

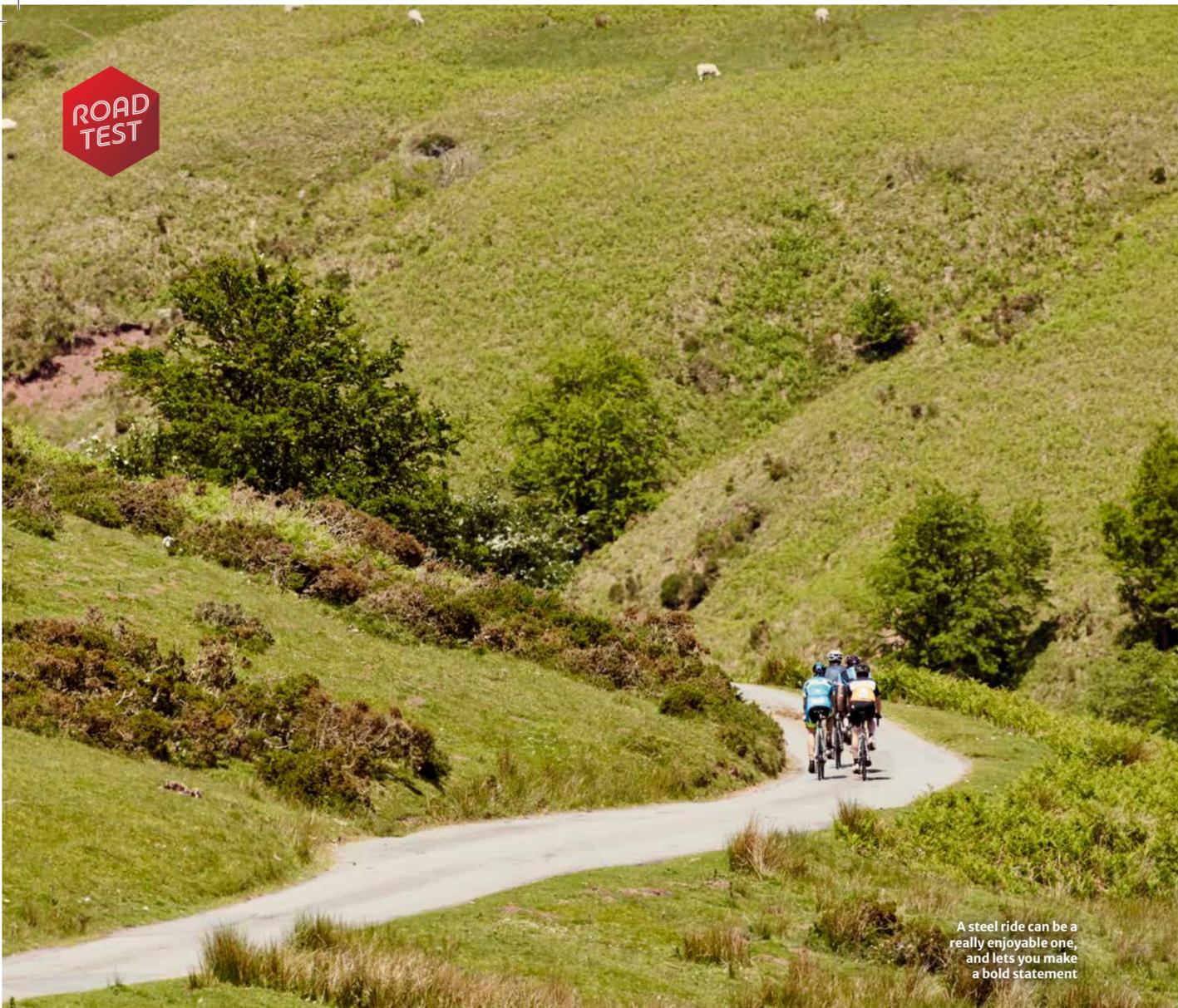


# STEEL YOURSELF

Are premium steel bikes the ultimate retro renaissance ride or all show and no go? We test six iron alloy flagships from the timeless to the stainless and from racers to recreational all-rounders to find out



Steve Behr



A steel ride can be a really enjoyable one, and lets you make a bold statement

THE BIKES ON TEST



**MASON RESOLUTION ULTEGRA HYDRO** £3195

Mason might be a new brand but former Kinesis designer Dom has put all his experience and fresh ideas into the detailed, future-proofed Resolution. This frame's built in Italy but disc brakes, big tyre clearances plus mudguard and rack fixtures potentially make this the ideal UK all-rounder.



**GENESIS VOLARE** £3399

Genesis is relatively new to the steel game but few designers talk tubeset evolution with the passion and fanatical detail of brand manager Albert Steward. The Volare is the direct result of several seasons of pro race development and despite being the second cheapest bike on test here, it's the only one with a stainless steel tubeset and a Di2 electric shift groupset.



**CONDOR SUPER ACCIAIO** £3410

Legendary London shop Condor Cycles is another brand that's been developing steel frames under its pro race team for years and it shows in the notably aggressive character of the new Super Acciaio frame. The custom Columbus tubeset is a masterpiece of multi-section metal manipulation and Condor's online builder allows you to create exactly the bike you want from this beautifully finished, UCI approved frame.



**ENIGMA ELITE HSS ST UNION JACK LTD ED** £3649

The Elite HSS ST translates all the company's titanium building experience into a triple-butted Spirit Niobium tubeset from Italian prestige plumbers Columbus. Anyone who wants a responsive ride from their steel steed should take note that Enigma's cracked the code on fast ferrous style.



**COLNAGO MASTER X-LIGHT** £3512 test bike build

An iconic bike from one of the most storied brands in the bicycle world, and hand-made in its Italian headquarters. A cross-section tubeset held together with traditional lugged construction and semi-chromed stiletto forks and pencil stays has been setting the benchmark for steel beauty for 30 years.



**PEGORETTI DUENDE CIAVETE** £2635 frame and fork

Whatever it said on the frames Dario Pegoretti was the brilliant Italian builder behind some of the most successful riders in the golden age of steel bikes. The legend's endured and you're looking at a several month waiting list for even the most affordable Duende model.

Steel ruled supreme for the first century of bike building before aluminium and then carbon fibre frames broke its grip. Now it's in the midst of a renaissance powered by riders who want to break the carbon mould. The stark truth is that even the most advanced steel frames cannot compete with carbon ones in pure performance terms. Steel fabricators can pick statistics to make it look comparable but even the lightest steel frames are 50 per cent heavier than the lightest carbon frames. If you want to maintain the signature smoothness steel is prized, but they won't be as stiff or precise as a composite frame. As a result Strava performances we logged on these bikes were comparable to the £1000 carbon ones we tested last issue. If you take off your rose-tinted retro glasses and put on a blindfold

**YOUR TESTER**  
**Guy Kesteven**  
*Tester*  
 Guy learned to ride bikes when steel ruled the world and he's tested every possible frame material including a few he's glad he's forgotten. Getting back onto a full set of steel bikes raised a whole new set of questions for Guy and his ultra-experienced northern test crew.

even the distinctive subtly sprung, road-smoothing resilience of a premium steel frame is very hard to distinguish from some softer carbon road frames, and we're not necessarily talking expensive carbon either. With the frames here costing from between £1200-£2700 economy isn't a strong point either. The ideal bike isn't always about speed and value though, and when it's done right steel interacts with the road and rider in an inescapably enjoyable way, gliding along with the warmth of a summer evening and effortlessly rolling a gear round like a childhood hero. An experience that's about savouring each moment, not being a slave to post-ride uploads or virtual leader boards. If you want to make an individual statement rather than following the herd no other material attracts craftsmen builders or lends itself to ostentatious artistry like steel either.

**RATINGS EXPLAINED**

★★★★★  
**EXCEPTIONAL**  
 A genuine class leader

★★★★  
**VERY GOOD**  
 One of the best you can buy

★★★  
**GOOD**  
 It'll do the job very well

★★  
**BELOW AVERAGE**  
 Flawed in some way

★  
**POOR**  
 Simply put, don't bother

## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES



**+** **↓** Below Shimano disc brakes with 140mm rotors keep the Mason under control **Bottom** MultiPort inserts make for neat internal cable routing



You still get the signature steel surge of speed like the turbo kicking in on a diesel car

# MASON RESOLUTION ULTEGRA HYDRO

**£3195** > Can the youngest bike here compete with classics?

**M**ason is so young as a company that our Resolution sample still wasn't quite a perfect production example, but it throws down a new challenge to the steel status quo.

The obvious difference with the Resolution is the fact it's disc brake specific. The rear callipers bolt into replaceable brass thread details inside the kinked dropouts and the hydraulic hoses vanish into down-tube and fork leg to keep lines clean.

Mason's unique MultiPort alloy inserts give equally neat internal routing of full outer, split outer or electric cable runs or plain blanking

plates for singlespeed or single-ring running. Ironically these seemingly tiny touches required the most intricate design and Italian hand-building skill to get them to work with the thin wall Columbus steel tubing while still adding minimal weight. Slightly extended chainstays and raised placement of the hooped seatstay bridge make the Resolution compatible with full guards with the 28mm tyres fitted or up to 32mm tyres without guards.

At this point you'd be forgiven for thinking the Resolution is just a particularly neatly designed utility/light touring bike with plenty of existing parallels but

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 9.16kg (54cm)

**Frame** Mason Columbus Spirit/Life custom disc

**Fork** Mason Aperture carbon

**Gears** Shimano Ultegra 6800 50/34x11-28

**Brakes** Shimano 785 hydraulic disc, 140mm rotors

**Wheels** Mason Hunt 4 Season disc

**Finishing kit** Deda Zero2 and bar, Continental Grand Sport Extra 28mm tyres

the ride confirms it's genuinely special. Granted, the weight of the puncture-reinforced Gran Sport Extra tyres is obvious in the first few pedal strokes and there's a bit of bounce in those long rear stays, but get the gear turning and you still get steel's signature surge of speed like the turbo kicking in on a diesel car. Switching to lighter GP4000S II rubber released the potential of the Resolution to punch up the steeper sections of our Dales test loops and/or roll a big ratio over the summit.

Don't get hung up on the overall wheel weight either as that includes the weight of the 140mm Shimano Centerlock rotors. →



The custom Columbus tube mix screens out chatter and stutter from rough surfaces

The 4 Season wheels are a close collaboration with another 'UK upstart' brand - Hunt - and a perfect complement to the Resolution. They're responsively low weight, without sacrificing the stiffness needed to get maximum precision and longevity from the huge amounts of fingertip control from the hydraulic brakes. The all-weather control of the discs is backed up by a slacker than usual head angle, which combines with the longer chainstays for a stable and confident descending feel. A relatively short stem keeps steering keen and lively, so if you decide to go off piste you'll have a good handle on grip in loose gravel conditions.

As you'd expect if you were paying £1459 for a steel tubeset, the custom Columbus tube mix screens out chatter and stutter from rough surfaces. Unlike many disc sets the full carbon Mason Aperture fork is

**HIGHS**

Beautiful blend of buoyantly responsive ride, surefooted control and next level detailing

**LOWS**

Lighter tyres release more of the Resolution's underlying responsiveness

**BUY IF**

You want an utterly practical all-rounder you'll still be begging to ride all weekend

light and smooth riding without any worrying twang or flutter when you anchor hard. The wheels are tubeless tyre compatible if you add a sealing strip and valve, adding another level to the existing survivability and smoothness advantages of the Resolution's tyre compatibility. The way the Mason shrinks the miles adds credibility to the latest 'bigger is faster' rubber testing results.

Mason has teamed up with UK contact point specialist Fabric for maximum bar tape and carbon railed saddle comfort to complete the excellent ride complementing spec.

**THE VERDICT**

All weather confidence, all purpose utility and ultra detailed style.

★★★★★

Also consider...



**GOT MORE CASH?**  
**MASON RESOLUTION DURA-ACE Di2 HYDRO** £5595

Mason's flagship uses the MultiPort inserts to create a slick aesthetic for its electric shifting, steel superbike.



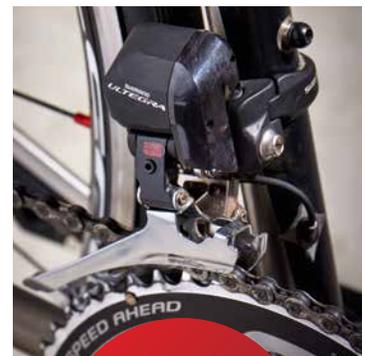
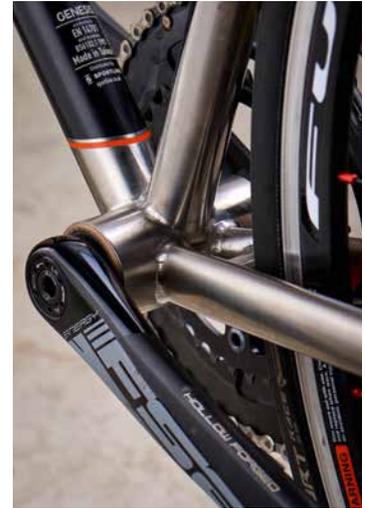
**ON A BUDGET?**  
**MASON DEFINITION ULTEGRA HYDRO** £2695

This delivers the same outstanding fork, disc brake specific MultiPort and guard detailing in an alloy tube format. →



## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES

**+** **↓** Below BB86 Press-Fit bottom bracket provides a stiff, efficient pedalling platform **Bottom** Gearing is a mix of Shimano Ultegra Di2 and FSA kit



The semi-raw finish reveals a few spots of functional rather than flawless welding

# GENESIS VOLARE STAINLESS

**£3399.99** > Is this stainless racer blemish free on the road?

**G**enesis is another relatively young brand but while it might not have the same depth of laurels to rest on as Condor, Colnago and Pegoretti its stainless Volare frame has picked up an impressive trophy haul in the last three years.

The bike you're looking at isn't exactly the same as the £1999.99 Reynolds 953-tubed Volare frame evolved and still regularly raced by the Madison Genesis pro team. The American-developed KVA stainless tubeset is created using the same cold drawn, homogenous welded seam methods though and tensile

strength is high compared to other Reynolds or Columbus options. Genesis has also decreased tube sizes slightly to keep weight down, relying on the thicker tube walls for similar stiffness. Stout chainstays and press-fit BB86 bottom bracket add some width to channel wattage in the right direction when you put the power down. It's Di2 specific with the battery and wiring running internally. We did experience occasional, irritating cable rattle and the semi-raw finish reveals a few spots of functional rather than flawless welding, but the alignment of the ring-reinforced head-tube to cowed dropout is perfect.

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 8.84kg (54cm)  
**Frame** KVA MS3 stainless steel  
**Fork** ADK full carbon  
**Gears** FSA Energy MegaExo 52/36t, Shimano Ultegra 6870 Di2 11-28t  
**Brakes** Shimano Ultegra  
**Wheels** Fulcrum Racing LG CX  
**Finishing kit** Genesis 110mm stem, Compact bar, Continental Grand Sport Race 25mm tyres

The Taiwanese ADK fork is the best piece here in terms of ride quality. It smoothed-out incoming impacts and rough road sections so well that we stopped and checked we hadn't lost front tyre pressure several times before we realised it was just the exceptional damping performance doing its job. That same smoothly planted and connected feel carries through the whole frame. The 25mm tyres add a bit more smoothness and while they don't have pose value the Genesis-branded contact kit is comfortable.

Even allowing for that (and swapping wheels about to check) the stainless tubes had a distinctively →

There's enough authority in the front and fork that it never started to twitch or stand up



more ductile and fluid interaction with the road when we got deep into our swap over, back-to-back segment riding sessions. While they're not light the Fulcrum wheels roll smoothly and Genesis has specced the CX version, which gets better bearing seals than normal.

This permanently connected feel means while the wheelbase is relatively short we never doubted the ability of the Volare to push the Continental tyres hard on descents without overstepping the mark. There's enough authority in the front and fork that it never started to twitch or stand up just when we were trying to calm our breathing and totally commit to a sweeper, and you can work the brakes hard and late without worrying.

Where the Genesis is less compelling is on climbs. The slight spring of the steel means it can tap a rhythm out beautifully and there's

**HIGHS**

Very smooth and surefooted ride quality, great value for stainless tubes and Di2

**LOWS**

Wheel and component choices dull responsiveness

**BUY IF**

You want a sublimely smooth, Di2-equipped package rather than a pick and mix charger

a generous stretch in the top-tube to give ample breathing space. Kick hard though and the heavy wheels and extra Di2 weight can be felt dragging you backwards. The FSA chainset is slightly soft underfoot too but even when we swapped to an Ultegra crank and lighter wheels to isolate the chassis, the Genesis still doesn't feel as responsive and taut as either the Condor or the Enigma.

While the complete package deal makes it very good value for a stainless-tubed Di2 bike, you're reliant on your dealer to accommodate any changes you might want to make.

**THE VERDICT**

Excellent value for impeccable stainless steel smoothness and Di2 drive

★★★★★

**Also consider...**



**GOT MORE CASH?**

**GENESIS VOLARE 953 £1999.99**

(frame and forks) The pro spec Volare frame uses Reynolds tubing, including several shapes developed for Genesis. Conventional or Di2 specific options.



**ON A BUDGET?**

**GENESIS EQUILIBRIUM STAINLESS £1999.99**

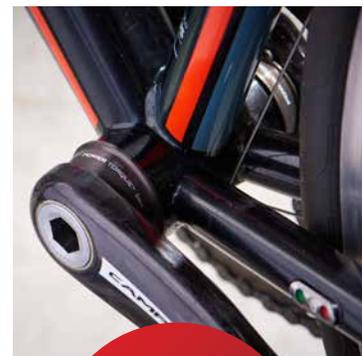
This uses a similar KVA stainless tubeset to the Volare but in a more relaxed, all-rounder format.





## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES

**+** **↓** Below Seatstays flattened out below the brake bridge **Bottom** Oversized PF30 bottom bracket is a rare sight on steel bikes



It's the only bike here that's gone through the lengthy and expensive process needed for UCI approval

# CONDOR SUPER ACCIAIO

**£3410** > Does Condor's latest steel racer really give you wings?

**C**ondor's shop on Gray's Inn Road, London, has been a cultural hub for everyone from cycle couriers to Continental pro riders since 1948 and has been producing stylish machines for just as long. The Super Acciaio blends that timeless style and experience with the fruits of its long relationship with Italian tube master Columbus to produce a sporting steeler.

If you didn't know about the rich racing history of Condor – most recently in cahoots with Rapha and JLT – there are some clear clues in the Super A frameset. It's the only

bike here that's gone through the lengthy and expensive process needed for UCI approval and the international racing clearance that provides. A tapered head-tube keeps a firm (for steel) hold on the light Columbus Grammy Slim fork, it uses an oversize BB30 bottom bracket that is almost unheard of in steel bikes and stout, kinked chainstays end in oversized cowed dropouts. You'll feel a different cross-section wherever you grab the triple-butted tubes too, with everything from round to oval to octagonal to rectangular and every permutation in between used to maximise power transfer and precision.

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 8.0kg (55cm)  
**Frame** Columbus Condor custom  
**Fork** Columbus Grammy Slim/ Super Acciaio  
**Gears** Campagnolo Athena Carbon, 52/36, 11-28t  
**Brakes** Campagnolo Athena dual pivot  
**Wheels** Campagnolo Shamal Ultra  
**Finishing kit** Fizik stem and bar, Conti Grand Prix 4000S 23mm tyres

The seatstays are flattened to flex subtly below the Condor-embossed brake bridge and there's delicious detailing from the contrast paint inside the double-sided reinforced dropouts to neatly shaped cable guides and multiple 3D versions of the Condor logo on various tubes.

A full bike fit at Condor HQ (or nine other regional Condor stockists) is included in the £1399 frame or complete, multi-option bike builder price and if none of the six broadly spaced 46-61cm sizes feel right custom geometry (and paint options) are available for £120 and an eight-week wait. The bike builder also allows your personal →

Enhanced power transfer and precision comes at the expense of subtle shock damping



choice of parts but you'd not go far wrong with Condor's own pick of mid-range Campagnolo groupset and top end wheels here.

While artistry and custom spec potential help justify a serious bike purchase, it's how a frame feels on the road that really lights your fire. The Super A is the most flammable bike here in that respect too. The stiff, short chainstay frame stokes the lightweight Campagnolo Shamal wheels up to a scorching pace with minimal effort for a steel bike. The 8kg weight means it'll ignite with equal enthusiasm on any steepness of incline or village sign sprint and it's the standout bike here for riders who love to look over their shoulders and prod the pace of a group ride. Even with the wheels swapped it's still got a noticeable edge over the otherwise similarly sporting Enigma when you're twisting the bar tape off at max torque. The steepest steering

**HIGHS**  
Efficiently effervescent responsiveness and handling with serious style and good value custom options

**LOWS**  
Firmer, feistier ride than you might expect from steel

**BUY IF**  
You want a classically styled, deep heritage, custom configurable steelie with a distinctively dynamic ride

on test makes it the most quick-witted of the bunch and it's as eager on twisting roads as it is on climbs.

Perhaps inevitably, enhanced power transfer and precision comes at the expense of subtle shock damping and there's a fair amount of clatter and chatter from either end of the Condor. Tight clearances mean even 25mm tyres are a close fit. A relatively tall head-tube takes pressure off your hands, and with the extra filter of a skinny Fizik carbon seatpost under the Aliante saddle there's enough spring to float a big gear over staccato road sections and keep the steel spark alive.

## THE VERDICT

Aggressive power and handling, clean steel style with good value custom options

★★★★★

Also consider...



**GOT MORE CASH?**  
**CONDOR ACCIAIO STAINLESS**  
£2799.99 (frame and fork) The Columbus XCr stainless steel Acciaio comes with custom fit and colour choice as standard.

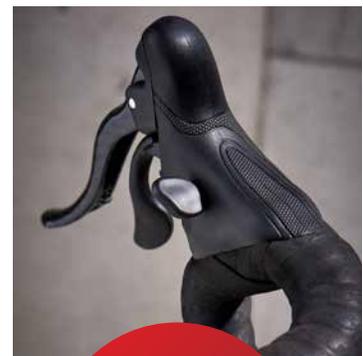


**ON A BUDGET?**  
**CONDOR ACCIAIO** £899.99 (frame and fork) A more upright and affordable frame but the Dedacciai Zero Replica triple-butted tubestet means it's no heavier than the Super. →

## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES



 **Below** For an extra £299 you can be patriotic with Union Jack touches **Bottom** Campagnolo Chorus Skeleton brakes scrub off speed



There's enough give in the frame to keep tyres glued better than you expect

# ENIGMA ELITE HSS ST

**£3649** > Has Enigma cracked the code for spirited yet smooth riding?

 he optional £299 Union Jack painted front end of the Enigma makes a striking visual statement but the frame and fork it covers are what confirm the Elite HSS ST's combative character.

The stocky head-tube gives room for a full-size tapered fork with hidden Columbus ceramic bearings. The fork base width means the head-tube can be kept low for an aggressive ride position rather than perching you up high for pottering. The carbon Enigma fork has been chosen to produce the right blend of precision and palpable small bump

absorption. It's so good that given the visual similarity we actually asked Enigma if it had fitted an ultra-expensive ENVE Road 2.0 under the colour-synched paint job rather than its own unit.

Enigma follows up the contemporary front end with a gently sloped top-tube and tight rear that keeps the metal needed to a minimum. That gives the Elite HSS an impressively low claimed frame weight of just over 1500g for the smallest size. Tube shaping's minimal too, relying on the classic round profiles of the triple-butted Columbus Spirit tubing to join the tapered head to the conventional

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 7.82kg (53cm)

**Frame** Columbus Spirit Niobium

**Fork** Enigma full carbon

**Gears** Campagnolo Chorus, 50/34, 11-28

**Brakes** Campagnolo Chorus Skeleton

**Wheels** Campagnolo Zonda

**Finishing kit** Enigma 3D stem, Compact bar, Continental Grand Prix 4000S 23mm tyres

screw-in bottom bracket shell. The brazed-on tab for the front mech is neater than the wraparound clamps used on most of the bikes here. The sudden pre-dropout taper of the stout chainstays reminded us of the classic enhanced stiffness Max OR tubeset that Columbus developed to combat the rise of alloy frame popularity in the '90s. The cowled dropouts also give maximum contact area for the rear stays to complete a muscular looking frame.

Enigma offers Ultegra-based 1.1 (£3075.99) or Dura-Ace-based 1.3 (£4299) complete bike options or can build you a custom spec bike like the Campagnolo Chorus stop and →



Even with the relatively low bar position it's forgiving enough for a lazy summer ride

go/Zonda wheel sample here. While frame prices of the Elite HSS ST and Condor Super Acciaio are the same at £1399 the Condor bike builder is cheaper for a similar spec. Enigma has its own paint shop, with several two-tone options as standard on the Elite and a range of custom finishes including colour-matched Enigma stem and seatpost for £299+.

While the colour-matched frame and kit looks great it's how it works on the road that makes it clear why Enigma's owner Jim Walker often rides one himself rather than one of his more expensive titanium frames.

While the relatively relaxed head-tube gives a stable base feel, the steep seat angle pushes weight and authority onto the front tyre. There's enough give in the frame to keep tyres glued better than you expect, so you can really rip the low front end through corners, clipping apexes and straining your neck for

#### HIGHS

Excellent balance of smoothness and speed with full commitment handling and collar and cuffs style options

#### LOWS

Complete bike prices are slightly high

#### BUY IF

You want your steel with smooth performance position swagger, easy speed and fresh styling

the fastest exit. It's not as taut as the Condor or solid as the Pegoretti but the stout tubes are punchy enough to make going full gas a rewarding experience on climbs or sprints and help you churn a fading gear over the brow of a hill and spin straight into the attack. Even with the relatively low bar position it's forgiving enough for a lazy summer ride.

The Enigma feels as classy and coherent to ride as it is to look at and its easy yet enthusiastic character is a great example of why steel still deserves consideration if you want more from your riding than clinical speed and mass market value.

## THE VERDICT

Engaging and enjoyable race style, easy speed ride but value is in the finish options

★★★★★

#### Also consider...



#### GOT MORE CASH?

**ENIGMA EXCEL TI** £2287 (frame and fork) The Excel sits at the top of the prestige pile thanks to an evolved 6AL 4V tubeset, tapered fork compatible head-tube and machined detailing.



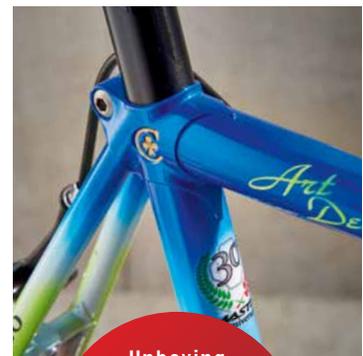
#### ON A BUDGET?

**ENIGMA ETHOS** £1050 (frame and fork) Triple-butted Columbus Life tubing means a similar weight frame to the Elite, but a straight steerer and single colours keep it more affordable. →

## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES



**+** **↓** **Below** Precisa fork sports Colnago's cloverleaf logo  
**Bottom** The frame's paintjob is a mix of stencilling, air brushing and metallic flake



Unboxing revealed a beautifully judged build kit from importer Windwave

# COLNAGO MASTER X-LIGHT

**£3512** > Is this ultimate Italian icon still a relevant ride?

I was more excited to try this bike than any I can remember in a long time. I caught my first glimpse of this aspirational icon when I opened my first copy of the 1986 *Bicycle Buyer's Guide*. It was the most expensive bike in there and justified that cost easily with its opulence. My giddy expectation didn't ease when unboxing revealed a beautifully judged build kit from importer Windwave, which teamed Campagnolo's latest Chorus 22-speed stop/go equipment with a retro Selle Italia suede saddle. Even the machined facets on the Vision

TriMax 30 rims sync with the flat faces of the Master's signature cross section Columbus tubing.

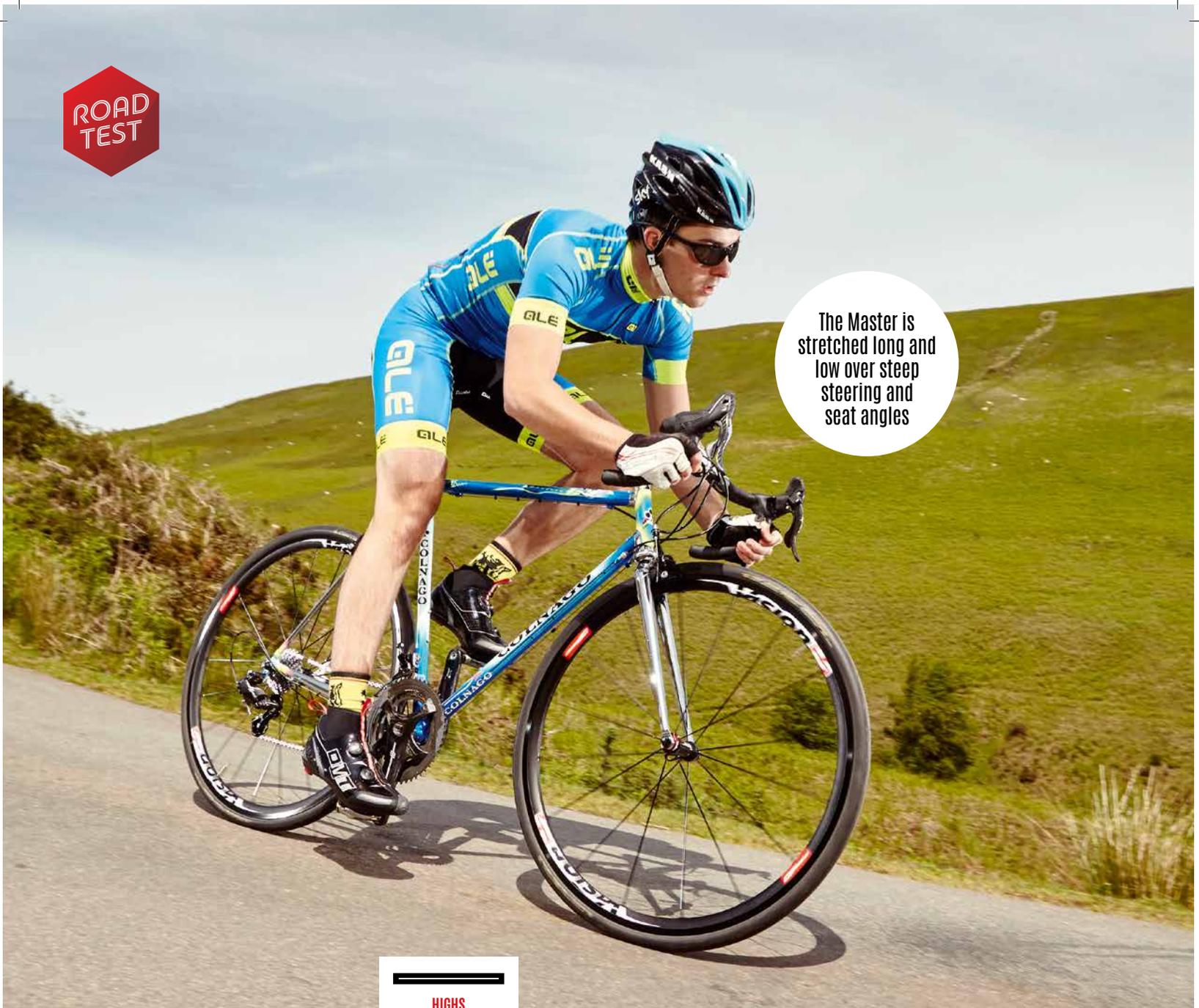
It's the £1999.99 frame with its 30-year history that's the star. The tubeset is joined via separate ornately shaped lugs or socket sections. The ones connecting the head-tube to the down-tube and top-tube are chromed and inset with Colnago's cloverleaf logo to match the chromed, tapered leg Precisa stiletto fork. The centre sections of the slim rear stays are also immaculately chromed. The whole frame is perfectly aligned so you only need to touch the wheel positioning screws in the rear

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 8.45kg (56cm)  
**Frame** Custom DT15V steel  
**Fork** Colnago Precisa, 1in steerer  
**Gears** Campagnolo Chorus, 52/36, 11-25t  
**Brakes** Campagnolo Chorus  
**Wheels** Vision TriMax 30  
**Finishing kit** FSA Gossamer stem and bar, Colnago post, Continental Grand Prix 4000S II 25mm tyres

dropouts if you want to sneak the rear wheel even closer to the seat-tube on the already short rear end.

Crowning the constructional glory on our sample is one of four different base colour versions of Colnago's Art Deco livery. It's a stunning mix of stencils, multi-colour airbrush fades, rich colour blocks and freestyle metallic flake detailing that somehow works perfectly in the Colnago context whether you remember it from childhood or it's totally new to you. If it's a bit flamboyant for you there are retro Mapei team colour, the classic white panel on red livery of Italian 1982 World Champion Giuseppe →



The Master is stretched long and low over steep steering and seat angles

Saronni or just a white and chrome option. A vast range of sizes in single centimetre gaps from 49–65cm should see most riders find a fit.

The fit of the Colnago is as much of its time as the construction and style. The Master is stretched long and low over steep steering and seat angles. While it looks fragile the ultra-tapered Stiletto fork is anything but, skewering the road with authority considering the inch diameter steerer, skinny head-tube and frame tubes connecting it to the rest of the bike. Those slim tubes glue the back end onto the tarmac with equal tenacity, with the 25mm tyres and angular Vision rims adding more adhesion and accuracy. Add the long, low position and the Master descends like a hawk even on technical descents, begging you to add gears rather than back off.

While it's a match for the latest bikes on descents, accelerating

#### HIGHS

A true style icon with authoritative charisma and technically tenacious handling

#### LOWS

Slim lugged steel tubes need coaxing up to speed not bullying

#### BUYIF

You want a truly timeless, instantly recognisable classic rather than a modernised muscle bike

and climbing requires a more deft touch. Stomp rudely on the pedals or heave the bar and it responds with the speed sucking stubbornness you'd expect if you tried to bully an old Italian. Squeeze power forwards from a rearward saddle position and the sense of sticky brakes and rubber chain is replaced with a steady surge of speed that's sustained whatever the road underneath you. Pushing weight back and riding light on the front also reduces the hammer from the fork. This is a bike that rewards you if you respect it and where time you spend aboard is a bonus, not something to be hurried.

## THE VERDICT

A true steel icon with impeccable handling and timeless charisma

★★★★★

Also consider...



**GOT MORE CASH?**  
**COLNAGO C60 DISC** £3699.95

The latest C60 monocoque flagship comes in disc brake and electric shift versions or even a combination of the two.



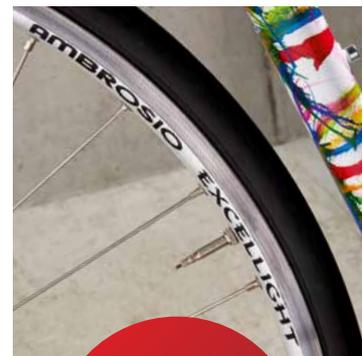
**ON A BUDGET?**  
**COLNAGO AC-R 105** £2099.95

This uses a carbon frame and fork that's conventional or electric shift compatible and comes with Campag Veloce, Shimano Ultegra or 105 kit. →



## £2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES

**+** **↓** Below The Ciavete finish will cost you an extra £485 **Bottom** Ambrosio Excellight SSC rims are weighty but can handle rougher stuff



The welding and alignment is perfect from the extended head-tube to the dropouts

# PEGORETTI DUENDE CIAVETE

**£2635 (frame and fork)** > Stand out style from a framebuilding legend

**W**e can't think of another bike we've tested that hasn't had its brand name somewhere on its frame but then Pegoretti isn't an ordinary brand.

There's an extra irony in the fact that Dario Pegoretti doesn't plaster his name on his frames either as he built his reputation by creating bikes to be raced under other brand names by the world's best riders. He started frame building back in 1975 and already had an enviable reputation before he started to pioneer TIG welding to join steel tubes in 1985 when most other

builders were still using lugs and low temperature brazing.

While the technique became common with mass-produced alloy frames before flowing back into steel and titanium construction, at the time this pushed the materials and craftsmanship to the limit. The precision mitring (curved shaping to ensure the perfect tube on tube connection) removes any overlap, minimising the amount of metal needed and therefore producing the lightest frames possible. It also lets the frames flex and move to the maximum potential of the material and this construction is still favoured by Dario in his Italian workshop.

### SPECIFICATION

**Weight** 9.09kg (57cm)

**Frame** Columbus Spirit Niobium

**Fork** Pegoretti Falz carbon

**Gears** Campagnolo Athena alloy, 50/34, 11-25

#### Brakes

Campagnolo Athena dual pivot

**Wheels** Ambrosio Excellight SSC rims on PMP hubs

**Finishing kit** Deda stem, bar and seatpost, Schwalbe Durano Plus 23mm tyres

The Duende is the entry-level model using a Columbus Spirit-based tubeset with socketed rather than TIG-welded dropouts to save time and money. That means it 'only' costs £2150 for the frame, Falz carbon fork, custom insertion depth Chris King D11 headset and surprisingly crude looking clamp-on front mech mount. The welding and alignment is perfect from the extended head-tube to the distinctive socketed dropouts. The price includes a single colour finish of your choice, with panel designs at an extra £165, standard multi-colour paint jobs at £340 or the Ciavete finish seen here for →

When it comes to muscling a gear round or ploughing through the roughest corners the Pegoretti is awesome

£485. This option hands the creative reins to Dario and the results can be anything from monochrome graffiti to embedded newspaper cuttings, abstract polychromatic panels or psychedelic explosions.

While the aesthetic insanity and heritage is the reason many riders are happy to wait for months and pay a huge premium for a Pegoretti, how does the Duende ride?

If you're expecting something ethereal you're in for a shock. Legendary riders like Stephen Roche, Miguel Indurain, Mario Cipollini, Claudio Chiappucci and Andrea Tafi used Pegoretti frames as their tools of the trade, the Duende is a solid workhorse. There's little of the flow and spring of the more animated bikes here and it'll punish you if you put the Falz fork in the wrong place on a rough road. The Campagnolo Athena alloy parts and relatively heavy hand-built wheels

#### HIGHS

Immaculate build quality, rock solid ride and incredible paint options

#### LOWS

Premium price, punishingly stiff by steel standards

#### BUY IF

You're a muscular rider with a passion for pedalling the ultimate in frame building artistry

provided by UK importer Mosquito Bikes don't do the Duende's responsiveness or snap acceleration any favours either.

But the PMP-centred wheels are beautifully built and when it comes to muscling a gear around with grim determination or ploughing through the roughest corners the Pegoretti is awesome. Features like the horizontal top-tube and extended head-tube also make the Duende suited to bigger, heavier riders who might find the more vibrant bikes here too flexy but who still want a piece of art, not just another mass-market moulded carbon frame.

## THE VERDICT

Immaculately constructed rock-solid steel workhorse with unmissable individual styling

★★★★★

Also consider...



**GOT MORE CASH?**

**PEGORETTI BIG LEG EMMA £3500**

Big Leg Emma uses oversized tubing and horizontal stiffening baffles in the down-tube to create the most powerful frame in the Pegoretti lineup.



**ON A BUDGET?**

**ZULLO TONICA £1595**

Legendary Italian builder Tiziano Zullo's entry-level frameset can be ordered with rack and mudguard mounts or larger tyre clearance. →

ROAD TEST



£2635-£3649 STEEL BIKES

	MASON RESOLUTION £3195 ★★★★★	GENESIS VOLARE £3399 ★★★★★	CONDOR SUPER ACCIAIO £3410 ★★★★★	ENIGMA ELITE HSS ST £3649 ★★★★★	COLNAGO MASTER X-LIGHT £3512 ★★★★★	PEGORETTI DUENDE CIAVETE £2635* ★★★★★
<b>Size tested</b>	54cm	54cm	55cm	53cm	56cm	57cm
<b>Sizes available</b>	50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60cm	50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60cm	46, 49, 52, 55, 58, 61cm	53, 55, 56, 57, 59cm	49-65cm	49-60cm
<b>Weight</b>	9.16kg	8.84kg	8.0kg	7.82kg	8.45kg	9.09kg
<b>Frame</b>	Mason Columbus Spirit/Life custom	KVA M53 stainless steel	Columbus Condor custom	Columbus Spirit Niobium	Custom DT15V steel	Columbus Spirit Niobium
<b>Fork</b>	Mason Aperture carbon disc	ADK full carbon	Columbus Grammy Slim/Super Acciaio	Enigma carbon	Colnago Precisa, 1in steerer	Pegoretti Falz carbon steerer
<b>Frame alignment</b>	Head-tube and rear dropout perfect, fork dropout excellent	Head-tube and fork dropout perfect, rear dropout excellent	Head-tube and rear dropout perfect, fork dropout excellent	Head-tube excellent, fork and rear dropouts perfect	All perfect	All perfect
<b>TRANSMISSION</b>						
<b>Chainset</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800, 50/34	FSA Energy MegaExo, 52/36	Campagnolo Athena Carbon, 52/36	Campagnolo Chorus, 50/34	Campagnolo Chorus, 52/36	Athena alloy, 50/34
<b>Bottom bracket</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800	BB86 PF	Campagnolo Power Torque PF	Campagnolo EPS	Campagnolo EPS	Campagnolo EPS
<b>Cassette</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800, 11-28T	Shimano 105, 11-28T	Campagnolo Athena, 11-28T	Campagnolo Chorus, 11-28T	Campagnolo Chorus, 11-25T	Campagnolo Chorus, 11-25T
<b>Chain</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800	KMC X11	Campagnolo Athena	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Athena
<b>Derailleurs</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800	Shimano Ultegra 6870 Di2	Campagnolo Athena	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Athena
<b>Gear levers</b>	Shimano Ultegra 6800	Shimano Ultegra 6870 Di2	Campagnolo Athena	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Athena
<b>WHEELS</b>						
<b>Front and rear</b>	Mason Hunt 4 Season disc	Fulcrum Racing LG CX	Campagnolo Shamal Ultra	Campagnolo Zonda	Vision TriMax 30	Ambrosio Excellight SSC rims, PMP hubs
<b>Tyres</b>	Continental Grand Sport Extra, 28mm	Continental Grand Sport Race, 25mm	Continental Grand Prix 4000S II, 23mm	Continental Grand Prix 4000S II, 23mm	Continental Grand Prix 4000S II, 25mm	Schwalbe Durano Plus, 23mm
<b>Wheel weight</b>	F 1.43kg R 1.79kg	F 1.28kg R 1.7kg	F 1.01kg R 1.48kg	F 1.03kg R 1.56kg	F 1.09kg R 1.54kg	F 1.35kg R 1.77kg
<b>COMPONENTS</b>						
<b>Stem</b>	Deda Zero2, 90mm	Genesis, 110mm	Fizik Cyrano R3, 110mm	Enigma 3D, 120mm	FSA Gossamer, 120mm	Deda Zero100, 120mm
<b>Handlebar</b>	Deda RHM02, 400mm	Genesis Compact, 420mm	Fizik Cyrano R3, 420mm	Enigma Compact, 420mm	FSA Gossamer, 420mm	Deda Newton, 420mm
<b>Headset</b>	Deda HHS, tapered	FSA Orbit ITA	Condor custom	Columbus Ceramic, tapered	FSA Orbit X	Chris King D11 custom
<b>Saddle</b>	Fabric carbon	Genesis	Fizik Aliante Kium	Enigma Ellipse	Selle Italia Turbo	Selle Italia Flite Gel
<b>Seatpost</b>	Mason Penta carbon, 27.2mm	Genesis alloy, 27.2mm	Fizik carbon, 27.2mm	Enigma carbon	Colnago carbon, 27.2mm	Deda RS02, alloy
<b>Brakes</b>	Shimano Ultegra 785 hydraulic disc	Shimano Ultegra 6800	Campagnolo Athena dual pivot	Campagnolo Chorus Skeleton	Campagnolo Chorus	Campagnolo Athena dual pivot

\*Frame and fork

# WINNER

## Mason Resolution Ultegra Hydro Disc > Talking 'bout a Resolution

Ferrous alloy delivers its true value over years of user-friendly riding

After several months of enjoyably exhaustive testing we understand why steel bikes are more popular than they've been for ages, despite obvious price and performance disadvantages. While brands like Parlee show you can make carbon beautiful and individual, steel bikes are the chosen canvas of the world's best bike artists. If you can afford the premium price tag nobody matches Dario Pegoretti for combining a history of constructional innovation with aesthetic impact. Ernesto Colnago is even better

known in broader cycling circles, and for many it's the Art Deco-painted Master X-Light that captures the glory better than anything since. If you're after more contemporary performance it's the UK not Italy showing the way. Condor's racing heritage shows in the pulse-racing performance of the Super Acciaio. Genesis offers excellent value with the ultra-smooth-riding, stainless steel Volare if you want Di2 and don't mind upgrading the wheels to unleash its full potential. Enigma slots between the two of them with a great balance of speed and smoothness wrapped in collar and

cuffs style, albeit at a slightly higher complete bike price. Ferrous alloy also delivers its true value over years of user-friendly riding, not flash-in-the-pan, replace-next-season performance. Step forward the beautifully designed, high-performance Resolution from Mason. An outstanding bike that combines all-weather utility and confidence with multi-option future-proofing and seals the deal with a rewardingly responsive ride. If discs aren't your thing don't discount Mason for the foreseeable future either, as the Resolution is just the first bike in its steel pipeline.

**NEXT MONTH** There is a long and honourable record of ex-pro riders launching bike brands when they retire from racing, something which continues to this day. We test six bikes from the biggest names in sport, some whose careers date back to pre-war days, others just retired. But do their bikes live up to their illustrious names? Issue 305 is on sale 18 August 2015

