

**'tis the season**

**Orange 5 Pro**  
Crank Bros Iodine



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Orange is a household name in the UK but in the rest of the world most people will probably be familiar with them because of Steve Peat's World Cup successes while riding his 222 or it may be because one of Britain's most recognizable race teams (MTB-Cut.tv) with their outstandingly over the top color scheme, also uses them as their domestic and World Cup race rigs of choice. One reason Orange are so big is because they do all their manufacturing in the UK, more specifically, in Halifax. None of the modern routine of getting everything cheaply made in Taiwan. The advantage of buying a British-made bike is you know it's a quality item that's going to last.

Orange were kind enough to send us a Five Pro to test. The Five Pro is the pro-level model for experienced riders looking for a high performance all-mountain bike. With a price tag of £2,499 you'd expect it to come with a good spec, and it does. Coming fitted with Fox Float R32 forks with 140mm travel, a Fox Float RP32 XV with a Boost Valve, Hope tech X2 brakes and a Raceface XC evolve Crankset, you can't really ask for much more in terms of componentry.

In true British style it landed a day early, so I took it for a quick 2-hour test ride. On first impressions a few things stood out: it was extremely light, weighing only 12.9kg (28lb); the bars were extremely narrow at 685mm which meant it got a little wild at speed, but this was a minor point; and its general construction and geometry reminded me more of a slope-style frame than an all-mountain setup. It comes with a 67 degree head angle which for an all-mountain frame is pretty slack, but this translated into a high level of stability and control in the downhill sections, which saved me a few times after slogging my guts out to get to the top of the mountain.

The Iodine wheelset was pretty much faultless. They were the lightest wheels I have used and the abuse they took was pretty intense, especially when I gave them to Ben Cathro (MTB-Cut World Cup racer) to try out. Ben weighs around 220 lbs and he is 6'7" tall so he is absolutely massive. I gave him the Orange with the Iodine wheelset mounted to it, and basically told him to try and destroy it, because I wanted to see how much the bike and in particular, the wheels, could take. He definitely took them places in terms of stress that I never could have, but at the end of the day he gave them back and they were still true and round, with no dings. They come with a 15 converter for the front wheel, as well as 20mm and quick-release, and the back is quick-release. The price might be prohibitive for a lot of people but if you want something very different and distinctive, as well as having the performance to back to back it up, these come highly recommended.

We stopped by Chris Hutchens' (MTB-Cut downhill rider) place to do some downhill with him on his local trails, which are mega-steep, rocky, fast and most importantly, varied. I really feel the Orange was exposed to almost every kind of downhill trail there is, and I was satisfied after seeing it withstand Ben's abuse that it would be more than enough for any amateur or pro rider.

There were a few downsides though. One irritation for me was the location of the valve on the rear shock. As you pedal, if you're wearing pants, they will without doubt keep on getting snared. Another bad idea was the specc'ing of Continental Mountain King tyres; they only grip on fire roads unless you're crazy enough to lower the pressure to below 20psi. The final drawback in terms of using this as a playbike was the handlebars which, at 685mm wide, were a little scary at times. A cool feature offered is the option of having almost any paint job

you want, starting with wheel rim color at £50 for the pair to having the full frame sprayed for £100. If you have the right money I'm sure they'll paint almost any part of it for you. Customers are getting increasingly demanding and are requiring customization like never before, so Orange are making an effort to stay on top of the game when it comes to personalizing the bikes for each individual.

Overall, I liked the versatility of the Five, especially for this time of year, as it ate up the cross-country rides but also was extremely capable on the downhill sections. I loved the simplicity of the single pivot, as pedaling uphill wasn't a problem and with the shock having a lock-out it was even more effortless. Downhill handling would be my first consideration when buying a bike like this however, and the Orange showed its World Cup downhill heritage in its choice of geometry and inherent handling characteristics. All it took was some changes in the fork and shock air pressure, as well as the tire pressure, and a bike that could be taken on epic cross-country rides was transformed into a hugely fun downhill/jump playbike. The Iodines offering option of running tubeless made the downhill experience even sweeter, so I was grateful that I had installed them when the going turned downwards. I'm off to Malaga in southern Spain at the start of January and if I had the option I would honestly take the Five instead of my downhill bike, as it would open up so many more types of riding to me like bike parks, dirt jumps and even the occasional cross country ride, and I really don't think I would miss my downhill bike all that much on the downhill runs...the Five really is that capable.

