



BREEZER CLOUD 9 LTD

\$5,900 / BREEZERBIKES.COM

LIVELY AND CARBON ARE TWO WORDS NOT OFTEN used in the same sentence unless prefaced by the word 'not.' Somehow, however, Joe Breeze managed to meld these words nicely together. The bike had a playful feel, when pushed through corners and mobbed through rock gardens, usually reserved for steel or high-end aluminum frames.

I gave Breeze a call to ask him about this. "Tubing is the star of the show," he kept repeating while describing how long, uninterrupted, large-diameter tubes makes for a better-riding frame.

On the surface, the Breezer seems pretty ordinary, but close inspection reveals plenty of details that make this bike stand out. The Cloud 9 uses Shimano's BB92 standard for its bottom bracket shell, which allows for an extra-large non-drive chainstay. This helps maintain rear-end stiffness as the drive-side chainstay needs to be narrower for chainring clearance. The wide bottom bracket also allows for generous tire clearance—the Cloud 9 comes stock with 2.2-inch WTB Wolverine tires, and there is plenty of extra room for mud or even fatter tires.

After a few short rides, I decided to swap the stock stem and bars for something a bit shorter (80 millimeters) and wider (30 inches). Once this swap was made, the Cloud 9 felt balanced and right at home beneath me.

Tight and twisting trails are where Breezer designed this bike to excel, and man, it did not disappoint here. The 17.2-inch chainstays, 71-degree head angle and low, 12-inch-high bottom bracket kept the wheelbase tight and the steering razor sharp. The bike's personality was about 50-percent lean into, and 50-percent steer though corners, which I found to be nice in tight corners, and reasonable in fast, wide-open sweepers.

While it wasn't a surprise that the Cloud 9 did what it was supposed to do in the tight stuff, the bike's behavior on rough trails was startling. The Breezer was surprisingly easy to float though chunky rock gardens. Some combination of the high-volume tires and frame compliance kept the hardtail sting to a bearable minimum. That said, on steep, unforgiving terrain, extra attention had to be paid to make sure the Cloud 9 stayed well behaved.

One thing I wished this bike had—and something I feel *all* mountain bikes should have—is a through axle fork. That said, the tapered steerer did a reasonable job of keeping the front end stiff, despite the fork's open-style drop outs. What's not to love? Frankly, the price. Then again, that sort of price tag is what you get when a full XTR kit, carbon bits and WTB wheels get together and party.

At 24-pounds even (with pedals), the Cloud 9 could easily be at home toeing start lines, but the ride quality makes it an excellent choice as an everyday bike anywhere that 29ers reign supreme. —RYAN LABAR

FINAL TAKE: A SURPRISING LIVELY CARBON HARDTAIL WITH A WELL-BALANCED ATTITUDE AND AN AFFINITY FOR TIGHT TRAILS.