

ENIGMA ECHO

Overwhelmed by the onslaught of carbon-fibre wonder rigs? Take a deep breath and go back to the future with Enigma's low-key but talented Echo

GROUPSET
Shimano Ultegra 6800

WHEELS
Mavic Ksyrium Elite S

WEIGHT
7.6kg (55cm)

PRICE
\$5750

CONTACT
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RIDE IT

If you want to stand out from the pack, albeit in an understated way.

DON'T RIDE IT

If you're after pure speed. Enigma's Excel is their express Ti offering.



IN its subtle, brushed metal way, Enigma's Echo is all about classic proportions and understated intentions. That it's rendered from cycling's über-metal only adds to the mystique.

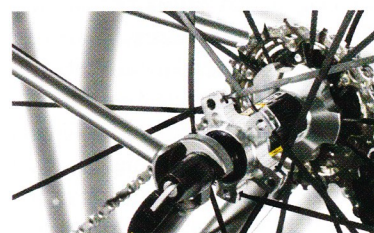
Titanium is essentially steel on steroids. A Ti tube can be twice as strong as the same-weight cromoly steel tube, is corrosion-resistant and scratches can be buffed out with fine-grit sandpaper. It also has an ethereal, almost sensual quality to the touch, something that a painted surface just can't match. In fact, it's hard to keep your hands off it...

English company Enigma is just a handful of years old, but it's quietly carving out a niche as the builder of some of the nicest touring and sportive Ti frames in the Old Dart.

The 3Al/2.5V Echo is pitched as an affordable sportive machine and the main sell is its unusually shaped down tube, which flares in the vertical plane to stiffen things at the head tube, and in the horizontal plane at the regulation bottom bracket to reinforce things down below. Straight, thin seatstays combine with mildly tweaked chainstays

to complete a very traditional two-triangle compact build. Cable routing is external, the seat collar is removable and the welds are otherworldly.

Our tester came built with carbon forks, Shimano's Ultegra 6800 group and Mavic's trick Ksyrium Elite wheelset, and was





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The Finer Points

HEADSTRONG

While the double-butted main tubes of the Echo are formed from 3Al/2.5V Ti alloy, the head tube, along with a few other small parts, are machined from the much stronger, more expensive and harder-to-work 6Al/4V Titanium.

MIRROR, MIRROR

The satin bead-blast finish is something that Ti bikes are synonymous with. Enigma will supply its bikes with all manner of decal options and tubing finishes, including the mirrored decals here.



finished with Enigma's own parts.

The Echo offers a ride that's best described as silken. Road-surface chatter just vanishes like mist, and the quietness is unnerving. It doesn't steer as much as pour itself through corners, and the large-diameter down tube ensures that there's sufficient resistance to a solid kick on the cranks. You'll

never mistake it for a slab of carbon fibre, but it's able to provide both resilience and absorption in the same crank rotation. It's not soft when cranking hard uphill, and it's not flighty bombing down the other side. It felt more keyed into the road surface than any other machine I've ridden lately, while retaining a zest and a liveliness

that carbon can so easily dial out.

Our medium test bike felt very compact in the front centre measurement, with our largest tester getting some wheel/toe overlap, but he'd really need the large (57cm) to fit properly. Nothing much to report about the running gear; it all just works.

Subtlety isn't for everyone, granted. If, however, you use your bikes hard and put them away wet, or you like the idea of a bombproof, beautiful, lifelong companion bike that will cosset and complement your riding style regardless of your ability, maybe subtlety is for you, after all. – *Tim Robson*