

High-grade steel

If you're buying a road bike for over £4,000, why choose steel? Guy Kesteven tests a Condor Fratello Disc and a Mason Resolution to find some answers

To introduce this test, I'm going to cheat and quote Cycle magazine editor Dan from when we exchanged emails about it: "Surveys tell us that road bikes are now the most popular type of bike among Cycling UK members. That's what we're testing here. Not tourers. Not gravel bikes. Not race bikes. Quality, general-purpose road bikes that are brisk, comfortable and practical."

But with alloy, carbon fibre and titanium frames all available, why is the oldest, heaviest frame material – steel – still popular for this sort of bike? The surprisingly different ride feel of the two bikes here, Condor's Fratello and Mason's Resolution 3, go a long way to explaining why ferrous bikes have so many fans.

Frame and fork

Before we get into the differences between the two bikes, there are some clear similarities. Both frames are handmade in Italy using triple-butted (three wall thickness in each main tube), internally corrosion-proofed, Italian Columbus Omnicrom steel. The Fratello is made from 'Spirit', the Resolution 3 a mix of 'Spirit' and 'Life'. Both bikes have carbon fibre forks.

Frames and forks have clearance



for 35mm tyres or 32mm with mudguards – which both bikes have fittings for, as well as four-point rear rack eyelets and a brace of bottle cage mounts.

Each bike has internal main-frame and fork routing for the disc brake hoses, front hub dynamo wiring through the fork, 12mm axles front and rear and conventional gear hangers. The swappable hardware for the 'Smart' gear routing on each bike also looks very similar. It allows you to fit blanking plates if you use a SRAM AXS wireless or a Shimano Di2 electronic groupset.

While the Condor's cable shift routing is external, the Mason's cables are routed internally right to the dropouts. The Resolution 3's use of an oversize T47 bottom bracket shell enables the rear brake hose to run internally the whole way, too. The Fratello has a traditional BSA design and partly external hose routing.

The literal big difference between the two frames, however, is tube diameters. The Spirit pipework of the Condor changes from 32x38mm to



Middle: Slimmer stays and less chunky dropouts contribute to a more archetypal steel-frame ride

Bottom: Campag Chorus – but you can pick and mix the spec