ibis

mojo hdr 650

Price: $2,699 (frame only)
Price: $5,599 (XT kit)
Weight: 28.1 lbs (small)
www.IbisCycles.com
CELEBRATED FOR ITS OH-YEAH! RIDE QUALITIES, THE TOUCH OF ROXY LO’S
curvaceous design work, and the different travel and geometry configurations, the Ibis Mojo HD has been called the ideal privateer’s trail or enduro bike. Do-it-yourselfers, inspired by early adapters on mountain bike forums, have long been altering the original HD to house 650b wheels. More or less, it worked, but not without some compromises. That consumer demand, along with the need for a few other frame updates and availability of new production technologies, has inspired Ibis to bring us the updated HDR and HDR 650 to replace the HD.

Taking a cue from those early adapters, and presumably to satisfy their own curiosity, Ibis designers took the old HD and tweaked it so the HDR frame can now officially—stamped with safety testing and all that—be converted between a 26-inch, 160-mm travel bike and a 650b (27.5-inch), 130-mm travel bike (designed to run a 140-mm to 150-mm fork). The conversion requires switching the shock mounts (available from Ibis) and shock for one with a longer stroke. You will also need a fork for each wheel size and the wheels, of course, so it’s not something you’ll do every day but effectively gives you a two-in-one bike.

NOT JUST BIGGER WHEELS
Besides adjusting for the 650b wheels, Ibis made other major improvements to the HDR frame, one of the biggest being an updated carbon layup. On the old HD, the carbon layup was completed in pieces and then the pieces were molded together to form the frame. With the new process, the frame layup is completed all in one piece, allowing for longer, continuous fibers and eliminating joints in the frame. That also shaves just shy of a half pound from the frame, dropping it to 6 pounds. The continuous fibers make it stronger, and it’s just as stiff as before.

With the new construction, Ibis also made adjustments to the swing arm to accommodate ISCG 05 chainguide mounts (a major miss on the original HD frame) and clearance for new 11-speed drivetrains. The main frame was also adjusted for more front derailleur compatibility with current 2X or 3X options and Fox’s lighter weight LV air cans on the new CTD shocks.

The HDR can be purchased direct as 650b or 26. Similar to the HD, if you know what you’re doing, it is possible to set up the HDR 650 with 140 mm or even 145 mm of rear travel (do-it-yourselfers beware: screwing this up can lead to frame damage). Ibis is currently working on an approved shock spec for this, but it’s not yet ready for public consumption.

Technical details of the HDR are everything you’d expect for a well-thought-out trail bike: 142x12 Maxle rear axle, tapered head tube, routing for a dropper post, optional polycarbonate cable/frame guard under the down tube, dual row angular contact bearings for the front lower link and ample 28x15x7 mm radial bearings in the rear lower link for added stiffness and long wear. The geometry is dialed with a 67.1 degree head tube angle (650b with 140-mm fork) and 17.125-inch chainstays.

Our test rig was ready to shred with a Shimano XT 2X kit with a Shadow Plus derailleur, e*thirteen cranks with bash guard and 34x24 rings, Stan’s ZTR Flow EX wheels, Pacenti Neo-Moto tires, 740 mm Ibis Hi-Fi carbon bars, Fox Float 34 CTD 27.5 140-mm travel fork, Fox Float CTD shock, and a KS
LEV remote dropper post.

The HDR is available frame only and with SLX, XT, XTR, X01 or XX1 kits, ranging from as low as $2,699 for a frame to as much as $6,999 for the XTR spec. For $5,599 the XT spec complete bike is a solid choice. I'm always impressed by Shimano's precision and durability. For my personal bike, I'd still need to go with the similarly priced SRAM X01 1x11 spec (with XT brakes). Every time I rode the HDR I found myself looking at the cluttered 2X cockpit and picturing how much cleaner it would look with a single, stealth Grip Shift. And for me, the clean, fast shifting (and nearly 1-pound weight savings) of the 1x11 is the only way to go. Hey, Shimano: 1x11—bring it on.

Kudos to Ibis for honoring Kirk Pacenti (the man responsible for first rattling the 650 saber) and spec'ing Pacenti Neo-Moto tires. The Neo-Moto is a fine all-around tire with a predictable round profile that, despite not being stamped as tubeless ready, set up nicely tubeless (ride at your own risk). They are, however, a lighter weight, thinner sidewalled option. I ended up shredding my front tire on a rock after a few rides and putting on WTB Vigilantes. The beefed up sidewall and true tubeless ready casing definitely gave me more confidence.

Some of my first miles on the HDR 650 were running practice laps for the Big Mountain Enduro race in Crested Butte, Colo. The race utilized a significant amount of lift-served, purpose-built DH terrain at Crested Butte's EVO bike park. For most of the stages, the HDR was right at home cranking tight berms, smoothing through rock gardens, and launching the rollers and tables. Only the big diving board step down on stage 6, which I had never hit before, left me feeling the HDR 650 was under gunned.

Had I had the time and components, I would have switched it over to 160 mm travel for that race. Instead, I ended up racing a different 160-mm bike. However, in hindsight, I should have raced the HDR. Once I hit that drop on the longer-travel bike and gained some confidence, I realized the HDR 650 could have handled it just fine and would have been way better on the other, more pedally stages. The 130 mm of DW-Link plushness combined with the 650b wheels makes for a surprisingly capable bike with incredibly nimble handling in the corners.

Since that race, I've logged more than 400 miles on the HDR on everything from Crested Butte's EVO Bike Park to classics like Doctor Park and all my favorite technical thrillers at Hartman Rocks near Gunnison. It's the most responsive and the most stable trail bike I've ridden. To me, the 650b wheels aren't even a question, especially on standard Rocky Mountain terrain. It has an incredibly natural, balanced feel when carving it hard and transitioning through corners.

The entire bike is stiff and responsive, and the DW-Link is perfectly tuned to keep the rear wheel tracking through corners and over roots with a bottomless feel off bigger drops.

As with the entire frame design, Ibis went its own direction with sizing. With a 595-mm stack and 409-mm reach, the size large frame is similar to most companies' medium frame. It is just semantics, but make sure to look closely at the sizing chart if you order one without demo'ing first.

The only faults in the frame are surface flaws: The top tube cable routing seems a little clunky for an otherwise beautiful frame (the cables just cover up those nice flowing lines), and the paint seems to scratch easily. Those who like big meaty treads may be soured that the dynamics of the HDR 650 frame limit it to 2.35-inch tires (depending on the profile of the tire). Most 2.4-inch tires will rub on the seat tube at the bottom of the suspension travel. Ibis, however, got it right with important details, such as the polycarbonate/cable guide on the down tube, steel chain guard on the drive side chainstay, and King InSet 3 tapered headset compatibility.

For most natural terrain, the HDR 650 with 130 mm rear travel is all a trail rider truly needs. It's quick and agile and climbs like a goat that just ate a six-pack of Red Bull (cans and all). The HDR 650 tears through surprisingly big terrain without a hitch. Still, I'll be interested to see if Ibis comes up with a 140-mm to 145-mm shock spec for it. Just for that extra ability to gobble up some bigger rocks—that may be the ticket. For those who spend some time at the bike park or on more serious terrain, spending the extra cash on a second set of wheels, shock and fork to complete the 160-mm conversion would be a worthy investment for that two-in-one bike.

With all the updates to the frame, the famed Ibis HD is better than ever and edging closer and closer to trail bike perfection. I only say closer because I know Chuck Ibis will never be satisfied. The versatility and adjustability of the HDR makes for a bike with little compromise. Whether your thing is shredding epic backcountry expeditions or battling it out on the enduro scene, the HDR delivers with precision. –B. Riepe