

# Merlin CR3/2.5 Ti works



Mark of quality: the engraved Merlin badge

THE MERLIN'S NOT JUST FOR RACING

## Sportive performance

INITIALLY I got this bike with the intention of using it for racing while I took a carbon-fibre bike to sportives and longer, hillier events. The plan was that it will get upgraded as the season goes by, and I will keep updating you as to how I'm getting on. But with the 'do it all' nature of the titanium frameset, especially the comfortable riding position, I'm thinking I may have a hard time switching between this and my Time.

Huw Williams

**A**S a slight change to normal testing, this is the first look at what will be a long-term test machine. It's a bit of a paradox, but you can often judge something's true value by your lack of desire to use it for its intended purpose.

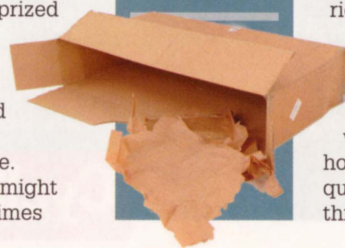
A bit like those sad old men in Belsize Park who keep Ferraris in their sheds, only rolling them out on Sunday mornings to polish them before rolling them back in again for another week under cover. "Well I don't want to get it dirty or stress the engine," is their reasoning, "got to keep it in top condition." Top condition for what, exactly? The worrying thing is that after taking delivery of the

CR3, I'm beginning to understand their point of view.

Years ago I regularly raced off-road, and recall with great joy the moment I first rode a full titanium mountain bike. At the time I swore I'd be happy never to ride anything else ever again. With the arrival of the Merlin, the first full titanium road bike I've ever ridden, I'm beginning to feel the same way.

Straight out of the box, and with no adjustment other than saddle height, all the reasons why titanium is so highly prized hit you squarely on the chin. Light weight, amazing stiffness, quick response, and unparalleled comfort all combine in a perfectly-balanced package. OK, other frame materials might be able to match or sometimes

Merlin's name has been synonymous with high quality titanium framesets for almost 25 years. This bike continues that tradition



better the individual performance characteristics of titanium in each of these areas, but it's always only as a result of a trade-off in other departments. What titanium gives you is unmatched performance across the board.

### Perfect product

Add to that the fact that titanium bikes always, but always, have a classy, understated look and will never fall apart, rust away or come unglued, and you can see why such a high proportion of riders who use them swear by them religiously.

A first glance over this particular Merlin reveals tight compact geometry with a sloping top tube and hourglass stays. The build quality synonymous with Merlin throughout the years is evident

"Straight out of the box, all the reasons why titanium is so highly prized hit you squarely on the chin"

all over it and the graphics have been updated, including a classy, engraved head tube badge. The build is mostly Ultegra with some Cane Creek headset parts and 'Real Design' Super Sphere wheels. I might upgrade the wheels purely for cosmetic reasons: although they perform really well, they look a little too 'traditional' on this bike, so I might experiment a bit. It's tricky,

though, as the front end response is already amazing and I don't want to lose that. There's a pair of Mantis Wing Shape bars on the front, which I love and are definitely staying on there.

Now all I need do is get over my paranoia of riding it regularly and getting it dirty — either that or it's a move to Belsize Park and a sad life of weekend polishing for me.

### CR3/2.5 WORKS

Manufacturer	Merlin
Price	£2,799
Distributor	ABG 01793 618008
Weight	18.5lb
Frame	Merlin 3/2.5 titanium
Fork	Real Design Signature HP
Size Range	S-XL + custom
Groupset	Shimano Ultegra
Deviations	none
Alterations	none (yet!)
Gear Ratios	53/39 with 12-25
Wheels	Real Design Super Sphere
Tyres	Continental GP4000
Bars/stem	ITM Mantis
Seatpost	Thomson Elite
Saddle	Fizik Aliante Sport

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