

BIKE SHOP

26 PAGES OF INDEPENDENT TESTS AND REVIEWS

HOW WE TEST

All products featured in Bike Shop are independently tested and rated by us. We don't rehash product press releases and we never adjust our tests to curry favour with advertisers. We just offer honest opinions and constructive criticism.

Sometimes we ask for products, sometimes they come in on spec. They're all tested day in, day out in real-world situations for as long as it takes us to reach our conclusions – usually several weeks, sometimes months. We could test more products more quickly, but we're not on piecework and we're not on any manufacturer's payroll. We care whether something works – and many faults aren't immediately obvious.

With bikes, C+ Workshop Manager Jez Loftus strips them down, checks frame alignment, looks inside open tube ends and inspects welds. He weighs each component and looks for potential problems before re-assembling the bike and getting it ready to ride.

All our products – bikes, kit and components – are given a single rating out of 10, with 10 being 'perfect'. The rating is both a reflection of how good the product is, and whether or not it's good value.

MEET OUR EXPERTS...



PAUL VINCENT

Paul is a real expert when it comes to bikes. He rides TTs and cyclo-cross, commutes 30+ miles daily and, for good measure, used to work in a bike shop



IAN OSBORNE

Former downhill racer and BMX rider now an Ironman triathlete, TT rider and do-any-event-in-the-name-of-C+ type of rider Ian rides cyclo cross on p16



MIKE STENNING

If you've ever seen a lone cyclist speeding around the Surrey lanes in the wee small hours it's probably Mike testing kit – he's serious about testing



DAN JOYCE

Experienced cycling journalist and ex-C+ editor, Dan is a thrift-conscious (tight-fisted?) utility cyclist, time triallist and mountain biker



Shimano Dura-Ace WH-7801 Carbon wheels £1,250 (pr)

Shimano wheels already have a very strong following with the cost-effective WH-500 and entry level 550, but the Dura-Ace WH-7801 is the company's flagship model. Using a carbon deep section sprint rim (there's an aluminium rim Dura-Ace available too) and aero spokes, it is intended primarily for time trialling and road races on flat roads.

The angular contact bearings have a little more friction than, say, a pair of Corima Aero wheels – they don't spin quite as long when you turn them, but in our experience they should provide very long service without needing

attention. The rim has a lenticular (lens-shaped) section so they are relatively unaffected by crosswinds, and their low weight makes them feel quick over gradients.

The spoke heads are effectively locked into place in the bed of the rim so they will never shake loose, though an out-of-true wheel can be corrected by adjusting the nipples at the hub-end of the wheel if the need arises.

Despite the fact that they are compatible only with Shimano 10-speed systems, they recently won the German IF product design

award out of 2,000 entries. They're stiff, light, strong and well designed, though a little pricey. *Paul Vincent*

Weight: 862g R, 667g F

Shimano: www.ultimaterepairs.co.uk

Worth the money if you're fit enough for serious time trialling service

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Sport Beans £1.25

If you're exercising for more than an hour, consuming carbohydrates can help delay tiredness as well as enable higher intensity performance – an intake of 30-60g per hour is ideal. Each 28g pack of Sport Beans (from the makers of Jelly Belly beans) contains 25g carbs, of which 76 per cent are sugars, making them ideal portable carbs to aid in maintaining blood sugar levels and allowing longer exercise.

The packs are a good size to slip in your pocket and are also simple to open with one hand if you do the tearing with your teeth, making munching on the go easier. A

good thing about the beans is that there's no artificial sweeteners which makes for a tasty snack that doesn't leave your mouth feeling like you've been sucking on sticky tape. A water bottle is recommended as well as the beans to keep your fluid intake in balance, but otherwise we found these to be surprisingly effective and really quite moreish. The only down side was the amount of E numbers in a product that purports to aid us healthy, sporty types – E102, E133 and E110 are banned in numerous European countries. *Gillian Brooks*

Flavours: Lemon & lime and orange

Sport Beans: Extra UK ☎ 01933 672170 www.jellybelly.com

Sweets on the go that help you go faster. We don't need the garish colours though

7





Real Peloton DVD, issue 2 £9.95

This is the second issue of Matt Rendell's DVD magazine devoted to the world of professional cycling. The first featured – like this summer's print mags – Basso's likely Tour head-to-head with Ullrich. The main feature this month is Cadel Evans' Tour of Romandie win, but there's another excellent piece on four European-based Colombian pro riders. Modestly and with good humour, the quartet of Victor Peña, Leonardo Duque, Iván Parra and Mauricio Ardila (winner of the 2004 Tour of Britain) discuss their cycling backgrounds, dispelling a few rumours in the process – no, Colombian riders don't carry guns while training, and their personal histories are from glamorous. The piece on Operación Puerto might not add much knowledge to what we've already read, but the forensic footage is hugely revealing in the sheer volume of material – notably frozen blood products – that the Spanish police nabbed. A bonus disc offers an unedited version of Lance



Armstrong's Alpe d'Huez press conference from this year's Tour: interesting in places but really one for the completists. *Simon Withers*

Real Peloton: Prendas Ciclismo ☎ 01202 248649, www.prendas.co.uk

Fascinating, in-depth look at the pro scene from a deservedly respected cycle journo

8



Sigma Micro Lights £7.99 each

Designed as 'sports' lights for cycling, jogging, rollerblading and so on, these are unusually powerful for their size. At only 5x3cm and a handful of grams, they will still get you noticed, to say the least, despite their only having a single LED. While the front LED doesn't emit enough light for off-road riding on a regular basis, you can still get some illumination from pointing it right down in front of you, so that it would serve as a 'get me home' off-road light; undoubtedly though, the main use is for riding on lit roads. There was nothing evident on the packing or the lights themselves suggesting they conform to the relevant BS standards, but in practice you are unlikely to ever get stopped using them because they have quite a high dazzle factor (due to "advanced optics", says the Sigma blurb).

Two sizes of velcro strapping mean they will mount just about anywhere on your bike or about your person

(though strapped around a jacket arm they could easily be obscured by even small folds in the material). The claimed battery life is 30 hours and our lights are still going strong after about 20. Batteries are the small, circular 3V lithium 'coin' cells (CR2032 – the most popular size of this kind), so obtaining and carrying spares is a doddle. The only annoyances were the fact that the underneath of the lights were a little slippery for bar mounting and the velcro a little long for some smaller bars – niggles easily sorted with a strip of rubber.

Richard Peace

Weight: 22g per light, including velcro straps
Sigma: www.sigmasport.com has a full directory of GB distributors

In terms of 'weight to light' ratio these are the best we've seen. Stylish and hard to fault

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Chris King Ti NoThreadset around £200

Have a close look at any pro level road bike that still uses an external bearing headset (a reduced number these days) and you'll most likely see a Chris King NoThreadset – it's pretty much a standard fitment because it is brilliantly designed, impeccably made and smoother than my impossibly well shaved legs. For most riders (including Lance) the standard alloy cupped version is perfect, just choose from a rainbow of colour options, face off the head tube (the biggest cause of premature headset wear) and fit. It'll be the last time you think the words 'head' and 'set' in the same sentence because the sealed cartridge bearings are of a high quality and are well sealed. We know of numerous units that are approaching a decade of daily use. Why, then, spend almost twice as much for the titanium version? Simple, because you want to. Because titanium is, much like the Chris King design, forever. *Justin Loretz*

Weight: 106g
Sizes: 1in and 1 1/8in + 1in Grip nut (threaded)
Chris King: Bromley Bike Co ☎ 020 8460 4852

Possibly the best headset you could buy – just don't tell the wife!

10



Aldi Crane Sports Cycling Jacket £9.99

In C+184 we tested a gilet from Aldi that cost £6. This autumn/winter jacket costs a tenner. It's made from polyester that's soft and fleecy on the inside, hem and cuffs are elasticated, and there's some stretch in the material so fit should be good. It isn't. The cut is awful. How much of this is down to mis-labelling is hard to know: ours clearly says 'M' at the collar but the washing information label lists it as 'X-Large'. It felt somewhere in between, ie, 'Large', and hung off me like a baggy jumper. Do try for size in the shop.

Features are good for the price, though. There's a zipped rear pocket that's big enough for an OS map, plus reflective piping down the front zip and across the lower back. It does a fair job of keeping the wind off too. Breathability isn't great; I sweated heavily, and it was still damp in the armpits hours later. It doesn't claim to be waterproof – and isn't – although it'll stand up to a light shower and offers some insulation when damp. It's too bulky for a jersey pocket when folded up. I'd favour a gilet (even an Aldi one) plus arm warmers. *Dan Joyce*

Colours: Red/black, blue/black, yellow/black, black
Sizes: S-XL **Weight:** 486g
Aldi: ☎ 08705 134262 (store locator), www.aldi-stores.co.uk

Sizing and cut are vague, but at the price this isn't bad for easy-paced recreational riding

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Boxit mobile phone case £19.99

Many traditionalists will say a phone has no place on a bike but, for better or worse, they are increasingly becoming our do-it-all constant companions. Many pack in bike-friendly functionality too. The Boxit is fully waterproof – I held it in a bucket of water for over a minute without a hint of a leak, you can hear and talk through it, courtesy of a Gore Audio membrane panel, and you can dial through its clear plastic fascia. It's also shock-proof, and you get a lid plug for using a hands-free cable or earphones while still keeping water out. We tested the Universal Boxit 5.0 Dolphin, which comes with standard case, hands-free

Keeps the weather out so you can stay in touch

7

interchangeable small and tall lids, antenna extension and foam pads to stop your phone rattling. Which bits you use will depend on the size of your phone. Flip phones need not apply. The handlebar clip is an optional extra, but the clip looks fairly cheap and we'd have liked a slightly more sturdy solution.

This is a clever way of having your phone heads up and answerable when out riding, no matter what the weather. We found it particularly good for running Viewranger's GPS software (C+188) – GPS navigation and route planning for the whole of Britain – all stored on the phone on your bars...

Neil Pedoe

Colours: Black, aqua, citroen, cristal

Boxit: ULC ☎ 0118 9262 491

Endura Roubaix arm warmers £12.99

British clothing company Endura is known for making quality products without the silly price tag of some, and these Roubaix arm warmers are no exception at a penny under 13 quid. They're made using brushed Roubaix lycra, which is not only soft and comfy to wear but is toasty warm for when it starts to get really cold. At the top of each arm warmer Endura has combined elastic with rubber beading like you find on higher end shorts to stop them slipping down and this works a treat.

The overall cut is tight so they don't flap around even for those built like stick insects, yet are stretchy enough to keep Popeye happy. That said, there are two sizes available so you can get the correct fit. A small reflective logo offers a little help when used in the dark. You'll find they can be used in so many situations from autumn through to spring and are always useful to have in your pocket just in case.

At £12.99 they're a great buy and one of the cheapest around without compromising on quality. Ian Osborne

Endura: ☎ 01506 497749, www.endura.co.uk

Soft, comfy and toasty warm and great value to boot

9

Specialized Super Roubaix knee warmers £14.99

Made from Super Roubaix fleece material, these knee warmers are a good choice for chilly rides. In keeping with supplementary clothing of this type, they had a tendency to roll down the leg slightly after a couple of hours in the saddle, but not enough to become obvious or annoying, the leg grippers feeling firm without leaving any tell-tale marks against the skin.

Tested during a cold snap, I really felt the benefit of the Super Roubaix material, which proved thin enough to complement a pair of lycra training tights without feeling restrictive. In any case, should they not be required, they'll roll up and fit comfortably in a jersey pocket.

Thrown into the washing machine with free abandon at 30 degrees they continue to look as new, with a classic, understated design, and at a shade under 15 quid they represent good value for money. A useful addition to anyone's early season wardrobe, they'll be of particular interest to riders sensitive to knee trouble.

Michael Stenning

Specialized: www.specialized.com

Comfortable, classy and good value for money

8

Endura Strike glove £29.99

The Strike glove comes with a waterproof, breathable liner so your hands won't end up wet and cold in our usual winter rain and sleet. It's lined with fleece, while the outer is windproof. Fleece patches on the forefinger and back of the hand cope with sweat or snot, while reflective piping aids night-time visibility. That said, this glove is better for medium-to-high intensity riding like road training or mountain biking rather than commuting, for which bulkier and warmer gloves are available. Fit is close and snug, thanks in part to the long, velcro-fastened cuff. Grip is good: both neoprene palm pads have a rubberised outer, as does the reinforced thumb, and there are PU dots at the base of the fingers and on two finger ends. Comfort is fine on flats or drops, with the neoprene pads protecting the ulnar nerve and the base of the thumb. If you want reasonable winter warmth without sacrificing dexterity, the Strike glove is an excellent compromise. Dan Joyce

Colours: Black

Sizes: S-XXL Weight: 93g

Endura: ☎ 01506 497749, www.endura.co.uk

Ideal gloves for winter road training or mountain biking in typical UK conditions

9





Euro Asian Imports chain tugs £4.50

These look decidedly like something you'd find at B&Q but are as effective on a day to day basis as the pretty NJS approved tugs, making a nice finishing touch to a budget fixer build.

For the money, the chrome plating seems reasonable although if you're fussy, a drop or two of oil inside the end caps coupled with an occasional wipe over with an oily rag will keep things shiny.

Fitting is simple. Remove one track nut at a time, loosen the end nut on the tug and wind the end cap out. Slide the hoop end over the axle and adjust the end cap until it sits flush against the drop-out and tighten the end bolt. Repeat on the other side, snug down the track nuts and you're done.

Performance has been equal to that of tugs costing four times as much and they're shapely enough to hide or enhance workmanlike frame ends. They might be of particular interest to riders converting an old road frame to fixed duties where the rear wheel can be more prone to snatching from the dropout. *Michael Stenning*

Weight: 28g (pr)
EAI: www.hubjub.co.uk

Cheap but very cheerful chain tugs

7

Vaude Ultratrail 20 £60

Vaude's waterproof backpack uses the same welded-seam construction as its Road Master Professional panniers (C+188), and it won an award at Eurobike last year. It's best suited to all-day mountain biking or rough-stuff touring. The waist and chest straps allow a stable, secure fit over uneven ground, and you can put a drinking bladder inside. (The bladder pipe threads out of the top through either shoulder strap.) A separate, stretchy helmet net clips to four anchor points on the back.

The integral whistle in the sternum strap is a nice idea, but it's rubbish. There are two expandable mesh side pockets – either big enough for a windproof – and a small seatpack-sized pocket with a waterproof zip for items needing easy access, like tools. The main zip is waterproof too. Inside there's an elasticated divider, which a bladder would sit behind, plus a couple of zipped, flat pockets for, say, a wallet or keys. Foam panels on the back improve comfort, while reflectives help visibility.

The Ultratrail could easily double as a commuting backpack because it's the right size, stable enough for riding with your hands on the drops, and waterproof. It's not as knock-about tough as Ortlieb's utilitarian Velocity backpack, but it's more versatile. *Dan Joyce*

Colours: Orange/red, light grey/black
Sizes: 20L, 12L Ultratrail 12 also available Weight: 599g
Vaude: Chris Davison Agencies ☎ 01665 510660, www.vaude.co.uk

Great for long-distance off-road rides, and good for commuting too

8



Ascent: The Mountains of the Tour de France by Richard Yates £25

Ventoux, Galibier, Tourmalet – names to strike fear into the peloton's heart. From the very earliest days of the Tour de France, it's the mountains that have been the combatants' battlefields: the Pyrenees, the Alps and Provence, where huge time differences are gained and lost – and, in the case of some riders, bodies battered, lives occasionally lost. Roger Rivière never recovered from an accident in 1960, while Tommy Simpson's death is etched in the memories of cycling fans everywhere.

Richard Yates' book is a fascinating look at the climbs themselves, and the grimpeurs who fought for supremacy on them, from Christophe, Lapize and Pélissier through Coppi, Bobet

and Bartali to the incomparable Merckx. And if you think modern riders have it tough, spare a thought for Octave Lapize in 1910: because of an overgeared bike he had to walk the Tourmalet – but still won the stage after 14 hours in the saddle!

The book is divided into six sections, from the aptly named "heroic stage" to television taking over, starting in the Sixties. And while the Kings of the Mountain jersey wearers are listed right up to 2005, Ascent's main narrative ends a few years earlier. But what really makes this elegant book come to life – apart from the epic tales – are the 150 sepia-toned photographs. Even riders from the colour era are pictured in glorious duotone. *Simon Withers*

ISBN: 1-892495-32-X
Contact: www.cyclepublishing.com

134mm width – unlike some brands which are available in different width fittings to get the perfect sitting bone/saddle compatibility. As with any saddle, we suggest you try before you buy. As for weight, it tips the scales at a mere 147g.

The Stealth 2000 is a quality lightweight Italian made saddle, but you do pay a premium for this – though we're sure this won't put off closet weight weenies with deep pockets. *Ian Osborne*

Weight: 147g
Gipiemme: Ison 01223 213800, www.ison-distribution.com

Quality lightweight saddle at a premium price

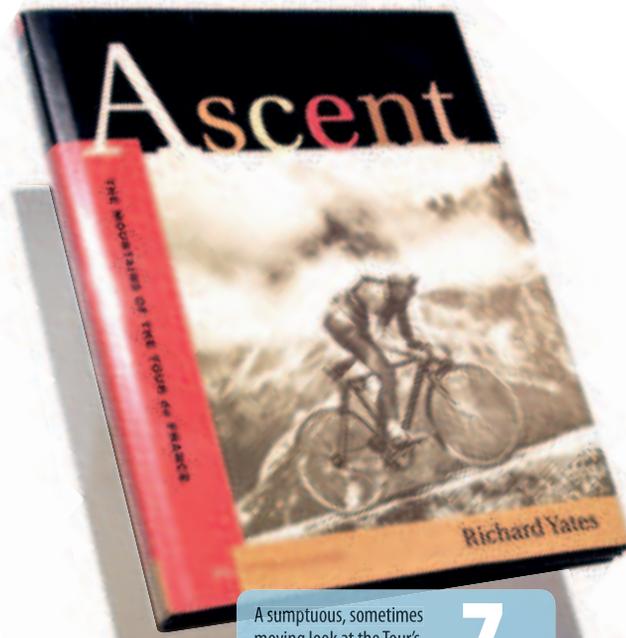
7

Gipiemme Stealth 2000 saddle £120

The first thing we noticed out of the rather stylish metal tin was the lack of anything unnecessary on the Stealth 2000. It's a simple, no messing, lightweight saddle for those who want to save weight. Gipiemme's Italian made Stealth 2000 also lives up to its name in terms of aesthetics and styling with its sleek black finish.

It has a 100 per cent carbon fibre shell that offers a little give when riding so it's not super solid like some early carbon saddles. For extra comfort Gipiemme has added a thin gel and fabric top. This certainly helps, especially for longer days on the road. The undercarriage is a simple affair with two titanium rails riveted to the carbon shell.

Naturally these keep the weight down while holding the saddle perfectly in place. The shape is pretty standard with a cutaway to the rear. The saddle is 273mm long and only comes in a



A sumptuous, sometimes moving look at the Tour's climbs and climbers

7



Top: An ideal choice for sportifs, the Scultura 909's semi-compact frame is moulded in a single operation
Middle: Carbon stays are designed to help dampen road buzz on the long haul rather than for the all out rigidity of a sprint
Bottom: A carbon steerer and carbon ultralight fork are included in the package

Merida Scultura 909
£899.99 frame, fork & headset

Merida is based in Taiwan and started producing frames for other manufacturers 30 years ago. The company soon caught on to the idea of entering the market with its own bikes, and in recent years the brand has become more widely known, aided by the use of Merida bikes by international Mtb squads in both the Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

The radically sloping top tube of a true compact frame design like Giant's range can look a bit odd in the larger sizes, and Merida has sensibly opted for a semi-compact design here, with the frame moulded in a single operation. Frame sizes are based on the distance between the centre of the bottom bracket to the top of the seat tube and the range comprises 50, 53, 56 and 59cm sizes. Frame weight is said to be around 1.2kg in the 56cm size and the geometry is pretty much what we would expect to see – our 56cm (Large) model has a 73 degree head angle and a fork offset of 4.5cm to produce 6cm of trail.

Like the Trek Madone 5.2 that we tested in the

November issue (C+189), the Scultura's handling leans more to the comfort end of the spectrum so those who want to feel every nuance of the road surface when gunning for the sprint finish should look elsewhere. The vertical compliance more than makes up for this, though, and the comfort factor delays the onset of fatigue on longer rides, making it an ideal choice for sportifs.

For an outlay of around £1,600 in total, I would spec the Scultura with Shimano Ultegra or Campagnolo Centaur finishing kit, leaving around £300 for hand-built Harry Rowland wheels, with Michelin tyres and Ritchey WCS parts. *Paul Vincent*
Sizes: 50, 53, 56 and 59cm
Weight: 1,200g
Merida: MUKshop ☎ 0845 600 8218, www.merida-bikes.co.uk

The Scultura scores high on the satisfaction scale and is very competitively priced

9

ACF-50 anti-corrosion formula/lubricant £12

Products developed for use in the aerospace industry often translate very well to cycling and this is no exception. This is not a PTFE-based water displacer, rather it is designed to form an atmospheric seal against the elements which, it claims, remains effective for 12 months and kills corrosion on contact.

I applied a light application to a pair of SPD cleats sporting some surface corrosion. From the nozzle, ACF-50 is pinkish purple, but within a few minutes the mixture settles to a neutral hue and I was amazed to find the dirty brown corrosion on the cleats had apparently neutralised to a matt black.

While far thicker in viscosity than water displacement sprays, it lends itself better to corrosion prevention than lubrication, so isn't really a chain lube. But I have every confidence that, reapplied twice yearly, it should minimise chances of internal corrosion in frames, trailers and racks, and eliminate the need to drill out corroded SPD shoe fittings – even on bikes living in coastal regions.

Although £12 for a 369g aerosol might not seem particularly cheap, a little seems to go a long way and I shall report back in a few months to see if it has kept its promises. *Michael Stenning*

Sizes: 369g
ACF-50: www.worldwideaviation.co.uk



Very impressive, but the next few months will be telling

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