



SHIFT.road bikes



IMPRESSIONS

SIMON'S RIDE

ENIGMA ECHO

Having only ever ridden one other titanium frame, in the shape of a Litespeed Archon, the Echo would have some big shoes to fill. But fill them it did!

The frame has the qualities of an elite race machine, it has a huge amount of stiffness incorporated in its design. On the smooth cycle paths of Belgium, the bike was very responsive and allowed you to push on at speed using minimal effort. But I was beginning to wonder: how exactly would the Echo fair on the cobbled climbs that were ahead of us?

I need not have worried, for the ride was sublime. Over the cobbles the resilience built into the frame's seat stays gave me an amazing level of comfort. Which was amazing when considering just how good the bike had felt riding here. They always say the heart of a bike is its frame and, with the Echo, you can feel the time and effort that was put into the design process. The quality of the ride, the responsiveness, all add up to a bike that is every inch the equal of the Litespeed Archon, except in one respect. The price...

What I can say is that if you're looking for a bike that will let you keep up with the pack at your local circuit race or your mates on an epic all day ride, while having the all important attributes of style and flair, then this will be all the bike you'll ever need.

loosening, while the handlebar stem simply clamps to the steerer tube. Any spacers fitted are purely cosmetic and, since they are not part of the headset play adjustment system, have an 'O' ring on the inside face to keep them from rattling around. Avoiding the need to slacken the headset when removing the stem for carriage in, for example, a bike box, the Quickset system is neat, simple, effective and unobtrusive – Time composites in a nutshell.

One for the road...

And the cobbles? SHIFT rode the Oude Kwaremont, Paterberg and Koppenberg, climbs that feature regularly in the Ronde van Vlaanderen, in a loop of roughly 30km south of Oudenaarde on the river Schelde. More evenly laid than the bread loaf cobbles of Paris-Roubaix, those of Flanders still offer a bone-jarring shock to the system and have another trick up their sleeve: many sections are found on the side of the hills south of the Schelde, where they turn any slope into a strength-sapping mockery of smooth, controlled cycling. A few beers the night before riding them helps to ease the pain.

