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Fasthouse Blitz gloves (\$34)
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SAGE POWERLINE V3

The fast and the furious

When we reviewed Sage's Powerlineback V2 in July of 2021, we called the titanium hardtail "a ripper" and said, "There was a certain balance and harmony that this bike brought to every ride we ventured out on during testing." We loved how versatile and capable the bike was, but bikes have quickly evolved in the last few years, so Sage adapted the Powerline to not just stay ahead of the curve but set the bar.

FRAME

The third-generation Powerline features a completely new frame, updated geometry and new features. It has a 3D-printed chainstay yoke, full internal routing options, and a frame made in the USA from USA-sourced titanium. The newly designed 3D-printed chainstay yoke replaces the flat, CNC-machined plate behind the crankset on the drive side. This new yoke is curvier and can accommodate a 34-tooth chainring while also increasing tire clearance from 2.5 to 2.6 inches without adding to the chainstay length. In addition, the new yoke offers smooth internal routing for shift cables

or wires. The new Powerline has 3D-printed dropouts, too. The 3D-printed titanium parts are claimed to be stronger, lighter and more precise than the previous machined versions.

Sage Titanium's Powerline V3 now incorporates an internal routing system for all control lines, which run inside the frame through the downtube and chainstays. This includes the rear derailleur shift cable or wire, rear brake hose and dropper-post remote cable. However, if somebody prefers an external rear brake line, this option is still available.

With a head angle of 66 degrees—a full 1.5 degrees slacker than before and longer trail—the bike is designed for even more aggressive descending capability. The bike is still designed around a 130mm-travel fork, but the Powerline's head tube and geo have been updated to accommodate increased axle-to-crown heights in modern forks. There are three bottle mounts on medium, large and XL sizes (two inside, one underneath). Small frames get two bottle mounts (one inside and one underneath).



This versatile hardtail is not afraid of a little air time or aggressive riding.

SUSPENSION

Sage says that prior Powerline V2 models were designed around earlier Fox 34 forks, which had a 537.1mm axle-to-crown and 51mm offset. However, the latest MY23 RockShox Pike Ultimate is among the tallest, with a 551mm axle to crown and a shorter 44mm offset, so the new Powerline is designed around that measurement, which keeps geometry in check when using other popular forks as well. Our test bike came equipped with a 130mm-travel RockShox Pike Ultimate fork. Other fork options in the custom builder include the 130mm-travel Fox 34 with GRIP or FIT4 dampers.

COMPONENTS

Frame price starts at \$6000 for the Powerline. Complete bikes are built to order with your choice of drivetrains, forks, wheels, tires and cockpit. You can even pick small details, such as brake-rotor size, saddle width, tire width and dropper-seatpost travel. The average bike price ranges from \$10,000 to \$13,765, including a choice of standard finishes. Custom, over-the-top, anodized or Cerakote graphics treatments like our test bike received start at \$1000. Our test bike was built with the highest-end options because it's Sage owner David Rosen's personal bike. This build includes SRAM's XX1 Eagle Transmission drivetrain and Level Ultimate brakes, both of which worked flawlessly during our test.

Enve's M6 rims are paired with Industry Nine Hydra hubs for a wheelset that's light yet capable of aggressive riding. Sage specs a Maxxis Forecaster front and Recon rear tire combo in either a 2.6-/2.4-inch or 2.35-/2.25-inch combo; however, our test bike came with Schwalbe's Nobby Nics in a 2.6-inch front and 2.4-inch rear sizes. Another spec change came in the form of a RockShox AXS Reverb in place of a Fox Transfer dropper seatpost. The cockpit was particularly intriguing with Sage's own Beccus saddle that has

consistently drawn high marks from test riders on all bikes we've tested it on. Most interesting is the new titanium Sage Mountain handlebar. This one features custom graphics to match the frame, but they will be offered with different bends and Cerakote finishes ranging in price from \$300 to \$395. The bar on our test bike came with a 0mm rise, 760mm width and 7-degree sweep.

CLIMBING

From the very first climb it was clear that the Powerline has deep XC roots. It is quick feeling under power, darting forward with each stab at the pedals. It may not have quite the acute sense of acceleration that we got from the Optimator that we previously tested, but the stout-feeling bottom bracket area and solid rear triangle offer a great platform for the rider to transfer power. The seat angle is far steeper feeling than the 74.16-degree angle suggests. The saddle's sweet spot seems to be farther forward than most, so test riders speculate that is the main cause of this sensation. Either way, we like it. A 65mm stem and 454mm reach combined to offer a roomy-feeling cockpit, too.

DESCENDING

We expected the 26.3-pound hardtail with carbon wheels to climb well, and on paper, it should descend great, too, but we were still a bit surprised after dropping into our first downhill. Like all hardtails, line selection and working with the terrain are key, but we were able to push the bike harder than we initially thought. Small- to medium-sized jumps and bermed corners are taken with surprising confidence. The front end in particular works extremely well. It's tough to say if it's the high-volume, 2.6-inch tire; the superb action of the RockShox fork; or compliance from Sage's new titanium handlebar, but we reckon it's a bit of all three combined that offer an extraordinarily forgiving feel. Naturally, the frame has that cliché lively yet smooth ride quality that titanium is known for, too. It's still a hardtail, though, and needs to be ridden like one.



Custom anodized or cerakote graphics like this start at \$1,000 and make it feel like you're riding a work of art.

CATEGORY	WHEEL SIZE	SUSPENSION
Cross-country	29"	130mm (front)

The Powerline feels frisky on the climbs and makes ticking off the miles a pleasure.

Overall handling is quick enough to feel responsive at slower speeds and stable enough to let your mind wander a bit. The bike, as tested with this build, gives it a feel on the lower end of the trail bike spectrum on the descents, which makes it a lot of fun to ride on a wide variety of trails.


WHAT DID WE LOVE?

There wasn't a single person who didn't comment about the bike's colorful graphics. These graphics are extra special, too. There is a small silhouette of a dog on the head tube and paw print on the downtube as a tribute to one of Rosen's dogs that recently passed away.

WHAT DID WE HATE?

Most of our taller, larger-handed test riders didn't care much for the small-diameter Danny MacAskill signature grips (now called the Wasatch). They would have preferred the larger-diameter Charger Evo grip option on the custom build instead. We didn't love the fact that Dave sent us his personal bike with its custom graphics that meant so much to him. However, we rode it as hard as any test bike knowing that if the worst happened, scratches could be buffed out, the frame bead-blasted and restored to its original finish—graphics and all. It's one of the many advantages to owning titanium frames.

BOTTOM LINE

The updated Powerline is the kind of bike you want to take on a hard ride with tons of climbing and a challenging long descent at the end. It covers all the bases between cross-country race and all-mountain riding scenarios with a frame that looks like a piece of art while doing it. We have tested hardtails that are racier and faster, and those that are more capable on the downhill, but few that cover the spectrum between them as well as the Sage. 

SAGE POWERLINE V3

www.sagetitanium.com

Price	\$13,765
Weight	26.3 pounds (without pedals)
Sizes	S, M, L (tested), XL
Frame tested	Titanium
Fork	Rock Shox Pike Ultimate, 130mm travel
Wheelset	Enve M6 rims w/ Industry 9 Hydra hubs
Tires	Maxxis Forecaster (29x2.6" or 29x2.35") front, Maxxis Recon (29x2.4" or 29x2.25") rear
Seatpost	Fox Transfer (150mm travel)
Saddle	Sage Beccus
Handlebar	Enve M6 carbon
Stem	Enve M6 carbon
Grips	Lizard Skins Danny MacAskill
Headset	Chris King
Brakes	SRAM Level Ultimate
Rotors	SRAM Centerline, 180mm (f)/160mm (r)
Rear derailleur	SRAM XX Eagle Transmission
Shifters	SRAM AXS Ultimate Controller
Crankset	SRAM XX Eagle
Bottom bracket	Chris King
Cassette	SRAM XX Eagle Transmission 12-speed, 10-50T
Chain	SRAM XX Eagle Transmission Flattop
Chainrings	SRAM XX Eagle Transmission 34-tooth

GEOMETRY

Head tube angle	66°
Effective seat tube angle	74.16°
Reach	454mm (17.9")
Stack	643mm (25.3")
Bottom bracket height	325mm (12.8")
Chainstay length	430mm (16.9")
Wheelbase	1,193mm (47")