



● MASON RESOLUTION

BIKE TEST

BRITISH STEEL

Cycling journalist *David Arthur* tests the Mason Resolution and Shand Skinnymalinky, steel road bikes designed in and for the UK

DESPITE THE increasing affordability of carbon fibre and titanium, steel remains an excellent material for a road bike. It's seldom the lightest option and it's not necessarily the cheapest. But if you want a durable, comfortable, year-round bike for club rides, audaxes, sportives, training, commuting, general road riding, and even light touring, a steel road bike can be ideal.

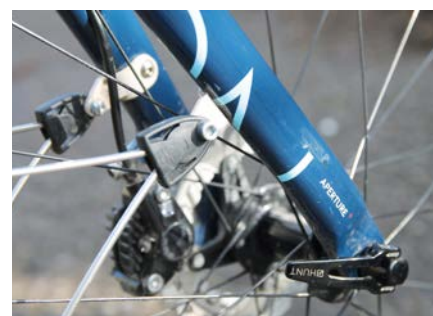
The new Resolution from Brighton-based Mason Cycles is a fine example of a contemporary steel road bike, using the latest steel tubing and bristling with modern details, including disc brakes and internal cable routing. From Scotland's Shand is the Skinnymalinky, a more traditional take on the genre. Both bikes share the same ability to accommodate 28mm tyres with mudguards and both focus on year-round comfort and versatility.

FRAME AND FORK

Shand's Skinnymalinky uses a mix of Reynolds 853 and Columbus tubing, with small diameter round tubes and a

non-tapered 1 1/8in head tube. It's very traditional in its appearance, but the quality and detail is first class. The headset and bottom bracket use external bearings and the gear cables are routed externally, though the rear brake cable is routed inside the top tube. There are neat Breezer-style hooded stainless dropouts and eyelets for a mudguard and a rack. The test bike was fitted with a US-sourced, mudguard-compatible WoundUp carbon fibre fork. Its slender blades are very much in keeping with the appearance of the Shand frame. A steel fork is an option.

The Mason's frame could scarcely look more different. A mix of Columbus Spirit and Life tubing has been extensively profiled into oversized proportions. An oval-shaped top tube and D-shaped down tube combine with a tapered head tube and beefy carbon fork to maximise lateral frame stiffness. Mason has routed all cables and brake hoses inside the frame, with interchangeable ports that can be swapped to adapt the frame to any number of groupset configurations, including



● (Above) The mudguard mounts on the Mason Resolution's carbon fork are well away from the disc calliper, so you don't need to bend the left-hand stay to fit (Below) Cables are routed internally, with different plug-in ports available for different setups, such as Di2





● SHAND SKINNYMALINKY

Di2. Unlike the Shand, the Resolution is a disc-specific bike, Mason reckoning that discs are a requirement for year-round cycling. Like the Shand, the Mason Resolution features a 272mm seatpost, a 68mm threaded bottom bracket, and mudguard and rack eyelets. It even has a chain pip on the driveside seatstay.



● (Above) Campagnolo Athena has a maximum sprocket size of 29T. You can specify Shimano Ultegra or Ultegra Di2 if you prefer; either will cope with up to 32T

(Below) Only the rear brake cable runs through the Shand's frame. Note the rear rack mounts on the stays



Aside from the visual differences, there are some key differences in the sizing. The Skinnymalinky is available in five standard production sizes or you can get a made-to-measure frame for no extra cost. The bike pictured is a 56cm and the geometry is quite traditional, with a short 140mm head tube producing a low front-end position and conventional 73.5/74 head/seat angles and a slightly sloping top tube.

The Resolution is available in six sizes, but the Mason geometry differs. It's intended to offer a more relaxed fit, with the 54cm bike I tested featuring a taller (155mm) head tube and a reach that, with a change to a 120mm stem, is comparable to the larger size Shand. Both bikes offered me a good fit and a comfortable position for long rides.

COMPONENTS

The Mason is equipped with a Shimano Ultegra 11-speed mechanical groupset with matching hydraulic disc brakes. It's a good package, one I've ridden before and gotten on well with. For the wheels, Mason has collaborated with another young Brighton-based company, Hunt Wheels, to develop an aluminium clincher wheelset. It has a 23mm wide (external) tubeless-ready rim, with 24 triple-butted spokes and Shimano's Centrelock disc rotor mounting system. A Fabric saddle with carbon fibre rails adds bling and is mounted to a Mason-branded carbon seatpost, with a Deda RHM02

aluminium handlebar and Zero2 stem.

The Shand has a Campagnolo Athena 11-speed groupset and, like the Mason, a compact 50-34 chainset with a middling-sized cassette – 12-27 on the Shand, 11-28 on the Mason. Shand offers some customisation, such as the colour-matched stem atop the Chris King headset. I liked the reach of the Ritchey Comp Stream aluminium handlebar but I'm no fan of the wing-shaped tops. Wheels are a combination of Hope RS Mono hubs, with their distinctive clicky freehub, and black Mavic Open Pro rims, and proved reliable and durable.

Both bikes use Continental tyres: 28mm Grand Sport Extra on the Mason and 25mm Grand Prix 4Season for the Shand. The Skinnymalinky will take 28mm tyres with SKS mudguards, but the PDW mudguards fitted to this bike limit tyre width to 25mm. Both companies include mudguards for a small cost. Shand goes the extra mile and will paint them to match the frame.

The most obvious feature that sets the bikes apart is their choice of braking systems. On the Mason, braking is done courtesy of Shimano's RS685 hydraulic brakes with 140mm disc rotors. The brakes have a firm lever feel but I did detect a bit of squealing in the wet test conditions. The Shand is fitted with TRP RG957 long-reach callipers, with a predictable performance and impressive braking on some of the steeper hills I tested the bike on.



● (Left) The Resolution is handbuilt in Italy to a British design

● (Below) Braking is reliable with hydraulic discs and isn't affected by the condition of the rims, but outright stopping power has the same limit as callipers: tyre traction



● MASON RESOLUTION

» RIDE

I tested both bikes over a mix of rolling lanes and steep hills in my local corner of the Cotswolds, searching out some of the most challenging road surfaces and sweeping descents. I rode them over the same routes to get a feel for each bike in equivalent conditions and at similar speeds.

Despite the similarities in frame material, the bikes felt quite different to ride. The

The obvious feature that sets the bikes apart is the choice of braking systems: hydraulic discs versus callipers

Mason is a step away from road bike norms. The longer trail figure, a result of the 71.5-degree head angle, and long wheelbase create a bike with impressive high-speed stability. It's composed on faster descents: the bigger tyres provide more cushioning and the high level of frame and fork stiffness giving confidence-inspiring steering. Through fast sweeping bends, it's a lot of fun. At lower speeds, it can feel bit ponderous, the steering a touch on the heavy side. It took

Other options



1) LIGHT BLUE WOLFSON ULTEGRA £1799.99

For £1,000 less, you get a well-built Reynolds 853 frame and carbon fork capable of accommodating mudguards. This model has Shimano Ultegra 11-speed gearing. thelightblue.co.uk



2) ENIGMA ECROIX ST £1,549 (FRAME ONLY)

The company might be best known for titanium, but it does a nice line in steel bikes, including this new Ecroix ST, which offers bigger tyre capacity with a Columbus Zone/Life frameset. enigmabikes.com

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● SHAND SKINNYMALINKY

● (Above) The Shand's slender fork could pass for steel but in fact it's carbon fibre, painted to match the frame. You can have it unpainted if you wish, or even choose a steel fork

● (Right) Built in Scotland, the frame is available in five off-the-peg sizes – or you can have a custom size at no extra cost



» me a few rides to acclimatise.

The Shand's steeper head angle means less trail than the Mason. Combined with its shorter wheelbase, this results in more lively handling. The steering is lighter and the bike easier to turn, making slow speed agility very good. It's an easier bike to move around the road at a wider range of speeds than the Mason, which is more comfortable at pace. The Shand's shorter head tube gives a riding position that suited me better; I immediately

prices. The finish and attention to detail are astonishingly good. Each bike offers a ride that's quick enough and comfortable enough for anything from fast Sunday club rides to all-day audax events. Since both are designed for frame-fitting mudguards, you could ride either bike in any weather. Add a rear rack, and either would serve as a light tourer or everyday commuter too.

The Mason offers a more contemporary package, both in terms of its adoption of

Both bikes are good examples of why steel survives in this modern era of carbon fibre... The finish and attention to detail are astonishingly good

felt at home on it.

The Shand offers a smoother ride over rougher road surfaces, its 3mm narrower tyres notwithstanding. The Mason's beefier fork and frame tubes are stiffer, which riders heavier than me (I'm 66kg) might appreciate more, but it's at the cost of compliance.

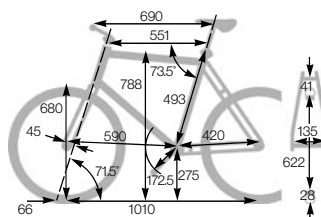
SUMMARY

Both bikes are good examples of why steel survives in this modern era of carbon fibre. They look lovely, as you'd expect at these

disc brakes and the stiffer ride that results from the oversized and profiled tubes and the beefy carbon fork. But the overall ride feel isn't as nuanced as the silky-smooth Shand, which is a delight to ride. It might lack the modern details of the Mason and perhaps isn't as visually interesting, but it rides like a really good steel bike should. Add in the lighter handling and you have a bike that is easy to live with every day. ●

David Arthur is Technical Editor for road.cc

Tech specs



MASON RESOLUTION ULTEGRA HYDRO

PRICE: £3229.99 as tested

SIZES (TESTED IN BLUE): 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60

WEIGHT: 9.75kg (no pedals)

FRAME & FORK: Columbus Spirit/Life frame with Mason Aperture full carbon fork, tapered steerer, mudguard and rack eyelets, internal cable routing, Di2 compatible

WHEELS: Mason x Hunt disc-specific wheel set with Continental Grand Sport Extra 28mm tyres.

TRANSMISSION: Shimano Ultegra 6800, 50-34 chainset, 11-28 cassette

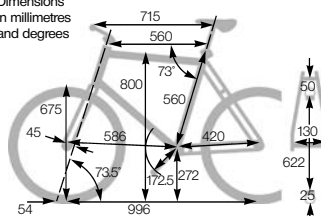
BRAKING: Shimano RS685 hydraulic disc brakes with 140mm IceTech rotors

STEERING & SEATING: Deda RHM 02 420x31.8 handlebar, Deda Zero2 120mm stem, Mason Penta Carbon seatpost 27.2mm, Fabric Scoop Shallow saddle with carbon rails

MUDGUARDS: SKS Longboards

masoncycles.cc

Dimensions in millimetres and degrees



SHAND SKINNYMALINKY

PRICE: £2985 as tested

SIZES (TESTED IN BLUE): 52, 54, 56, 58.5, 60

WEIGHT: 9.36kg (no pedals)

FRAME & FORK: Reynolds 853 and Columbus tubing, S-bend stays, stainless dropouts, mudguard and rack eyelets, WoundUp carbon fork, 1 1/8in steerer

WHEELS: Mavic Open Pro rims on Hope RS Mono hubs and Continental Grand Prix 4Season 25mm tyres

TRANSMISSION: Campagnolo Athena 11-speed, 50-34 chainset, 12-27 cassette

BRAKING: TRP RG957 long-reach callipers

STEERING & SEATING: Shand 110mm custom painted stem, Ritchey Comp Stream 420x31.8 handlebar, Shand 27.2mm seatpost, Shand saddle,

EQUIPMENT: PDW mudguards

shandcycles.com