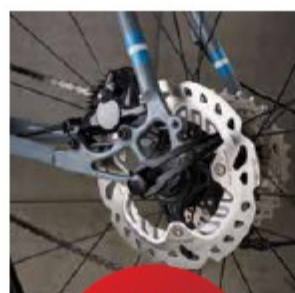
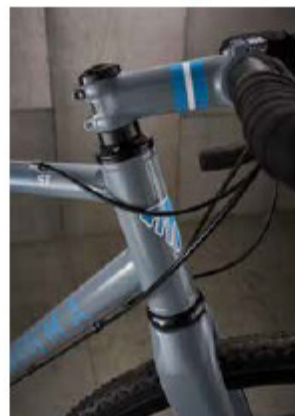




+ **+** Below The Enigma's head-tube is reinforced for extra strength. Bottom New Enigma Ecroix STs will come with thru-axles rather than quick releases.



All Enigma's Signature series frames are immaculately handmade in Hailsham

ENIGMA ECROIX ST

£3250 > Can Sussex-built steel match foreign-manufactured titanium?

Enigma introduced the Ecroix ST this year, and while the frameset only costs £192 less than its titanium Ecroix, your money gets you a premium all-rounder with an impressively tight and lively ride, handbuilt and painted in Sussex.

The £1250 frame (£1680 with fork and headset) uses a mainly Columbus Zona Nivacrom double-butted main-tube and rear stay set, stiffened and lightened with a Life Niobium seat-tube. At 1950g it's light for a steel frame designed to handle off-piste hammering, and you're not looking at a big weight

penalty over the titanium or aluminium bikes here. The ring-reinforced 44mm head-tube takes a tapered, colour-matched carbon cyclo-cross fork and for an extra £37 you can get a colour-matched stem. A custom-painted carbon seatpost adds £45 and we reckon the effect is well worth it.

All Enigma's Signature series frames are immaculately handmade in Hailsham with very neat TIG-welding. Cables are kept external and mostly naked for easy servicing and the monogrammed bottom bracket shell uses durable external bearings. There's a slight curve and flare to the chainstays

SPECIFICATION

Weight 9.49kg (55cm)
Frame Columbus Zona steel
Fork Enigma carbon CX disc
Gears Shimano Ultegra 6800
Brakes Shimano RS785 hydraulic 160/140mm disc
Wheels Hunt 4 Season Disc
Finishing kit Enigma bar and stem, Enigma Ti saddle, carbon post, 35mm Continental Cyclocross Race tyres

but while the A-frame seatstays run straight that still leaves space for 28mm tyres and mudguards or 35mm rubber without guards.

Our sample came with a quick-release rear axle, while new bikes will get 14x12mm thru-axles. To keep the tubes as clean and strong as possible Enigma produces dedicated Di2/EPS/eTap frames. After consistency issues with third-party painters Enigma created its in-house 'Paintworks' and two colours are included in the basic price. Full-custom paintjobs and custom sizing/geometry are also available, and you can even make a lugged and brazed version



Precise handling means the Ecroix feels equally keen and alive through the handlebar

HIGHS

Taut, enthusiastic, responsive and springy steel feel with handling to match

LOWS

Unforgiving on rocky, rooty trails or at lower speeds and a slightly high price

BUY IF

You want a British-built steel all-rounder that majors on stiffness and speed

of the Ecroix yourself on Enigma's week-long frame-building course.

Enigma doesn't offer complete builds on the Ecroix ST but apart from a slightly high £3250 overall price we can't really fault the package Enigma supplied us with, featuring Shimano Ultegra, an Enigma-branded cockpit and Hunt 4 Season wheels. The titanium-railed Enigma saddle on top of its sleek laid-back carbon seatpost was a nice finishing touch.

The 31.6mm post creates a firm position for pedalling, which is totally in keeping with the rest of the ride. The stiffness of the fork, oversized 44mm down-tube and straight stays is also obvious when you're climbing full tilt out of the saddle. And though at 9.5kg it's no lightweight, you wouldn't know from the way it responds. Precise handling from the 72-degree head angle means it feels equally keen

and alive through the handlebar, encouraging you to push the lean angles as hard as the pedals.

The downside of its stiffness is that over rough rubble it chokes up momentum, and compared with the smoothest bikes here, rides over moorland tracks were pretty miserable in places. On better surfaces adding pace transforms that slap into a springy skim, which is another good reason to open up the throttle. That means that as long as you're not regularly pushing the Ecroix into mountain bike territory you'll see why quality steel is still alive and very firmly kicking as a frame material.

THE VERDICT

Super-clean, taut-riding, UK-made all-rounder that thrives on an injection of pace

★★★★★

Also consider



FOR A FAIR BIT MORE
ENIGMA ECROIX TI ULTEGRA £3899
The double-butted titanium Ecroix frame is only £192 more than the steel, but this complete build also includes Mavic Ksyrium Pro wheels.



FOR A LITTLE LESS
ENIGMA ETHOS DISC ST £1360 (frame)

Doesn't have such big-tyre clearance but it'll take 28mm tyres and guards and it's also handbuilt in Sussex.