road muck, though the gap between tyre and guard, especially at the front, is pretty tight.

Cannondale’s Synapse Sora also says in the name what groupset you’re getting. Nine-speed Sora is two steps down from 105 in Shimano’s gearing hierarchy. The shifting isn’t quite as slick and the front lever requires more effort to shift to the larger chainring. Cannondale has, however, paired an FSA compact chainset with a larger (11-34) cassette. The resulting lower bottom gear compensates for the Synapse’s extra weight. Cables are routed internally, which makes for a very tidy-looking front end.

The Cannondale’s disc brakes are cable-actuated Promax Decode Rs. While they lack the power of hydraulic systems, they are consistent in all weathers and are pleasingly quiet, with only the briefest of squeaks from the front in the wet. The other advantage – particularly for those using the Synapse throughout winter or for year-round commuting – is longer rim life.

The standard Spa Cycles Steel Audax 105 comes with Shimano RS100 wheels but the test bike features an optional, £140 upgrade: handbuilt wheels with Bitex hubs and Kinlin rims. (Wheel-builder Bobby Stevens has done a sterling job.) I think it’s a price worth paying, as they ride beautifully.

The Synapse has more scope to tackle rougher surfaces than the Spa, having clearance for 35mm tyres. The Vittoria Zaffiro training tyres are basic compared to the Spa’s more supple Schwalbe Ones, but they’re tough and I’d be in no hurry to replace them.

There’s not too much to choose