



## INTENSE M9-FRO

**\$3,150 (frame with Cane Creek Double Barrel shock)** / [INTENSECYCLES.COM](http://INTENSECYCLES.COM)

WHEN WE FIRST BEGAN RIDING THIS BLOOD-RED Intense M9-FRO almost a year ago, we were so blown away by its penchant for pure speed that we likened it to Slayer and Sepultura: Fast, uncompromising and relentless. After several months—and many blistering shuttle runs—we stand by our comparison to these speed metal stalwarts. And just as lush bar-chord progressions become more deeply etched into one's brain with each rendition of a Slayer tune, our increasing familiarity with the M9's steamrolling characteristics have made swinging a leg over it feel like the opening riffs to *"Angel of Death"*—it starts fast and never lets up.

This rig accelerates so quickly, in fact, that it continuously forced some of us to ride well beyond our comfort zones, using velocity and sheer aggression to plow down the hill with pure contempt for line choice. The formula is simple: Point the bike downhill and shoot. When confronted with a formidable obstacle—a minefield of baby heads, roots or a series of scary drops—the correct course of action is to blast straight through it all. This

took a short period of adjustment for our more cautious riders, but each blazing run instilled us with greater confidence, and slower descenders found themselves narrowing the gap on their much-faster friends.

None of this should come as a surprise: The M9-FRO is the latest in Jeff Steber's venerated line of downhill race steeds, and it was designed with the sole purpose of getting racers down the mountain as fast as humanly possible. While World Cup-level DH riders stand to benefit most from the M9, it also rewards recreational gravity junkies by routinely saving their asses when they make ridiculous line choices.

The hand-built, made-in-the-USA frame is extremely adjustable, giving multiple options for chainstay length, rear travel and head angle. The headtube is designed for use with the Cane Creek AngleSet, which allows for half-degree adjustments from 62.5 to 65.5 degrees. These adjustments are easily made, thanks to a built-in, single-bolt headset clamp at the top of the headtube. The three degrees of adjustability give the M9 multiple personalities, making it the downhill race rig for all occasions, from the steepest of courses to tracks that require more pedaling.

The bike's plow-through-everything personality means that it is less nimble and maneuverable than some of the other machines reviewed in this issue, and this is noticeable on extended pedaling sections and in tight switchbacks. For riders who emphasize style or spend considerable time in the air, the M9 might not be the ideal choice. But if unchecked speed is your top priority, you'd be hard pressed to find a better option. —BRICE MINNIGH

**FINAL TAKE:** THE BURLY M9-FRO IS A HIGHLY ADJUSTABLE, BUILT-FOR-SPEED STEED THAT TAKES NO PRISONERS.