

Words **JOSEPH DELVES**

Pearson Forge

Pearson offers a new take on how a bike should fit

The Pearson Forge is a bike that wants to fit in. It's the first machine exclusively designed by south London bike shop Pearson, which has previously relied on working with open-mould suppliers to deliver its range. It forms half of a pair of new models intended for the road bike market, with the Forge embracing the general side of things, and the soon-to-be-released Shift aimed more at racers.

Both new bikes are informed by data collected by the company through its customer fittings, which Pearson claims means the frame geometry matches a broader proportion of the population than most manufacturers.

'The Forge has been designed as the product our staff wished existed when conducting our bike-fits,' says owner Will Pearson. 'Looking at over 13 years' worth of data and 2,000-plus fits, we've come to two main conclusions. One is that most bikemakers fail to account for the fact that the average rider's upper and lower halves don't lengthen equally as height increases, and the other is that most bike brands don't leave enough crossover between sizes to allow them to be fitted correctly.'

Consequently, the Forge is available in five sizes labelled 1 to 5, with the middle three

overlapping heavily. This is fewer sizes in total than most big brands offer but should still give fitters a greater chance of lining you up with a well-matched bike without resorting to weird stem lengths or funky saddle positions. Speaking more cynically, it probably also saves some cash in mould creation and stock holding too, but as someone who perennially falls between a medium and a large, I was all ears.

Looks can be deceptive

A further design criterion for the Forge was to offer the aesthetics of a racing bike while providing a riding position attainable by the average rider. These flattering tactics can be seen all over the frameset. Take the fork crown – it's slightly extended to keep the front end up. The head tube doesn't look too tall, but the way the flattened top tube sweeps upwards to meet it adds a centimetre to its length. The effect is a racy look with a comfortable fit.

The tubes are slender, with aero-looking profiles, while the rear wheel is tucked into the frame via a cut-away in the seat tube. Frame and fork both provide clearance for tyres up to 32mm, complemented by almost unnoticeable mudguard mounts. There's also an additional

The spec

Model Pearson Forge

Price £6,399

Weight 8.1kg (size 3)

Groupset Shimano Ultegra Di2

Wheels Pearson Hoopdriver Cut and Thrust

Finishing kit Pearson Integrated Carbon bars, stem and seatpost, Fizik Vento Argo R5 saddle, Pirelli P-Zero TLR 30mm tyres

Contact pearson.com

Highlights

- 1** The Forge's fit isn't aggressive, but a tight rear end and plenty of fork offset means the bike handles quickly
- 2** CeramicSpeed's hard-wearing SLT bearings are used in the headset to extend the time between services
- 3** Stack is tall, but because this allows the rider to use fewer spacers, the overall look of the front end is low and racy





Pick of the kit

Limar Air Atlas helmet, £220, limar.com

This helmet is a few notes cheaper than those at the very top end of the market, but it's still a premium product.

So what do you get for your money? Limar claims improved aerodynamics and a very secure fit – if your head is the right shape. I qualify this statement because I've recently had to admit that most helmets don't gel with my cranium. For whatever reason, however, the Limar does. Once in place, it also has the pleasing sensation of creating minimal disturbance to the air zipping past your ears.

The Forge instantly feels like a bike you could ride all day. However, once zipping along, it proves to be nimble

bottle or storage cage mount on the underside of the frame for even more practicality.

Pearson builds each Forge to order, and there are plenty of build options depending on budget. The dimensions of the carbon bar and stem can also be tailored based on your fitting, which Pearson offers with every Forge. They're neatly integrated, with cabling hidden away and any necessary spacers following smoothly down from the stem, but they're still separate components, allowing for easy adjustment.

All in proportion

Following a reassuringly comprehensive fit, my Forge test bike arrived looking less gangly than other stock frames I've had custom-fitted. This is helped by the fact that it has been created to get the contact points into place for the moderately flexible rider without resorting to spacers or other adaptations.

Fit-wise, it's like an endurance machine sucking in its gut to look like a racer, which



Left: Every Forge is built to order, and the neatly integrated carbon bar and stem can be tailored to your dimensions – every element of this bike is geared towards comfort, yet it's still fun to ride

is also how you might describe its test pilot. Thanks to the moderate stack and reach, the Forge instantly feels like a bike you could ride all day. However, once zipping along, it proves to be nimble in its handling. This is helped by 408mm chainstays that aren't too long and a head tube that, at 72.5°, isn't too slack.

In fact, the Forge is a lesson in how fit and handling, while interrelated, are separate elements. The numbers affecting handling and how the bike behaves on the road are closer to those on a racing bike than the splayed style of your typical endurance bike. That said, the combination of disc brakes, big tyres and confident handling makes the bike accomplished on both smooth and sketchy tarmac.

The Forge is happy occupying the middle ground without it being middle-of-the-road. It's not pushing any facet too hard while remaining fleet and fun to mess around on.

There aren't many things to score against the Forge but if you're looking to spend more than £6,000 on a bike, there are a lot of options from big-name manufacturers out there that can boast lighter or more aero frames and higher-spec components. The question is whether Pearson's fitting and customisation make up the difference.

For some riders, particularly those who don't match up to conventional geometries, the Forge represents a good deal. For others, it will be a closer run thing. 🚲



Clothing stockists

Limar Air Atlas helmet
£220, limar.com

Glasses, rider's own

Le Col Pro II jersey
£145, lecol.cc

Le Col Pro II bibshorts
£185, lecol.cc

Le Col Cycling socks
£17, lecol.cc

DMT KR SL shoes
£369.99, chickencyclekit.co.uk