

Genesis Equilibrium

FIRST RIDE

Can steel still cut it in this age of carbon? The striking looking, stiff but comfortable, positive handling, confidence-inspiring Equilibrium certainly tips the balance in its favour

We'll gladly put this on record – carbon fibre isn't the only fruit. Yes, we'll admit we do review a large number of composite machines, but a) the bike manufacturers make a hell of a lot of them and b) British cyclists buy a hell of a lot of them.

This abundance of black plastic means that other, more traditional frame materials can be overlooked, or even summarily dismissed, when a buying decision is being made. Until relatively recently this was less of an issue when one was parting with less than a grand for a road bike. Riders with under £1000 – even 1p under a thousand – were 'limited' to full aluminium alloy frames, or alloy/carbon combinations or steel. But thanks to brands like Boardman, Planet X and, until this year's price increases, Focus, £1000 full carbon bikes are now a reality. Why, then, would you possibly want to part with £999.99 for a steel Genesis Equilibrium?

Well, you'll stand out from the carbon crowd for sure – due both to your choice of frame material and the Equilibrium's clean, old fashioned good looks. The consensus here at *Cycling Plus* is that this British-designed

machine is one of the best looking sub-£1000 bikes on the market. Buy it on a Cycle To Work scheme and you'll be making a very reasonably priced style statement.

We're not shallow, though, it has to be more than skin deep to really impress us. And the Equilibrium boasts substance. The double-butted Reynolds 520 chromoly in the frame isn't an especially light or fancy steel, but it works well. Elegant, slim seatstays help soak up bumps and buzz, but there's a real steel

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feel. When you've grown used to carbon or aluminium, riding the Equilibrium is a bit of a treat – like slipping out of your work shoes into your slippers. Comfy. (Okay, there is some black stuff – the fork has carbon blades.)

But comfy doesn't mean slow, or dull, or old fashioned. The Equilibrium more than holds its own against other bikes at this price. If you want to turn up the wick it'll let you – it's stiff

in all the right places and positive and confident in the twisty stuff. The Alex AT 400 rims laced to Tiagra hubs are dependable, if not especially exciting performers. Likewise the Continental UltraRace 25 rubber.

Shimano's 105 transmission guarantees miles of smooth, effortless shifting and feels right for the Equilibrium. The eponymous brushed-effect 6061 seatpost and excellent shallow drop bar are pleasingly pretty and, along with the white saddle, stem and bar tape, help enhance the frame's aesthetic elegance.

We'd suggest only the brakes for an early upgrade. The Tektro BR358s didn't provide quite as much stopping oomph as we'd have liked. We're also not massive fans of the 'double-action' quick-release. It's kind-of-cool but if you're being inattentive when you put your wheels on and only push it to the first position your stopping might be compromised.

That aside, the Equilibrium was a popular test machine here at *CPlus* – everyone who rode it came back with a smile on their face. Maybe it's simply because riding a steel bike is now more the exception than the norm. More likely, though, it's because the Equilibrium is simply a rather good bike. **4.5/5**



Road Smith

The real steel deal and well worth considering at this price

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SPEC HIGHLIGHTS

Price **£999.99**

www.genesisbikes.co.uk

FRAME Reynolds 520 double butted chromoly

FORK Carbon blades, aluminium steerer

GROUPSET Shimano 105 10-speed, 34/50 compact

WHEELS Alex AT 400/Shimano Tiagra hubs