

# The 21-Pound Cannondale Project Rize

*Cannondale and Newbury Park Bike Shop build a beauty*

**W**e were impressed with the 2009 Cannondale Rize Carbon 1 (tested in our September 2008 issue). We concluded the test saying, "The Rize is a trailbike that thinks it is a cross-country racer. It is light, responsive, slim and just as effective (and fun) on the 40-minute lunch loop as it is on a six-hour, I-can't-believe-I-rode-the-whole-thing epic excursion." We weren't the only ones impressed.

The guys at Newbury Bike Shop in Newbury Park, California, were equally blown away. Then it happened. They had just finished an after-work ride on Los Robles Trail and were munching on their Double-Doubles at In-N-Out Burger, conveniently located right next to the bike shop. Talk turned from how fun it was riding the Rize to how much fun it would be to build a Rize from the frame out. The Rize is available in five models (two carbon framed and three aluminum framed), but Cannondale also sells it as a frame/shock combo so you can become the product manager. A frame/shock combo was ordered, and the Project Rize Carbon NPLO was hatched.

## THE PROJECT RULES

The Rize Carbon 1 we tested tipped the scales at 24.4 pounds with Crankbrothers Smarty pedals. The goal of the Project Rize Carbon NPLO (which stands for Newbury Park Locals Only) was to trim at least two pounds off that mark. There was a catch, however. It would be easy to lose the weight, and at the same time lose the ability to use the Rize as a trailbike. This was not acceptable. The final build had to produce a durable, rideable trailbike.

In addition to shedding weight without losing the essence of the Rize ride, the guys wanted their project to attract attention. This was not to be a sleeper or subtle bike. They wanted to elicit jaw-dropping reactions from riders who walked into the shop. The gang went to work.



**Floating proof:** The Project Rize felt just like the real thing, only lighter. The bike's light weight and long travel made every trail easier to ride. It really pays off in slow, technical sections.

# Rize

## THE RESULT

It is estimated that 40 hours of labor went into the creation of the Project Rize Carbon NPLO. And this doesn't include two weeks of acid baths and polishing of select components by The Polishing Shop in Oxnard, California, (805) 278-8274. Cannondale got word of the project and threw down a pre-production 2010 Lefty fork. Parts were imported from Italy. The bike was meticulously assembled. The result was a stunning Cannondale Rize Carbon with Crankbrothers Eggbeater pedals that weighed a mere 21.25 pounds on the official MBA Ultimate Digital Scale. The bike's value is in the neighborhood of \$8000.

## THE RIDE

The Project Rize Carbon NPLO takes getting used to. A rider has to treat it like the precision instrument that it is. That means deliberate, controlled brake application. It means that rider position has a bigger influence on cornering, braking, climbing and jumping than on a heavier bike. It means gear selection makes a giant difference in forward momentum. This is a hypersensitive trailbike, and that's why we loved it.



**Polished performance:** Components were polished for pure esthetic appeal. The polishing did not reduce weight. It added to the bike's visual impact.



The Project Rize Carbon NPLO takes over three pounds off the production Rize Carbon 1. This weight reduction offers the biggest benefit on climbs. In most instances, you are better off leaving the chain in the middle ring and powering up climbs. Dropping to the granny feels like an exercise in bike balancing. The Project Rize makes easy work out of tight switchbacks. You can easily loft the bike over trail obstacles. You can use the quick handling and ample suspension travel to fly down descents, and that light weight is always egging you on to loft off or hop over stuff.

Finally, a big surprise came directly from Cannondale. The pre-production



**First look:** The Project Rize Carbon NPLO used a 2010 prototype Cannondale Lefty Fork that did a lot more than reduce weight.



**Importers:** Italy's Extralite components, like these chainrings, are hard to find in America. That's not a problem for Newbury Park Bike Shop. They import Extralite components directly from Italy.

2010 Lefty Fork donated for the project has a new feature that we have begged for. The fork's lockout now offers a blow-off circuit, so if you hit something hard while locked out, the fork will move into its travel and save you from a sizable jolt to the upper body. Cannondale, we love you, man! Can't wait to get a production version for a full test.

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

The Project Rize Carbon NPLO is a dream bike come true. While you might not want to drop \$8000 to build your own version, the guys at Newbury Bike Shop can help you pick and choose the parts you need to get close to their creation. You can reach them by calling (805) 498-7714. □



**Newbury Park Locals Only (left to right):** Shane Heid, Ben Cox and Anthony Aker are three of the guys who made the Project Rize dream come true. Shane Kelly (not pictured) was the bike's builder. Somebody had to mind the store.