

**TESTED**  
**RIDDEN** **RUNCHED**  
**RATED**  
 BIKE TEST



**RATING**  
**9.2**

# JUSTICE MADISON CUSTOM

BEAUTY, PRACTICALITY AND SIMPLICITY EPITOMISED.

There's something very satisfying about owning something that no one else in the world possesses. It's even better when that something has been custom made for you, to your own preferences and specifications. But it's even more special again, when that something is a bike. And that's why I'm so happy with my Justice Madison Custom 29er.

**FRAME AND BUILD:**

Gary Snodgrass makes every Justice Madison by hand in his workshop, out the back of his house in Old Fort, Tennessee. Steel is the only material he works with, constructing each frame from a combination of Dedacciai and Columbus tubing. His has a classical approach to frame building; he eschews CAD programs and 3D modeling in favour of life size sketches drawn out on the concrete floor. Many of the machines he uses are circa World War Two, and instead of laser cutting, his tubesets are all mitred by hand. Sounds

backward? Sure, you could say that - but how can you argue with the man's processes when the end result is so damn perfect?

The Justice Madison is a marketing department's worst nightmare. There are no acronyms, nothing is oversized, press-fit, fluid formed or any of those adjectives that we fill the pages of this magazine with in a quest to differentiate each bike. But the Justice Madison does have something that other bikes in these pages often lack, and that's passion. There mightn't be a lot of bells and whistles going on here, but everything about this frame has the perfection of a passionate obsessive. Head tubes are faced and reamed, bottom bracket threads chased and all frame fittings installed with the utmost care. Then there's the paint job - undoubtedly one of the most gorgeous going, the green to white fade is pure class although it chips a little easily. Many single speed frames are ruined by clunky dropouts, but not the Justice.

The sleek s-bend stays culminate in some of the most practical, yet cleanly executed horizontal drop outs I've ever seen. Dual Allen bolts hold everything in place, while the tensioners use locknuts to keep prevent slippage under power. The disc mount slides with the drop out for perfect rear brake alignment too. Speaking of alignment, the Justice runs true and straight, and the rear wheel is perfectly centred between the stays. There's a mountain of tyre clearance, in spite of the short stays a 2.35" tread will easily fit. With no provisions for gears at all the lines are kept clean and unmarred by cable stops.

**SPEC:**

The Justice has had a number of changes made to its spec during its short lifespan. Once the descending capabilities of the bike were realised, the 80mm-travel Manitou Minute 29er fork originally installed was swapped out for something with more steering precision. On went a Fox F29



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RLC with not only more travel (100mm) but a 15mm axle too. Of course this fork change necessitated a new wheelset as the original Shimano wheels were quick release only. In their place I installed a TWE single speed specific wheelset. Built with the fantastic Stans Crest rims and laced with 32 spokes, they're not only lighter than the original Shimanos but stiffer too. This is particularly true out back as the single speed rear hub has both wider flanges and bolts in place. The wheels have been setup tubeless with fast rolling Specialized treads. A 700mm-wide bar and short 70mm stem complete the picture, giving great stability and cornering control.

**RIDE:**

I had absolutely no concept of just how much fun this bike was going to be when I first placed my order for a Justice Madison. I knew the feel I was after and had a rough idea of the frame numbers needed to achieve that, but I didn't expect this kind of all-round ability.

With a complete weight of less than 10kg, low 32/20 gearing and the 29" wheels making molehills out of mountains, it is a great climber. The roomy top tube leaves you with plenty of space for out of the saddle climbs, or lets you stretch out and hunker down for long seated efforts too. The stubby 70mm stem does cause the front end to want to wander a little, but it's a minor trade off for the improved descending it provides.

After having completed a 100km race on the bike I can attest that it's also incredibly comfortable. The light s-bend stays and thin 27.2mm carbon post take a lot of shock out of the trail. Setting the bike

up tubeless takes the comfort level even further. The overall suppleness comes into its own on the descents too; compared to other hardtails the Justice seems incredibly planted, refusing to skip out or buck around when you push to hard into a corner. Partly this is due to the excellent fork, but the rear end does give you the impression of having a small amount of travel when you need it most.

29" hardtails are rarely depicted as playful, but there's no other way to describe the Justice. Thanks to the slack head angle and short 430mm chain stays it's easy to pick up the front wheel to hop or manual over rough sections of trail, and hanging off the back, lofting the front for unexpected drop off is totally intuitive - something I've never experienced with a 29er before. It'll hook a corner with gusto too, whipping through with that side-loaded springiness that only steel can provide. You can definitely feel the whole bike load up and twist when you give it a really good runching, but because the fork is still nice and precise there's none of that nervousness that sometimes plagues a light steel frame. It's an unexpectedly ballsy ride, one that encourages you to over commit yourself to a high speed corner or launch a jump that's probably best left alone. On any other 29er hardtail it could spell disaster, but the Justice will see you through.

**VERDICT:**

It's amazing how far perfect geometry and thoughtful construction can elevate the humble hardtail. By all rights this bike shouldn't be nearly as fun and as capable as it is, but time and time again the Justice leaves me shaking my head. One hell of a bike. **AMB**



03.



04.

- 01. Slim stays look great and provide an ultra smooth ride.
- 02. A 15mm-axled Fox fork has the stiffness to complement the bike's abilities.
- 03. The neat sliding dropouts are well executed.
- 04. The lightweight Formula R1 brakes are a nod to weight saving... and good looks.

**INTENDED USE:**

**XC/RACE TRAIL**  
 ALL-MTN  
 FR DH  
 4X/JUMP

**SCORE CARD**

**Geometry:** 9.6  
**Build:** 9.5  
**Suspension:** 8.7  
**Spec:** 9.0  
**Final Score:** 9.2

**PRICE**

*On application.*  
**CONTACT**  
 www.justicemadisoncycles.com

**Weight:** 9.70kg  
**FRAME**  
 Steel  
**SUSPENSION**  
**Fork:** Fox F29 RLC, 100mm  
**DRIVETRAIN**  
**Cranks:** Shimano XT, 32t Surly chain ring  
**Chain:** KMC  
**Cog:** Surly 20t  
**Brakes:** Formula R1  
**COCKPIT**  
**Bars:** Jetblack Rocket  
**Stem:** Token 70mm  
**Saddle:** Thrones  
**Post:** Oval Concepts  
**WHEELS**  
**Wheels:** TWE/Stans  
**Tyres:** Specialized Renegade 2.0"  
**GEOMETRY**  
**HA:** 69° **SA:** 70°  
**TT:** 578mm **CS:** 430mm  
**WB:** 1092mm

+ Beautiful, inspired construction. Fantastic, playful handling.  
 - Paint is easily damaged.