

First look

Traditional-style road bike with a classy Reynolds 853 frame and 'actually fine' rim brakes

**Biketest**

Endurance road bikes

**DAN JOYCE**

Dan is 177cm tall (5ft 9 1/2in) and weighs 63.5kg (10st). He rides with his local club's fast group, despite unfashionably high handlebars on all his bikes

Steel or carbon? Rim brakes or discs? **Dan Joyce** tests two very different £2,000 road bikes from Light Blue and Ribble

An endurance road bike is essentially an audax bike with marketing glitter. It's a road bike designed not for racing but for efficient and comfortable mile eating – sportives, club rides, winter training, maybe long-distance commuting. Such bikes ran 25mm or 28mm tyres before they were adopted by racers, with room for mudguards to boot. Gears may (should!) go lower, and the handlebar may be higher so you're not forced into an uncomfortable racing crouch.

Many endurance road bikes are nevertheless too racy for my tastes: a steeper-than-optimal seat tube angle tips you forward onto a handlebar that's still too low, due to a shortish head tube and a carbon or aluminium fork steerer that can't be stacked with spacers... To address this, I often choose the next frame size up. This raises the handlebar (taller head tube) and also gives more toe room (longer front centres). Sliding the saddle back, if necessary, makes the effective seat tube angle shallower, while a shorter stem fixes what would be an overlong reach to the handlebar.

That's why the Ribble in this test is a Large rather than the Medium I 'should' be riding. And

it's why the stems are right at the top of the fork steerers in the photos. You have to be able to get the contact points where you want on a bike you'll pedal for 50, 100 miles or more. It's way more important the frame material or brake type.

As it happens, frame material and brakes are two of the key differences between the bikes on test. The Light Blue Wolfson 105 R7000 has a steel frame, with rim brakes that are deep enough to clear mudguards, like the audax bikes of old. The Ribble Endurance SL Disc Sport has chunky and angular carbon frameset and hydraulic disc brakes, like a lot of contemporary race bikes, but it still takes mudguards.

Frame & fork

Carbon fibre has a better strength-to-weight ratio but you can't beat a skinny-tubed steel frame for aesthetics, especially when nicely painted. The Light Blue's frame is in fact relatively light; the main triangle is Reynolds 853 and the stays are 725. This Medium frame is 1.7kg and the whole bike weighs less than the disc-braked Ribble.

The Light Blue's top tube is long for a medium-sized frame, which means the front-centres