

Other options



FEATHER WKNDR £2,800+

Stunning, off-the-peg steel all-road bike with custom feature and paint options from award-winning Yorkshire frame-building legend Ricky Feather.
wkndr.cc



COTIC ESCAPADE 853 £1,799+

This version of Cotic's Escapade all-rounder is also made in the Midlands from Reynolds 853 like the Roadfinder X (but not by Pashley).
cotic.co.uk

and Panaracer Gravel King 45 tyres for Zipp's super-broad 303 XPLR wheels and Goodyear Inter 45mm rubber. I used other wheels as well during testing to verify the ride feel of the frame separately.

Whatever spec you choose, the resulting retro-modern frame is a genuinely beautiful piece. While handmade can sometimes mean



a more 'rustic' finish, the sanded junctions and paintwork are flawless. The silver-soldered seatstay lug and cluster is totally seamless, and production models will have similarly glass-smooth joints between dropouts and stays.

The ride

'Glass smooth' is an accurate description of the Roadfinder X ride, too. As is often the case, Reynolds air-hardening 853 steel delivers a more muscular, precise but still inherently sprung feel compared to more docile or dull bikes in cheaper steel tube sets. On the Pashley that's enhanced by the larger weld areas and stiffness of the T47 BB shell and oversized 44mm head tube.

That translates into an encouragingly solid stance underfoot, so while a near 3kg steel frame will always be slower to accelerate than a lighter carbon or alloy frame, it's got a powerful surge when you press the pedals. The extra momentum is really clear in the way it continues to roll a gear easily when you back off the pressure. So whether I was on the tops pushing tempo on a rough rocky bridleway in the Dales or ducking low into a headwind on the road, the sustainable speed of the Roadfinder X was consistently impressive.

Even with the super wide and deep Zipp wheels, the bike was never too jarring at slower speeds on rough off-road sections either, with its inherent comfort appreciated more the further I rode. It also gives the Roadfinder X exceptional traction in turns and climbs, flattering both the Zipp tyres



Photos: Guy Kesteven

Above: Mastiles Lane in the Yorkshire Dales
Above right: T47 bottom bracket. This is stiffer, as it's larger in diameter, but it's also threaded

and my riding skill. The resilient spring also let me push confidently a lot further towards mountain bike terrain than you'd expect, surviving speed runs down Mastiles Lane and the rocky chaos of the tracks around Pen-y-Gent. With only 45mm tyre clearance, that's not Pashley's intended use case for the frame. When I used 30mm tyres and Zipp 303 wheels, it proved a very smooth and rapid road bike.

Mixed road/off-road use matches the geometry of the Pashley well, as, apart from a slightly longer than average top tube, it's nearer to an endurance road bike than a quasi-MTB. There is theoretically potential to stabilise the steering further by rotating the eccentric axle chips in the Columbus Futura Cross+ carbon fork. Unfortunately I couldn't undo the microscopic Torx bolts holding them in place to try the alternative position. On the bright side, the traction of the bike made it feel a lot more assured and stable than the frame geometry would suggest anyway. ●

Verdict

The amount of choice in the road/off-road category is vast. Pashley uses a blend of UK handmade history and cutting-edge tech to create a sublimely riding bike that's impressively capable in the rough yet swift on the road, too. Some might want more tyre clearance and/or more progressive geometry (watch this space), and the immovable fork-tip chip was irritating. But I loved the seamless, retro-modern aesthetic as much as the ride. Considering the craftsmanship involved, the UK manufacture and the custom options, the pricing is absolutely justified.