

# Bike of the year

Many are called, few are chosen...

When it comes to picking a Bike of the Year, our main criteria has always been that it must offer the reader something exceptional, either in terms of design, performance or value – or ideally all three. This year, all our category award winners could put good cases in for taking the overall crown.

The simplicity, elegance and value of our favourite fixie, the On One Il Pompino, or the versatility and flair of the Merida Speedster T2. Then there's the titanium Brompton, an improvement on a winning formula. All were in with a chance, as were a number of bikes that hadn't won anything as yet, such as the Setavento Custom Ti frame featured in C+172. Not only was this a lovely-looking piece of kit, it rode well too, and the £585 price tag included a custom option so that you could tune the bike to your exact riding specification. One to watch.

All these bikes get honourable mentions, as does the Time VRX. Most of the C+ crew reckoned that if they had to do three weeks on Le Tour they would prefer to do it on this classy piece of French carbon. Another classy composite machine is the TCR Carbon



**My pick of the year**

Paul Vincent

While we've seen big advances in Shimano equipment this year – particularly the new 105 groupset – I still believe the Campagnolo equipped bikes are the hot ticket to getting in the zone when descending on Continental sportifs. I have chosen four best bikes, as I believe that no bike we've tested this year is good for every cycling discipline. If I was talented and young enough to be an elite cyclist, the Cannondale Six-13 Team (C+TDF summer special) would be the bike I would choose to ride a stage race on and I would get the SRM version as a training aid. While I love the Six-13, the Merlin Extralight (C+168) has a stiff yet comfortable handling that makes it perfect for long road races. And where fast responses are needed for criteriums, the Storck Scenario C1.2 (C+179) and Giant TCR Advanced (C+TDF summer special) cannot be separated.

Advance – a bike that lives up to the promise of its name.

It was a great year for road bikes, too, but the machine that comes closest to a podium spot is a tourer, the very fine Dave Yates Wayfarer (C+176). This is a classy custom machine for a nudge under a grand (can't be bad). Simon Withers has done over 1,500 miles on it and Dave is going to have to wrestle it off him when the time comes... which should be good to watch..

In third place is one of only two 10s awarded this year, the Felt F55 (C+175). This baby rings the bell on the bangs-per-buckometer every time – both the '05 and '06 versions. It's made of aluminium, do you need to know anything more?... Probably not. Saddleback: ☎ 01454 299965 [www.feltracing.com](http://www.feltracing.com).

We liked the idea of our second place bike even before we rode it – and when we did jump on it, we gave it an award, Distance bike of year. The Specialized Roubaix is the future: a performance bike that's built for comfort, yet still delivers the thrill of speed. Yes, you could race it – though big old sprinters might make it flex a bit – but that's not the point. This is for century, sportif and audax rides, so big miles at a reasonable pace, and the sort of thing that more and more people want to do. Specialized also deserve a pat on the back for pitching such a technology-laden machine with a decent spec at such a relatively affordable price.

You may not need anything more than a well sorted aluminium bike, but do you want more? Yes, you probably do. Which brings us on to our bike of the year, the Pedal Force ZX3 (C+173, [www.pedalforce.com](http://www.pedalforce.com)), it's the carbon equivalent of the Felt F55. Last year we said that for most of us the only advantages a carbon race bike offered were that it was (a) carbon, and (b) let you spend a lot more money. Well, you can still spend more money on a carbon bike, but the Pedal Force proves that you really don't have to. This thing doesn't just ring the bell on the bangs-per-buckometer, it knocks it off the wall. We were suspicious that something so cheap could be so good. Arty types might argue that Pedal Force should spend some money designing a decent logo (art ed Warren reckoned it had been run up using a free script on Microsoft



**Bike of the year**

Pedal Force ZX3

The ZX3 knocks the bangs-per-buckometer off the wall

Office), but that's all we found to quibble about. We've put seriously big miles into this bike, and with some seriously big riders on it it's still going strong!

During the summer, the Pedal Force ZX3 shared space in one of our senior tester's workshop with an illustriously monikered, if not quite cutting edge, Tour team bike. "Swap the kit over and you wouldn't be able to tell the difference", was his verdict. Your bank manager would, though. Let's hope the carbon doesn't run out too soon...



**Bike of the year runner up**  
Specialized Roubaix



**Bike of the year Third Place**  
Felt F55



**My pick of the year**

Richard Grigsby

The BMC made a lasting impression on me, mostly due to its Lego-style construction. It also wowed with totally unashamed engineering and some very clever touches – like the way the seat cluster makes it look like a straight-through arrangement a la Giant Advanced, even though it's really just a clever bit of sleeving!

Ride-wise, the BMC wasn't anywhere near as harsh as I'd expected, or others found in practise, so I'd fully recommend this bike for the larger rider.

Despite previous reservations about the lack of excitement with Trek road bikes, our Lance Armstrong replica was a joy to behold. It positively glided along the road, with a classic combination of comfort, response and handling. A great package with nothing to add or take away for fast days or race days.

The only bike to challenge the Trek was Time's elegant VXR sloping. This bike couldn't fail to convert sceptical riders, as it's quiet on the road and handles magically on fast descents. Tom Boonen has also had a successful season on this bike without mishap – and he's hardly small!