

3D FOUNDER/OWNER/FRAMEBUILDER CHRIS HERTING HAS ABOUT AS CLOSE A RELATIONSHIP AS POSSIBLE TO EASTON SPORTS WITHOUT BEING RELATED TO JIM EASTON. HERTING WORKED FOR YETI CYCLES WHEN IT BEGAN MAKING ALUMINUM FRAMES AND WAS THE FIRST TO USE EASTON TUBES. WHEN HERTING



## 3D ROVER XC SCANDIUM

**HITS:** Compliant, light **MISSSES:** Flexy in front, chipping paint **DISTRIBUTED BY:** 3D Racing, 450 Pioneer Circle, Durango, CO 81301; 970/385-7840; [www.easton-sports.com](http://www.easton-sports.com) **WEIGHT:** 22.5 lbs. **SIZES:** 14.5, 16, 17.5 (tested), 19, 21, custom **MANUFACTURED IN:** U.S. **FRAME MATERIAL:** Easton SC7000 aluminum (scandium) **FORK/TRAVEL:** Rock Shox SID/2.5 in. **DRIVETRAIN:** Shimano XTR cranks, XTR bottom bracket, XTR 12-32 cassette, XTR front derailleur; SRAM ESP 9.0 rear derailleur, ESP 9.0 shifters **BRAKES:** SRAM ESP 9.0 levers, OnZa V-brakes **COCKPIT:** WTB saddle, Easton EA70 seatpost, Kore stem, Easton carbon-fiber handlebar, OnZa CWA bar-ends **WHEELS:** Cane Creek Crono WAM **TIRES:** Tioga Factory Slicks **GEOMETRY:** 17.5-in. seat tube (center to top); 23.0-in. top tube; 16.75-in. chainstays; 42.25-in. wheelbase; 11.9-in. bottom bracket; 71/73.5 head/seat angles

**PRICE \$1,400 (FRAME ONLY) \$3,700 as tested**

founded 3D he maintained contact with Easton Sports, using the company's material exclusively. He builds the frames that Easton uses for destructive testing, and, last fall, his brother accepted a job in product development at Easton. Because of this relationship, we couldn't think of a better bike for judging Easton's newest scandium tubeset than 3D's Rover XC.

**WHAT'S IT MADE OF?** The XC is the first frame we've tested with Easton's scandium (actually aluminum, but more on that in a minute) tubeset. Easton claims the alloy is strong enough to build frames about 10% lighter than current 7005-series aluminum TaperWall frames. Easton also claims greatly increased strength in terms of fatigue life, which means the frame can be made to give a more compliant ride than current aluminum frames.

**WHAT THE HELL IS SCANDIUM?** Scandium, a rare-earth ele-

ment mined only in the Ukraine, is used to refine the grain structure in aluminum alloys. This makes for better welds and less loss of strength in the heat-affected portion of tubing (nearest the welds), which is the most common area for frame failures. In fact, scandium improves aluminum alloys so much that Easton has developed a weldable aluminum (SC7000) that, they tell us, exceeds the strength of EA70 (the non-weldable, hard-alloy used for Hyperlite handlebars, fork steerer tubes and stanchions), and offers about two times the strength of a comparable 6061-T6 tube.

**WHAT'S THE BENEFIT?** Taking advantage of SC7000's greater strength, Easton made the tubeset lighter (our test frame weighed three pounds), while also making the diameter of the tubes smaller to offer a more compliant ride, and increasing strength and durability—measured on Easton's in-house, destructive testing equipment.

**ANYTHING ELSE ABOUT THE FRAME?** 3D welds the tubeset in a manner that reflects Herting's experience as a builder. The frame has even, well-spaced beads at all joints. The geometry, appropriately, is ready to race. Our 17.5-inch frame had a longish, 23-inch top tube and a 73.5-degree seat angle, which combined to give the bike a rangy front-center—perfect for sustained climbing and roomy enough to move your weight around when descending. If that's not good enough for you, 3D offers full-custom frames.

**WHAT ABOUT PARTS?** 3D sells framesets only, but our test bike came equipped with an Easton handlebar and seatpost. And like many of our test bikes lately, the Rover came with SRAM ESP 9.0 shifters, brake levers and rear derailleur—all light, all good. The levers are linked to OnZa V-brakes, which have a unique cable-routing system that eliminates the noodle. It's kind of cool, but we can't say that it made a

## TORK

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difference in performance.

**AND THE WHEELS?** The Ti-spoked Cane Creek Crono WAM wheels are delightfully lightweight, but at the price of stiffness and stability. They're best left to riders in the 125-pounds-or-less category. When combined with the Rock Shox SID (a relatively flexy fork), the Cronos made technical descending a handful. The Tioga Factory Slicks are good tires for hardpack XC racing, but we swapped them for some knob-bies for everyday use.

**SO HOW'S IT RIDE?** There's no doubt about the Rover's intentions. Aggressive geometry on a frame that's noticeably more compliant than traditional Easton frames but still plenty stiff makes this a pure cross-country racer.

But once pointed downhill, the Rover didn't track so well. The frame seemed fine, but the flexy combo of the Cane Creek wheel and SID kept us busy making adjustments to keep the bike on line.

**ANY PROBLEMS?** Our only true complaint with the frame was the sharp-edged cable stops on the top tube. They're hell on the knees on rides with lots of out-of-the-saddle climbing. Additionally, and much less significantly, the paint seemed to jump off the frame. Herting explained that SC7000 can't be powder-coated because the requisite high temperature would alter the frame's heat treatment. But Easton is working on a powder-coat process that will give a more durable finish.

**WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?**

Racers looking for flyweight but comfortable frames have an easy answer in the Rover, and it also seems a perfect choice for light riders who normally get thrashed by light-but-harsh aluminum bikes. Herting's construction is excellent and, because he offers totally custom geometry at no extra charge, the frame can meet the needs of most NORBA racers. ■

—Jasen Thorpe



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