

2006

MOUNTAIN

BEST MOUNTAIN: Ski-Doo Summit HMX 151

Sorry Fergie, but Summit's weight-loss program is more impressive than yours. Summit always had arm-stretching horsepower, but now it has a better power-to-weight ratio after the sled shed 15 pounds (20 if you got an X-package) for the 2006 season. The 900 twin, with its improved DPM control and increased cylinder head pressure, allows Summit to snap its fingers and leave others grabbing for their socks and shoes. Its 151-by-16-inch center-punched track provides a big footprint while allowing Summit to be more nimble on the trails and between the trees.

Couple all that with new skis, superb ergonomics, rear-tunnel mounted cargo rack, new seat and excellent running boards, and the Summit is ... well, tops in our book. That saavy red and gray paint job doesn't hurt either.



BEST HYBRID: Polaris Switchback

Here's a new category, but a fast-growing one. Cat's new Crossfire is solid, but a winter's worth of testing on Polaris' Switchback 900 and several rides on the new 600 have convinced us Polaris has the right combo. The key seems to be the excellent 144-inch track that helps this hybrid skim over the snow with ease. Add to that



the great hookup and power of the 900 and you've got more than enough thrust to climb any hill, no matter the angle. Everyone praised the new 600 motor too as smooth, responsive and powerful. Handling is good, both on trail and off, so boondockers can romp with ease and comfort. Shoot, one rider even said he could go for the 600 as best overall sled this season!

BEST HIGH-HORSEPOWER: Ski-Doo MXZ X 1000 Renegade

Ski-Doo wins this category too, but just barely. Our testers were surprised, not by the Renegade's speed, but by its quickness. It boasts a monster 2-TEC 1000 SDI engine that delivers 165 horses smoothly. Several riders commented that the Renegade was easy to handle, for a "tough guy" sled. It's low center of gravity gives a stable feel, no matter the rider's height or weight. Plus nearly everyone liked its longer 138-inch PowderMax track and how its suspension worked in extremely bumpy trail conditions. For now the Renegade is our high-horsepower sled of choice, but its sibling Mach Z X and Yamaha's Apex models will be filling Renegade's mirrors as they power through 2006.



BEST NEW INNOVATION: Arctic Cat seats/radios

Fun and comfort earn big points in any AmSnow evaluation and Cat gave us a two-fer this year. Its new 3-speed heated seats on the Touring models answer more than a few riders' prayers. Plus with separate controls, the divorce rate among couples riding two-ups may decline. On the fun spectrum, a new communication system on the T660 Turbo Touring LE and Turbo LE models is fighter-pilot-like fun. Its 15 channels with a push-to-talk switch give entire families the ability to chat on the trails. There's also a satellite radio, so you can dial in tons of tunes riding in the outback. This is a winner!

