



# Salsa El Kaboing

**THE SALSA EL KABOING IS ALL ABOUT THE TRAIL RIDE. IT OFFERS FIVE INCHES OF TRAVEL FRONT AND REAR AND IS TARGETED AT THE ADVENTUROUS WEEKEND RIDER. LUCKILY, WE HAVE PLENTY OF GUYS LIKE THIS SLEEPING ON THE FOOTPATH AT THE FRONT OF OUR OFFICE BEGGING FOR A BIKE, SO IT WAS OUT OF THE BOX AND ON THE TRAILS IN NO TIME.**

WORDS BY PAUL BRYANT  
PHOTOS: ADAM MACLEOD

The Salsa story starts way back in 1976, when Ross Shafer built his first frameset out of his garage, which then generated enough interest in his local cycling community for him to start building frames under the name 'Red bush'. Fast-forward to 1982 and he built what he said were "the only 5 mountainbikes I will ever build." Producing one for himself to "see what all the noise is about", he was hooked. Salsa Cycles were born.

Salsa Cycles were, in these halcyon days, a player alongside the likes of Ritchey, Gary Fisher, Ibis, Breezer, etc. Ross was also famous in those days for the Pro-moto chromoly stem – complete with cable roller, butted aluminium handlebars; and the flip-lock seat collar which is still in production today.

Enter 1996 and the hype of the catalogue that year is, yep, you guessed it, the El Kaboing, with the choice of a Risse or Elroy rear shock and RockShox fork up front. Roll the time clocks forward to 2009 and I find myself being asked to ride the new El Kaboing and give my two bucks worth on the latest rig in the Salsa quiver.

### The Bike

The 2009 El Kaboing is a well appointed all mountain machine, with 5" of travel front and rear and a consistent assortment of components you would expect on a bike of this price. The frameset is adequately proportioned to suit your average individual with some nice

angles in all the appropriate places. The battleship grey is sure to be a hit down at HMAS Cerberus. It's durable enough to endure scuffing a wharf or two and with its flattened seat-stays will even deflect torpedo attack from the rear.

As far as the decals go, I have never been a big fan of Salsa's designs. But I bet if you were in San José hallucinating from an excess of chilli and pissed up on Mescal this bike would look freakin' amazing!!

Climbing aboard the mighty steed and the bike felt instantly comfortable. It is not a common thing to jump on a bike and feel like you have been there before. Everything was right where it should be and the angles and lengths felt just right.

The spec mix is solid with Shimano XT generously splattered all over the place, specifically: the derailleurs, shifters, hubs and brakes. The rest of the bike is a mix with Race Face Deus cranks, Salsa rims, Race Face post and stem, WTB seat and Salsa bars. Forks are the solid and stiff Fox Float RL 100mm with a Fox RP2 shock up the back.

### The Ride

I took this big travel weapon to the Brisbane ranges, west of the fabled Victorian You-Yangs for some rocky, all-mountain mayhem. The terrain was exactly what we needed to give the El Kaboing the going test it required.

Five inch bikes are my favourites. I have

ridden many over the years, so have a good comparison database. The Salsa fits somewhere in the middle of the scale, from overstuffed lounge sofa to all out race weapon. It has a lazy live rhythm that means you can either cush out and relax, or put the hammer down. It is comfortable enough to ride all day, yet has the ability to go fast if you have the fuel.

The bike felt well-balanced weight wise, and this transferred well to both climbing and descending, being adequately responsive at both. The bike ascended quite well, and at no point did I feel thwarted by the weight or geometry. The Fox Pro-pedal RP-2 certainly benefits bikes such as this in that department. However, the XT shifters were far from impressive with the thumb shifter too close, and forefinger lever too far away! Climbing is made so much easier when you are not fumbling around the bars looking for something that should be at your fingertips.

Descending, the bike felt confidence inspiring and I was able to nail some DH cornering manoeuvres successfully, unlike my wingman who missed a couple of turns. No point having five inches of travel if the bike is a poor descender, I say.

The steering on ol' el Boingo was pretty spot on also. With years of experience, the Salsa team have got the head angle sussed on this rig. Although I do feel that a bike of this ilk could do with a front through-axle to add a bit more stiffness in steep cornering.



Paul gets carried away with air time on the Salsa

FRAME	Custom-drawn, size-specific scandium
FORK	Fox Float RL, 140mm
REAR SHOCK	Fox Float RP2
DERAILLEURS	Shimano XT
SHIFTERS	Shimano XT
RIMS	Salsa Semi Disc
TYRES	Kenda Nevegal, 26" x 2.35"
BRAKES	Shimano XT (180mm front, 160mm rear)
CRANKSET	Race Face Deus
HANDLEBAR	Salsa ProMoto Riser Bar
STEM	Race Face Deus XC
SEAT & POST	WTB Rocket V   Race Face Deus XC
RRP	\$6899
CONTACT	www.dirtworks.com.au

**✗ THE BEST**  
STABLE, CAPABLE AND VERSATILE

**THE WORST**  
I'D LOSE THE XT SHIFTERS AND TYRES

The ride overall was very smooth and comfortable, but stable enough that the shock only reacted to what it was required to, not pedalling or the rider shifting his/her weight. It felt stable in the rough stuff and agile enough to throw around.

At one stage we got bored with a section of trail, so headed up a dry river bed to test how good we, and our bikes, could handle the rock strewn terrain and to the Salsa's credit, it ate it up! I swear it made a sound like 'Kaboning' at one stage, except with a Mexican accent. The rear suspension felt smooth in its action and the frame is laterally very

stiff under load and does its thing well under pressure.

The overall spec of the El Kaboing is all very well matched and of an equal quality. I was impressed with the power delivery of the new(ish) XT brakes. The levers have a nice feel, and the adjustability is a nice touch. The Kenda tyres were quite good for the terrain, and felt pretty stable even in loose gravelly rock, although they aren't the fastest rollers out there. The seat was good. I can't remember too much about it which is a good thing because if I did remember, it is probably because I hated it. The bars were

adequate, which for me is good because I am a total handlebar snob. The Salsa grips were all over the place, but have I told you how good lock-ons are?

### The Verdict

This is a great all day trail bike that can tackle all manner of terrain and not feel like it is lacking in any particular area. It handled all the terrain I threw at it without a fuss, and didn't leave me wanting for anything it couldn't provide. A stable, capable all day trail bike.

TESTING