride.

**Getting settled:** The El Guapo will surprise long-time Titus fans because it moves away from Titus' signature rider position. Titus has always positioned their riders with a bias towards the rear of the bike and a relatively stretched-out riding position. Riders will find the El Guapo a much short-



er-feeling bike with a pronounced upright riding position. The FSA bars are insanely wide (28 inches), which seems to make the cockpit feel even shorter. This new positioning has an aggressive feel before you've even clipped in.

**Hammering along:** We found the Pearl shock to operate at much lower psi than other air shocks, so take time to dial in around 20 percent sag before your first ride. Some of our 170-pound crewers were down to as low as 85 psi before they felt comfortable. Shock pressure set, the El Guapo gives a very familiar Titus ride when hammering along. That means minimal suspension movement from pedaling (and the platform can be adjusted with the shock's Floodgate valve) while the suspension remains active to trail noise.

**Accelerating:** Every rider was shocked and delighted with the way the El Guapo got up to speed and maintained momentum. This is a big bike, but it never felt sluggish. The wheels and hubs are a great rolling duo (and it doesn't hurt that the El Guapo uses a rock-solid chassis).

**Wraparound strength:** Titus gives the El Guapo plenty of rear tire clearance by wrapping the seat stay around the seat tube. The El Guapo's rear end would wiggle around like a dashboard hula dancer without this little trick.

# Titus El Guapo



**Scrubbing speed:** The Formula ORO brakes were too powerful, especially for the hardpack surfaces that we have to contend with after a rain-free winter. A light touch was required or tires would meet their traction limit fast.

**Climbing:** Great rolling wheels and a solid chassis can't hide the fact that you are pedaling a lot of weight up the climbs. Climbing the El Guapo fell into two camps. The young guys shrugged and hammered away while the older guys complained and hammered away. The key is, yes, you're right, stay firmly planted in the saddle and spin up the climbs as smoothly as possible.

**Cornering:** The wide bars, spot-on tires and centered rider weight all make the El Guapo track through corners like it was glued to the ground. Super fast corners are a blast, as both tires slide at the same time (rather than a tendency to have the rear or front wheel lose traction first). This predictability raises confidence. Turning a little slow for you? Reducing the fork travel (by flipping a lever) is all it took to speed things up.

**Descending:** This is the Titus the gravity fanatics were waiting for. The forward rider position is far more aggressive, allowing riders to attack sections, change lines, loft obstacles and, in those moments of brain lapses, slam something head-on without major consequence. The shock holds the rear suspension back from delivering that bottomless feel, but you never feel like you have less than six inches of travel either.

**Braking:** The Formula ORO brakes are powerful to a fault. Even with 30-plus pounds of bike and 2.35-inch wide tires, a firm squeeze on the well-shaped Formula levers would lock a wheel. Their performance split the wrecking crew. Some raved about the power, while others felt their touchiness led to fatigue on the descents. If you like powerful, on-off switch brakes, you will love the Formulas.

**Beatings:** Jumps, stunts and slamming stuff doesn't faze the El Guapo. Swap the air shock for a coil-sprung shock and you could get a few seasons at any mountain resort out of this bike. We haven't mentioned the Fox 36

TALAS RC fork much because it works so well that you take it for granted. It is a fork that takes you where you point it.

## FACE LIFT

The El Guapo is one good-looking dude, but there are a few blemishes. Titus routed the cables along the side of the top tube. When things get busy, you will scrape your knees against the guides (hope you are wearing pads).

The RockShox Pearl makes an annoying "psst" sound as air works its way into and out of a wiper or seal. It doesn't change the shock's pressure, but the sound gets old on long climb. Also, we have finally found a suspension lockout as brutal as the one found on Cannondale's Lefty forks. When the shock's Floodgate is cranked all the way in, you've got a rear end that makes an aluminum hardtail feel plush.

We have already mentioned the touchy brakes. If you like them that way, great. The rest of us will look for more modulation by either using smaller discs or specifying a different brake.

## MORE THAN GOOD LOOKS

The El Guapo rounds out the Titus line. It finally gives riders who like to pedal (instead of ride a chairlift) and still favor aggressive descents, stunts and drops a chance to experience what the rest of us have known about Titus bikes for years. This is a bike that does everything right, enjoys great attention to detail and is built to last longer than mass-produced offerings. Looks good to us. ☐

## TITUS EL GUAPO

Price	\$4605
Country of origin	Taiwan
Weight	32.1 pounds
Hotline	(800) 858-4887
Frame tested	19"
Bottom bracket height	13.5"
Chainstay length	17.25"
Top tube length	23"
Head angle	68°
Seat tube angle	71.5°
Standover height	30.5"
Wheelbase	43.5"
Suspension travel (front)	6.2"
Suspension travel (rear)	6"
Frame material	Aluminum
Fork	Fox 36 TALAS RC
Shock	RockShox Pearl 3.1
Rims	DT Swiss E540
Tires	Kenda Nevegal DTC (2.35)
Hub	DT Swiss
Brakes	Formula ORO
Brake levers	Formula ORO
Crankset	Shimano XT
Shifters	SRAM trigger
Front derailleur	Shimano XT
Rear derailleur	SRAM X.9
Chainrings	Shimano (44/32/22)
Cassette	SRAM, 9-speed (11-34)
Pedals	Crank Bros. Candy sl