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The furry legs of Dave Ochs powered the Moots Vamoots RSL road bike through the streets of Silver City, N.M., during his escapade at the Tour of the Gila five-day stage race. "I was honored to fly this flag at such a worthy road race," says Ochs of the RSL. "It will reside in my dreams until my next bike purchase."



Mitchell Clinton

moots

VAMOOTS RSL

www.Moots.com

Price (as tested): \$8,714

Price (frame only): \$4,425

Weight (MD size - without pedals): 15.25 lbs.

Oh, sweet, supple, sexy titanium, I salute thee!

When my addiction to bicycles began about 10 years ago, a Moots was on my wish list but was not always affordable. I did eventually ride a Moots YBB for a year or so, and to be honest, I've missed titanium ever since. Nothing compares to titanium.

When Mountain Flyer asked me to test-ride the Vamoots RSL at the Tour of the Gila, a five-day stage race in southern New Mexico, I was drop-jawed and wide-eyed.

With the ever-growing carbon craze still leading the charge in the bike industry, titanium seems to have found a lower place on the popularity tree, especially with professional road racers. That could largely be attributed to the amount of research and design money going into carbon tube sets—leading to road bikes weighing 15 lbs.

With the RSL, Moots addressed the weight issue effectively with a customized tube set, cutting weight without sacrificing the ride. What Moots got was a competitively light frame set that will outlast a

carbon frame by decades. The company is still holding strong and true to its credo that nothing balances weight, strength, stiffness, vibration dampening and durability like titanium. Moots is right on.

What stood out first after throwing a leg over this beauty was the ride quality on the gnarly New Mexico roads. This bike yearned to ride over cracks, chip seal, bumpy roads—whatever was thrown at it. I couldn't get over how supple it rode. The Vamoots absorbed all kinds of road funk and had an ever-lasting dampening that made all-day riding feel so good.

The 3/2.5 Reynolds double-buttet tubing (6/4 micro-diameter seatstays) is not only beautiful, light and responsive, but so smooth. With perfect Moots welds and the standard Moots laid-back seat post and RSL stem, this bike rode like a dream.

My first day at the Tour of the Gila was the Inner Loop Road Race, a 64-mile stage with nearly 5,000 feet of climbing and descending. A bit dodgy in the Category 4/5 peloton, there were crashes left and right descending Pinos Altos, but the Moots was glorious.

I had reliable brakes and burly grab from the levers, which made for a very responsive machine. Between the rough roads, the



You can't tell by looking at the bike, but Moots was able to cut the Vamoots RSL frame weight by 20 percent in the top tube and 15 percent in the down tube compared with the RSL's predecessor, all while adding stiffness to the frame.

Using a Truvativ PressFit30 bottom bracket delivers a claimed 38 percent more stiffness while reducing weight by 5 percent.

squirrely 4/5 peloton and some pretty nasty descents with 180-degree switchbacks, I was damn happy to be on such a trusty steed. The RSL would lie down in the corners and accelerate out of them with reliable efficiency.

corners and 80 feet of climbing per lap.

I became rather familiar with the shifting through all the first-day nerves and mayhem on the descent. With the SRAM Red group, I liked how the shifting is controlled from only one lever and that the lever has a groovy taper on it for an easy grip. The shifter also swings independently of the brake lever, so you can move it closer to the bar for an even more convenient shift.

The Moots truly showed its persona here coming out of the tight and poorly surfaced corner No. 2 and up the climb with precision. All input to the pedals went right to forward momentum.

I'm still getting used to the big ring shifting, and I'm not sold on it yet. It seems a bit more forced under any load applied during shifting and doesn't seem to ramp up to the big ring like a Shimano shifter does.

This bike's ridiculously low weight obviously didn't hurt. I weighed it on the home scale at 14 lbs, 3 oz without pedals, 5 lbs less than the bike I left hanging in my garage at home in Crested Butte, Colo. I was going to focus on laying off the sauce before the Gila started, but no reason with that weight.

Blown away by the "all-day" ride aspect, I was eager to see how this kitty steered. The seemingly laid-back frame (73 degree seat tube, 73.75 degree head tube) was matched with a more aggressive fork, the Alpha Q carbon fork. The fork and the ti combination was like a cheetah turning to kill its prey: raaawwwwhhhhh (cat noise).

According to the company, the Vamoots RSL saves weight over its predecessors with a 20 percent lighter top tube, a 15 percent lighter (and 9 percent larger) seat tube, a 2 percent lighter (and 7 percent larger) down tube and the 9 percent lighter (and 22 percent larger) chainstays. It also takes on an increased strength with a 32 percent lighter Breezer-style dropout. I call it the supermodel of road bikes—actually more like a supermodel all hopped up on Fen-Phen and speed; she's fast as hell, too.

On the third day of racing, I was nervous riding this \$8,700 bike in the Silver City Downtown Critérium, but it was worth it. The Mavic Ksyrium SL wheels were stiff and reliable, and the bike would pounce out of the corners.

On the climbs, it was like having another gear or getting a little push. The RSL charged on the inclines and was so efficient. It accelerated with the easiest touch of the pedals, and it descended, you know...raaawwwwhhhhh!

Truvativ's PressFit 30 oversized bottom bracket delivers a claimed 38 percent more stiffness while reducing weight by 5 percent and gives the bike the muscle where it's needed: during sprints and hard climbs. The Downtown Crit takes on a bit of both with some really tight

On the last day, the Gila Monster Road Race covered 71.8 miles, more than 5,000 feet of climbing and 4,000 feet of descending. The race included some sweet descending into Pinos Altos and what a rush it was on this plush ride with dependable and aggressive steering. I may have been getting a bit cocky in the corners, but time and gaps were on my mind, and the Moots delivered.



Mitchell Clinton

Dave Ochs warms up on the streets of Silver City, N.M., preparing for battle in the criterium at the Tour of the Gila stage race. "I was scared riding such a nice bike with a bunch of Cat 4 thugs in a criterium," lamented Ochs. "But the bike's handling saved my ass."

As for other components, the Deda bars and the SRAM Red hoods were easy on my back, neck and arms. There wasn't really anything on this bike that didn't feel like it was snuggling up to you and inviting you in.

Topping it off, I was pleasantly surprised by the Fi'zi:k Arione saddle. I had tried the Fi'zi:k Gobi saddle on the mountain bike but was not such a fan. I was worried about starting the bike season on a new saddle. But the Arione's long, slender style provided multiple positions for comfort and variable seating. A great saddle for the time trial, it got me right up there on the "rivet," if you will (borrowed from road race commentators Phil and Paul) and got me back when it was more comfortable for flat-land riding.

I was honored and proud to fly this flag in such a worthy road race, and it will reside in my thoughts and dreams until my next road bike purchase. A tremendous asset for the quiver, a Moots really doesn't lose value.

It's pricey at \$4,425 for the frame and fork, but the titanium will ride as well 20 years down the road, and Moots backs the bike with a lifetime warranty. A lifetime warranty on a bike says quite a bit—that's unparalleled craftsmanship right there, folks. And it's handbuilt in the Rockies. —Dave Ochs



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