

NEW BIKE TESTED

WHY THIS BIKE?

Traditional British design with Italian flair

BEST FOR

All-seasons riding on all roads

TESTED THIS MONTH

Smashing out the work commute and turning heads in the city



Mason Resolution Hydro Ultegra £3,195

A do-it-all bike with a touch of class

Rob Hoyles

Arguments regarding modern bicycles generally come down to one of three things: weight, aerodynamics or price. Quite often, it's all three. Values such as build quality, ride feel and handling tend to be secondary considerations. This is strange, really, particularly in a pursuit where most of us have neither the ability nor the training time to make the most of any of the marginal gains manufacturers offer in their quest for a share of our spend.

But bikes do exist that reward in ways other than outright speed. Former designer and brand manager for Kinesis Bikes Dominic Mason's new range sets out to prove that, abjuring carbon-fibre opting instead for traditional materials where feel is as important as form or function. *Cycling Active* was among the

first to get a ride on the steel Resolution model, with a fresh batch of the aluminum Definitions still to land. Hopefully we'll be bringing you a test on a Definition very soon.

Frameset

All Mason frames are designed in the UK and manufactured in the industrious northern region of Italy, close to Venice. While being Europe-made goes a long way to justifying the not insignificant price-tag, it also explains the high quality of the finish and the superb attention to detail. Mason spent a long time finding a factory that would adhere strictly to his designs, having been frustrated by compromises during past projects. It was worth it; the tubes are perfectly formed from the finest Columbus steel, and the neatness of the welding is first-class.

Practicalities haven't been left out in the name of style, either. Billed as a '4Season' bike, the Resolution gets discreetly located mudguard and rack eyelets along with ample tyre clearance to run 28mm tyres with the guards or 32s without. The Aperture fork is full carbon, again bespoke to Mason. Unimpressed with what was available off the shelf, a manufacturer was located and promptly furnished with a set of drawings.

Specification

Frameset: Resolution Columbus Spirit/Life performance steel

Gears Shimano Ultegra 6800 11-speed

Chainset Shimano Ultegra 6800

Brakes Shimano STRS685 hydraulic with IceTech 140mm rotors

Wheels Mason x Hunt 4Season disc wheels

Tyres Continental Grand Sport Extra 700x28mm

Bars Deda RHM02

Stem Deda Zero2

Saddle Fabric Scoop

Seatpost Mason Penta carbon, 27.2mm microadjust

Weight 9.45kg/20.8lbs (54cm without pedals)

Size range 50/52/54/

56/58/60cm

Size tested 54cm

Contact:

www.masoncycles.cc

Components

Dedacciai tubes are used for Mason's aluminium Definition, so it follows that Deda finishing kit is present throughout the range. There's nothing too flash about the stem and bars but the subtlety suits the bike, as does the riding position, with only a slight stretch to the shallow drops. The headset is also Deda and runs as smoothly as you'd expect.

The only exception to Deda's finishing kit dominance is Mason's own carbon seatpost. Formed from unidirectional carbon-fibre, the slender Penta post features a neat dial to make levelling the saddle easier. Ride comfort and adjustability is on a par with anything I've ridden — it's available as an accessory for just £75.

What can I say about Shimano's 11-speed Ultegra groupset that hasn't been said before? It's light, it's not overly expensive, it works flawlessly and it's one of the best things to happen to mainstream cycling in a while. For me, though, the hydraulic disc brakes are a bone of contention. Sure, for a bike designed to work consistently well, all year round, they make sense — indeed, stopping power and feel were never an issue, whatever the weather. My gripe comes from having to fiddle around centring the calipers to stop dragging and squeaking. Cleaning and de-glazing contaminated pads caused by the manky metropolitan roads to stop



A semi-aero rim helps the 28mm tyres hold speed



The wheels were made to Mason's specification

them howling at low speeds soon became a pain, too. On such a quiet-running bike, the brakes let the side down.

Wheels

You may have gathered by now that Mason is something of a stickler. Unable to find a wheelset that he liked, he teamed up with fellow Sussex-based company Hunt Bike Wheels to produce the Mason x Hunt 4Season Disc wheelset. These feature a 27mm profile to strike a balance between weight and aerodynamics. The all-up claimed weight is just 1,585g — that's good going for a stock disc-specific wheelset and only 65g heavier than Mavic's benchmark £1,350 Ksyrium Pro Carbon SL C Disc wheelset.

Riding

Mason's mix of materials and design ideologies makes as much sense on the road as it does on paper. Steel for the feel; carbon to save weight and further enhance comfort; and aluminium to keep both weight and costs down. The design is equally interesting with a low bottom bracket to compensate for the larger tyres and improve the handling along with a head tube that offers a real halfway house riding position. Mason states that he's "hit the sweet spot" when it comes to handling, and it's hard to argue.

Hammering this bike through fast, sweeping bends, the mix of agility and stability simply inspires confidence. Ride quality is superb and on all but the hilliest of routes, the bike is an absolute joy to ride. If you can ignore average speeds (and the intermittently noisy brakes) and take pleasure in what is an excellent frame that laughs at road buzz and simply oozes quality, then you won't be disappointed.

Conclusion

This bike isn't for everyone. You won't crack out your fastest 100-mile sportive time on it. It's unlikely you'll trump too many similarly-priced bikes with spec-sheet superiority, either. The best way to describe this bike is, perhaps unkindly, as the most well-sorted winter bike we've ever tested. It's a bike for the connoisseur, a rider who appreciates the



The attention to detail is apparent throughout

steel appeal but still wants the benefits of a little modern tech. Mason prefers the term 'multi-discipline' to 'do-it-all' and suggests that a Resolution could, "replace three or four of your fleet". As a way to free-up space in the garage, it's a very tempting option. **End**

VERDICT

The Resolution is a bike for life. Beautifully engineered, and ready for anything.

Spot on...

- Build quality
- Ride feel
- Handling

Could do better

- Noisy brakes

SPECIFICATION LEVEL	15/20
BUILD QUALITY	19/20
ROAD HANDLING	19/20
RIDE COMFORT	19/20
VALUE FOR MONEY	15/20
OVERALL RATING	87 /100

ALTERNATIVES

Enigma Etape Disc Ti Ultegra Hydraulic £3,599

With a ride not too dissimilar to steel but with a substantial weight saving, titanium provides a third metal option. With an almost identical component choice as the Resolution, along with similar winter-friendly features, rival UK brand Enigma offers an alternative for weight weenies. Titanium is famously expensive and difficult to work with — facts reflected in the Etape's price tag.



Genesis Equilibrium Disc Ltd £1,849

You don't have to spend three grand to get a decent steel bike. OK, the Equilibrium is lower-spec than the Mason and it's not quite so exclusive but, for the price, still an excellent choice. The latest 11-speed 105 groupset is an absolute corker and the frameset is built to last with top quality British Reynolds 725 tubing.



CA EXPLAINER

Mason's Multiport

Unique to Mason, the Multiport system allows for the internal routing of cables, hydraulic hoses and wires — a world first for a steel frameset.

Interchangeable aluminium inserts that slot into the frame are available to suit different systems. The result is a neat way of making sure that if you are upgrading from a mechanical to an electronic groupset, you're not left with a load of ugly blanking plates or plugs. If you're something of a tech-head, then you should find Mason's excellent website (www.masoncycles.cc) absolutely fascinating.



Inserts keep cabling and hoses neat and tidy