

Flat out and fast!

Cass Gilbert and Cara Coolbaugh test four different takes on the flat-barred theme

On test



C'dale Synapse Carbon 105 Flat Bar £1499



Giant FCR1w £650



Planet X Kaffenback £599



Cotic Roadrat £255 f&f inc delivery

Only a short time ago flat-barred road bikes were a breed apart. Once the personalised steeds of streetwise couriers, these mutant machines mixed and matched parts from road bikes and mountain bikes to offer the best of the both worlds. Splicing the speed of one with the riding position of the other turned out to make a whole lot of sense, and it wasn't long before manufacturers were lining up to offer their take on the formula.

In fact, the flat-barred setup appeals to many. You might be an older roadie looking for a more upright, comfortable riding position without too much loss in performance; a commuter who enjoys a fast turn of speed on your ride to work, as this same geometry offers an improved field of view through traffic; or indeed anyone new to cycling – flat-barred

**Cannondale Synapse Carbon
105 Flat Bar
£1499**

Cannondale ☎ (00) +41 61 487 9380
www.cannondale.com



cockpits, with their improved braking and easier shifting, plus the visibility bonuses, are more confidence inspiring. Lastly, they're also a bridge to those heralding from an MTB background – a familiar riding position only with a slicker, faster ride.

Tapping into the appeal of the inclusiveness of the setup, there's now a whole range to choose from. Some are effectively road bikes fitted with flat bars, offering a simple change in riding position for weekend escapes. Others are more evolved solutions, often with city use more in mind. It's worth pointing out too that spec'ing a flat-barred setup should save you money too, as rapid fire shifters are considerably cheaper than more complicated STIs for drop bars.

This month's line-up reflects the variety that has emerged onto the market. We've tested Cannondale's Synapse in its drop-barred guise before – the Carbon 105 Flat Bar (£1499) is the highest in their flat-barred range. Giant's FCR1w (£650) is another bike based on a road bike platform, part of the new women's specific series and aimed at the

Cannondale's SAVE (Synapse Active Vibration Elimination) system, for reducing high frequency road vibrations, is used in both the forks and hourglass-shaped chainstays



sports market. We've also tried out Planet X's chromo Kaffenback as a winter trainer – this flat-barred version is now sold as a complete bike for a tempting £599. Lastly, we've got our hands on a brand new Roadrat, from boutique MTB brand Cotic, offered as a frameset for £255 inc delivery. It's built up here for £1050, though the complete bike will feature V brakes and be on sale at around £775.

**FRAME
Cannondale 9 Giant 8 Planet X 8 Cotic 9**

As the name suggests, the Synapse 105 Flat Bar uses the standard Synapse frame as its starting point. In doing so, it inherits all the carbon technology

Cannondale have packed into their well-received range of comfort performance bikes. Slightly more relaxed angles, longer chainstays and longer headtube mark it out for long distance riding, while its light weight and an impressively stiff bottom bracket ensure it's responsive too out of the saddle. It also shares Cannondale's SAVE (Synapse Active Vibration Elimination) system in its forks and hourglass-shaped chainstays, designed to reduce high frequency vibrations from the road. With their usual attention to detail, Cannondale haven't stopped there. The full carbon fork used on the Flat Bar has a greater offset than its drop handle barred stablemate, for a more confident,



Giant FCRw

£659

Giant ☎ 0115 9775900,
www.giantforwomen.com



stable ride. Don't expect any eyelets or clearance for mudguards though – this is Cannondale's take on a comfort road bike, and the emphasis is still very much on performance. Likewise, the trademark all-black finish and carbon weave looks great, but isn't up to being locked up against lampposts.

The FCR1 shares the same Aluxx butted frame as the women's SCR, in

their 6000 series aluminium alloy. Geometry hasn't been tweaked for use with flat-bars, and as such has a shorter effective top tube than when used with drops. It is not, however, an overly short reach to begin with and is actually the same dimensions as the men's FCR frames (the women's ones get shorter stems). Welds are smooth in the main triangle and the back end has reinforced

looking seatstays. There's a single eyelet for mounting a rack or mudguard at the dropouts, but there's hardly any room between the mech and tyres for a 'guard. A rack goes on more easily, however bear in mind that this is a road frame, not a touring or even hybrid frame, and the wheels supplied aren't suitable for heavy loads. The forks are carbon composite with an alu steerer and there's plenty of clearance for a mudguard between the fork and tyre. Mini-Vs and eyelets on the fork legs and crown make attaching the front 'guard far easier than at the rear. The pearly white finish on the frame and fork has a cool and appealing look – never mind the sorts of conditions it'll face in a rainy season of riding – and wins points for style. Two bottle mounts easily fit full sized bottles in the 50cm frame.

There's a single eyelet for mounting a rack or 'guards on the Giant FCR but remember this is a road frame, with too little clearance for guards and unsuitable wheels for load carrying

There's nothing trick and fancy about the new Kaffenback, just a tried and tested frame that sees a change in colour for 2006. Gone are the distinctive Blue Dragon tattoo-style decals, replaced with a stylish coat of sandy colour and clean



Tested Flat-barred bikes

Planet X Kaffenback £599

Planet X ☎ 0796 76 73 709,
www.planet-x-bikes.com



coffee decals. At 4lbs+, the butted frame isn't exactly hovering above the scales – but is light enough not to feel unwieldy and burly enough to take a knock. This no nonsense approach to frame building is carried through to the open gusset on the downtube and chunky seat stays, transplanted from On-One's popular Inbred. Although originally conceived as a winter road bike, the Kaffenback's capable of taking on even rough bridleways and dirt tracks, limited only by the tyre clearance at the back – enough for a 32c knobbly, or a 32c slick with 'guards. Other boxes that are ticked include rack mounts for touring duties and a pump peg along the top tube. Finish is good for the money, though not as neat as the Cotic. The fairly hefty chromo fork features a curved blade, with mudguard eyelets and plenty of

Our Kaffenback test bike was fitted with Sram X-7 grip-shift changer but there is also now an £800 (otherwise identical to this one) complete bike with the new rapidfire Ultegra shifters

clearance to match. You could always upgrade it to Planet X's carbon 'cross fork for an extra £99, saving a few hundred grams.

While most flat-barred bikes use a road frame as their starting point, the Roadrat is the opposite. Being from the Cotic family, it's the award winning, dirt

driven Soul that provides the blueprint. The top-tube length is identical, and once you've taken into account sag in the suspension fork, seat angles are similar too, while classic 'cross angles on the head-tube and 45mm fork offset ensure no toe overlap. Hence the MTB look: lots of exposed seat post and



Cotic Roadrat

£255 f&f (including UK delivery)

Contact: ☎ 07970 853 531,

www.cotic.co.uk



standover clearance. Slender tubing is butted chromo from Taiwan and finish is simply superb – a glossy black powder coat should mean the Roadrat hides its age well. Indeed, we were impressed by the overall attention to detail, including neat mini-gussets on the downtube and chainstays, beefing it up for roughstuff duties too. And if you do stray off the black stuff, there's ample tyre clearance. We shod it with 35c Schwalbe Racing Ralph cyclo-cross tyres, with ample room for mud and leaves – without 'guards, it should take up to 38c. There're mounts for both discs and V-brakes but it's a shame the bosses aren't removable. A neat and minimal sliding dropout transforms it from fixed or single-speed city rat to fully geared light tourer. The only downside is that the chaintug/derailleur hanger, though beautifully machined, is a bit fiddly to remove when fixing a flat – production

The Roadrat on test was fitted with Hope discs front and rear. If we were spec'ing up our own frame we'd fit Avid's easy-to-maintain, excellent BB7s





models will feature a tweaked, narrower version, with two adjustment screws for easy repositioning of the wheel in single-speed mode. Like Surly's Crosscheck, the 132.5mm rear drops will take both road and mountain bike hubs. Elsewhere, there's rear rack and mudguard eyelets, and a clever forward facing front disc mount to deal with any mudguard compatibility issues too. There're even neat cable bosses at the head-tube, so no paint rubbing from the cables to worry about.

HANDLING
Cannondale 8 Giant 8
Planet X 8 Cotic 9

We took the Synapse on a few long outings and were immediately impressed by how incredibly silky smooth it rides, ironing out typical UK road dimples as if they weren't there. A shorter, steeper stem and flat bars means it's some 20mm shorter in length and 50mm higher than the standard Synapse. The more upright riding position also helps in all day comfort, while a slightly slower steering than conventional road bikes ensures a stable ride that's still involving too, and no hint of toe overlap. Yet

although the frame helps eliminate road vibrations at the rear end, the flat-barred position is naturally limited in terms of hand positions – and this becomes more noticeable after a few hours.

We'd recommend fitting a set of bar ends, something like Cane Creek's excellent Ergo Bar Ends, to provide more variety and help reduce numb fingers over long rides. Unlike many distance bikes, which can sacrifice weight for comfort, it's noticeably light too – less than 18lbs – floating up climbs with the minimum of resistance and happily munching up hilly 100km audaxes.

As the frame is borrowed from the road line-up, the FCR1 has an easy reach with flat bars and a very upright position. The bike tested was one size larger than I would normally ride in a compact frame, but even so top tube length was not an issue. It was only the lack of seatpost showing and height of the front end that was noticeable. There are wide bars too – nearly 23in with the bar ends – which is good for visibility in traffic, but could be shorter for narrower shouldered women and ducking through tight city alleys. Aimed at

the fitness and training market, the improved control and positive feel of braking and steering on flat bars still outweighs the disadvantages of facing the wind with wide arms and an upright posture. The FCR1 is quite light and lively to ride and has certainly a road bike rather than hybrid feel, even with the 28c rubber. It rolls along smoothly, has ample gears for climbing and you get good leverage out of the wide bars. The controls are well within reach and the brake levers are less fatiguing to use than STIs for smaller hands. There's plenty of power from the Tektro mini-Vs, though modulation is less than perfect and feels especially 'grabby' on the front rim. Toe overlap was not an issue, and overall the bike cornered predictably and handled sharp, fast city riding as well as hilly country lanes.

The Kaffenback has had its fans in the C+ office for some time, having won us over previously as a well priced, no-nonsense all-rounder, happy to try its hand at anything. We've set it up with flat bars for touring around Wales, with drop bars for climbing the Alpe d'Huez and with mudguards for commuting duties. It's not the

lightest of road bikes, but carries its speed well and has a reassuringly solid feel. In its flat-barred incarnation, it's also a very comfortable bike, thanks to a semi-compact design with lots of standover clearance, a generous head-tube, plenty of steerer space, a 300mm seat post and a flippable six degree stem – it's just a case of shuffling things round to get the right riding position. In fact, although our test bike is an XL (equivalent to a 60cm), it didn't feel or look too big. Handling is fluid bit not too twitchy, and it will happily accommodate a couple of laden panniers without throwing it into a fit of wobbles.

The Roadrat injects a whole new lease of fun to zipping round the urban landscape, confidently darting down backstreets and skipping over potholes. Initially, the 130mm stem looked long – but once in motion it works a treat, balancing the lively frame nicely. The wide handlebar (25in) helps with stability and steering but can encroach on tight traffic corridors. The longer stem also puts you into more of a low-slung position for road work compared to an MTB – particularly with the stem flipped down. In this

regard, expect an involving ride, rather than the upright, sedate position of some flat bars. I'm a big fan of a single chainring and rear cluster combo. It's easier on the legs than a single-speed, and is all you need even in hilly locales like Bristol – side benefits being a lighter bike and fewer parts to maintain than standard gears. Although the whole bike feels very tight and together, there's just room for a couple of standard rear panniers without heel clearance issues, or toe overlap with touring width rubber – extending its horizons. The Tubus and Tortec racks we tried fitted fine and cleared the disc callipers.

EQUIPMENT
Cannondale 8 Giant 7
Planet X 9 Cotic 8

With its full carbon, high-tech frame and Cannondale cache, you'd expect

the Synapse to cost the earth. In fact, £1500 gets you a decent level of kit, including an Ultegra grade 50/36T compact chainset, mated to a 10-speed, sensibly spread 12-27T cluster. Plus, it's £150 cheaper than the list price of the drop version. We're big fans of the new 105 Shimano kit as it's such great value for money with little weight penalty, excellent performance and great looks. The 105 theme extends through the front and rear derailleurs, as well as brakes, offering crisp gear shifts and powerful, confident stopping. The flat-barred specific shifter pods are Ultegra in quality, and there's some cheap but comfortable full-finger brakes, with an integrated bell and rubbery Cannondale grips. Atop the basic FSA seat post sits a Fizik Wingflex Nisene, that's proved its worth on longer rides.

Giant have gone out of their way to make the FCR1w look good. It has coordinated paint from frame to fork, a matching white saddle and slick silver cable housing. They could easily have got away with standard black, but the result is a look that's a bit special. The headtube is long with an internal headset for continuity of style, a small stack of spacers and a short stem to keep the bars close and high. Performance-wise, the saddle is a comfortable and sporty women's design. Along with the 170mm cranks and 90mm stem (165mm and 80mm come on the smaller sizes), these are the FCR's only female specific concessions. It's become quite standard to see a carbon fork and post on a bike at this price, which must help its smooth feel on pocked roads – also thanks to the wider tyres. The 105

rear mech is a highlight, however the mixed drivetrain was a bit fussy when shifting and needed more attention to keep it running efficiently. It's a standard (30/42/52) TruVativ triple chainset paired with a mid-range SRAM 12-26 cassette. The front mech is Shimano's flat-barred series R443 and there're 9-speed R440 levers. Tektro linear pull mini-Vs and levers work well with this set-up and give more 'guard clearance. Giant's own comp alu bars and stem finish off the kit.

At £599, Planet X might have been a little thrifty in the parts department. In fact, no stone has been left unturned, with an impressive list of solid, mostly in-house branded kit with a few fancy surprises thrown in. Most eye-catching is the Shimano drivetrain – one of the new 10-speed 34/50T Ultegra grade compact cranksets. It's mated to a tight 9-speed cassette (11-23T), and along with the mongrel-like setup of its Tiagra front mech and a Sram X-7 provides clean – if a little clunky – shifting. Gripshifts may not appeal to everyone, so it's worth noting that Planet X now offer a whole host of options, including the new rapidfire 10-speed Ultegra shifter for around £800 (complete bike). If you're thinking of touring, we'd recommend going for a wider ranged 12-27 option. The saddle, possibly inspired by Fizik's Arione, is in a fetching shade of tan and lives atop a lightweight Planet X seat post. Basic Tektro Mini-V's provide good braking, teamed with Avid levers. These are fitted to some cheap grips on a dependable XC 24in flat bar, and a light four-bolt stem. Finishing touches even include a pair of 22g carbon cages – a bit out of place on a bike like this, but very spiffy none the less. Overall weight is sub 22lbs, which is fine for such a durable bike.

The Roadrat is currently offered as a frame and fork option, costing a very reasonable £255. A similar setup to the one we tried, albeit with Bontrager Select wheels and V-brakes, will be offered at around the £775 mark. Our test bike came with Hope discs, which provide superb, reliable braking though if we were spec'ing it, we'd plump for Avid's excellent, easy-to-maintain BB7s. There's also a matching Bontrager seat post, slender saddle and grips. The single 42T chainring and TruVativ cranks feature a chainguard while Sram's X7 rear mech and shifter pod provides light and crisp gear changes. We're not mad about oversized stems for city bikes as inevitably, compatibility issues arise with older accessories like lights and bar bags, though the extra stiffness does make sense if you're running it as a single-speed. Set up as it is, our



Tested Flat-barred bikes

bike would cost around £1050, and weighs in at under 22lbs. But it's a perfect frame for running as a single-speed/fixed, and there's no reason why you couldn't fit it with a shorter stem and drop bars – maybe On-One's shallow drop Midgees would work particularly well.

WHEELS

Cannondale 7 Giant 8 Planet X 9 Cotic 7

We're seeing Mavic's Aksium Race wheelset crop up on a lot of bikes – largely, we suspect, because they look so much like the higher end Ksyriums. In fact, they're a perfectly capable all round set of wheels that are suited to training rides. We had no problems with Hutchinson's Top Speeds, a 23c tyre with an elastomer

layer to help puncture proofing.

The Xero XSR 3s are a case of style reigning supreme. With 20 and 24 paired spokes front and rear, they look like fast road wheels, though they're neither really lightweight nor robust enough for hard commuting. Hubs are Formula's, with easy-to-service cup and cone bearings. They take a suggested tyre width up to 28mm – like the Kendas that are fitted – and down to 23mm for faster rides. The Kendas roll quicker, once up to speed, than their width might suggest and the extra cushion of air smoothes over bad roads, as well as mixed surface cycle lanes without trouble. However, the minimal spoked design is not ideal for curb hopping or pothole hits

over the long term – best to keep these wheels on the ground.

We reviewed a set of Mavic Speedcity's in our commuting wheels test (C+ and since then have put them through their paces both on and off-road. In fact, we've been impressed by how tough they've proven to be with no adjustments needed. This said, they're a pricey set of wheels. A cheaper and equally effective option would be a classic rim, like a Mavic Open Pro, and a pair of well-sealed Deore disc hubs. Likewise, Conti's Grand Prix 3000 is fast and light rubber. But as our Roadrat is set up more as a city dweller, we'd spec it with Ultra Gatorskins for improved puncture proofing – especially given the rear wheel setup.

There're two kinds of complete Kaffenbacks – the unbuilt version sports an R500 Tiagra wheelset and costs £499. Invest an extra £100 though, and you get the bike pre-built, as well as a more traditional set of handbuilt wheels. Our test bike featured the latter, using Planet X's solid double-walled rims with eyelets, designed to take anything from a potholed commute, to club runs and even cyclo-cross. Spokes are lightweight, double-buttet Sapim Race, built up in an easy-to-maintain, strong three-cross pattern. Tyres are tourer's classic Conti Top Touring 2000. 32c wide, they run up to 75 psi and offer good durability and puncture resistance, with a decent turn of speed too. The quality Planet-X skewers are a nice touch.



Rivals

Kona Phd £1000

Trek 7.6 FX WSD £700

Genesis Day 03 £530

Trek Soho £900

Kona Phd £1000

Contact: ☎ 01179 825500, www.konaworld.uk.com

Latest and lightest in Kona's stylish flat-barred lineup, features Easton Ultralite Race tubing, Aksium wheels, FSA Gossamer triple, Conti Ultrasport 23c tyres, rack and guard eyelets too.

Trek 7.6 FX WSD £700

Contact: ☎ 01908 282 626, www.trekbike.co.uk

www.trekbike.co.uk With 700x32c wheels, the 7.6 is good for city and light rough stuff, while still having the look and feel of a flat-barred road bike. There's clearance for mudguards too.

Genesis Day 03 £530

Contact: www.ridgeback.co.uk

The classic flat top boasts sleek looks, lightweight aluminium frame and fork, Shimano Tiagra triple, R500 wheels and rack eyelets – all

without worrying the bank manager.

Trek Soho £900

Contact: ☎ 01908 282626,

www.trekbike.co.uk Hit town in style: Avid BB7s for all-weather breaking, single chainring for minimum maintenance faff or cost, rubber frame protectors, upright riding position and there's even a thermos for your skinny latte too...

CYCLING PLUS Verdict

The Synapse Flat Bar 105 isn't a bike we'd recommend for day-to-day commutes – its finish just isn't hard-wearing enough, and the Bad Boys and Road Warriors of the world are better placed to cover this base. But if you're after a performance flat-barred road bike that's big on comfort and as light as they come, you'd be hard pressed to find a better choice. With an upgraded wheelset, it would be even better still.

Giant's FCRw isn't that women specific, but it's still a solid upright position and performs well for new riders looking to break into cycling as a form of gaining fitness. The lack of rear clearance for a mudguard is a



Cannondale Synapse Carbon 105 Flat Bar

Replacement value £1499

Cannondale ☎ (00) +41 61 487 9380
www.cannondale.com

Frame and forks

Size tested: 53cm
 Sizes available: 47, 50, 53, 56, 58, 60, 63
 Weight as tested: 8.070kg/17.8lb, no pedals
 Frame: Synapse Carbon
 Frame weight: 1106g/2.4lb
 Fork: Carbon Save fork
 Fork weight: 439g/1lb

Bike dimensions

Top tube: 56cm/22in
 Seat tube: 51.3cm/20.2in
 Chainstays: 41cm/16.1in
 Wheelbase: 100.5cm/39.6in
 Head tube angle: 72.5
 Seat tube angle: 73.5
 Fork offset: 5.0cm/0.75in
 Trail: 5.8cm
 B/b height: 27cm/10.6in
 Standover height: 79cm/31.1in
 Braze-ons: two bottles

Frame alignment

Head tube: perfect
 Rear triangle: perfect
 Fork: perfect

Transmission

Chainset: Shimano no name, 34-50T, 172.5mm
 Bottom bracket: Shimano Hollowtech II
 Freewheel: Shimano HG50
 Chain brand: Shimano 105
 Derailleurs: Shimano 105
 Gear levers: Shimano 105 Rapidfire shifters with Cannondale brake levers
 Pedals: n/a

Gear ratio (in)

Chainring	Sprocket									
	12	13	14	15	16	17	19	21	24	27
34	77	71	66	61	57	54	48	44	38	34
50	113	104	96	90	84	79	71	64	56	50

Wheels

Front and rear: Mavic Aksium Race, 20/24 bladed spokes (f/r)
 Tyres: Hutchinson Top Speed, 700x23c
 Wheel weight: 215g/1635g (f/r)

Other components

Stem: Cannondale, 90mm
 Handlebars: Cannondale Fire, straight bar, 59cm
 Headset: FSA Integrated
 Saddle: Fizik Nisene
 Seatpost: Cannondale Fire
 Brakeset: Shimano 105
 Accessories: none



Giant FCR1w

Replacement value £650

Giant ☎ 0115 9775900
www.giantforwomen.com

Frame and forks

Size tested: 50cm
 Sizes available: 42 (XS), 46.5 (S), 50 (M)
 Weight as tested: 9.790kg/21.6lb, no pedals
 Frame: Allux 6000 series alloy
 Frame weight: 1545g/3.4lb
 Fork: Giant FO carbon with alloy steerers
 Fork weight: 638g/1.4lb

Bike dimensions

Top tube: 55cm/21.7in
 Seat tube: 45cm/17.7in
 Chainstays: 42cm/16.5in
 Wheelbase: 100cm/39.4in
 Head tube angle: 72.0
 Seat tube angle: 73.5
 Fork offset: 4.5cm/1.8in
 Trail: 6.6cm
 B/b height: 27.5cm/10.8in
 Standover height: 77.3cm/30.4in
 Braze-ons: two bottles, front and rear mudguards

Frame alignment

Head tube: perfect
 Rear triangle: within 2mm
 Fork: perfect

Transmission

Chainset: TruVativ Touro, 170mm
 Bottom bracket: RPM cartridge, square taper
 Freewheel: SRAM
 Chain brand: Shimano HG53
 Derailleurs: Shimano 105
 Gear levers: Shimano unbranded series
 Rapidfire levers
 Pedals: n/a

Gear ratio (in)

Chainring	Sprocket									
	12	13	14	15	17	19	21	23	26	
30	68	62	58	54	48	43	39	35	31	
42	95	87	81	76	67	60	54	49	44	
52	117	108	100	94	83	74	67	61	54	

Wheels

Front and rear: Xero Lite wheelset
 Tyres: Kenda Kwest, 700x28c
 Wheel weight: 1457g/1957g (f/r)

Other components

Handlebar stem: Giant A3, 90mm, OS
 Handlebars: Giant A5, 58cm, OS
 Headset: Internal
 Saddle: Giant
 Seatpost: Giant C5 carbon
 Brakeset: TekTro RX3 V-Brake
 Accessories: none



Planet X Kaffenback

Replacement value £599

Planet X ☎ 0796 7673709
www.planet-x-bikes.co.uk

Frame and forks

Size tested: 57cm (equivalent to 60cm)
 Sizes available: 48 (S), 51 (M), 54 (L), 57 (XL)
 Weight as tested: 9.940kg/21.9lb, no pedals
 Frame: Maxwall Cromoly
 Frame weight: 2148g/4.7lb
 Fork: Cromoly
 Fork weight: 840g/1.9lb

Bike dimensions

Top tube: 59.5cm/23.4in
 Seat tube: 51cm/20.1in
 Chainstays: 41.5cm/16.3in
 Wheelbase: 103.5cm/40.7in
 Head tube angle: 71.0
 Seat tube angle: 71.0
 Fork offset: 4.3cm/1.7in
 Trail: 7.5cm
 B/b height: 29.0cm/11.4in
 Standover height: 82cm/32.3in
 Braze-ons: two bottles, front and rear mudguards, rear rack

Frame alignment

Head tube: perfect
 Rear triangle: perfect
 Fork: perfect

Transmission

Chainset: Shimano Hollowtech II, 172.5mm
 Bottom bracket: Shimano Hollowtech II
 Freewheel: SRAM PG970
 Chain brand: Shimano Ultegra
 Derailleurs: Shimano Tiagra/SRAM X-7 (f/r)
 Gear levers: SRAM X-7
 Pedals: n/a

Gear ratio (in)

Chainring	Sprocket									
	11	12	13	14	15	17	19	21	23	25
34	83	77	71	66	61	54	48	44	40	37
50	123	113	104	96	90	79	71	64	59	54

Wheels

Front and rear: 32H Planet-X DN6 rims, stainless triple butted spokes on Shimano 105 hubs
 Tyres: Continental Top Touring, 28x1 1/4in
 Wheel weight: 1420/1820g (f/r)

Other components

Stem: Planet-X, Superlight Team, 110mm
 Handlebars: FSA, 62cm
 Headset: Cane Creek S2
 Saddle: Planet-X Team
 Seatpost: Planet-X Team
 Brakeset: TekTro Mini-V
 Accessories: none



Cotic Roadrat

Replacement value £255 f&f inc delivery

Cotic ☎ 07970 853 531
www.cotic.co.uk

Frame and forks

Size tested: M
 Sizes available: S, M, L
 Weight as tested: 9.940kg/21.9lb, no pedals
 Frame: Double butted chromoly
 Frame weight: 1975g/4.4lb
 Fork: Cotic Road Hog with canti, guard, disc eyes
 Fork weight: 886g/2lb

Bike dimensions

Top tube: 59cm/23.2in
 Seat tube: 43cm/16.9in
 Chainstays: 43.5cm/17.1in
 Wheelbase: 103.5cm/40.7in
 Head tube angle: 72.0
 Seat tube angle: 73.0
 Fork offset: 4.5cm/1.8in
 Trail: 6.6cm
 B/b height: 28.5cm/11.2in
 Standover height: 77.5cm/30.5in
 Braze-ons: two bottles, canti, guard and disc eyes

Frame alignment

Head tube: perfect
 Rear triangle: perfect
 Fork: perfect

Transmission

Chainset: TruVativ Isoflow, 42T
 Bottom bracket: TruVativ Powerspline
 Freewheel: SRAM
 Chain brand: SRAM PC95
 Derailleurs: SRAM X-7
 Gear levers: SRAM X-7
 Pedals: n/a

Gear ratio (in)

Chainring	Sprocket									
	11	12	14	15	18	21	24	28	32	
42	103	95	81	76	63	54	47	41	35	

Wheels

Front and rear: Mavic Speed City
 Tyres: Continental Grand Prix 3000, 700x23c
 Wheel weight: 1340g/1910g (f/r)

Other components

Stem: Bontrager Race, 130mm, OS
 Handlebars: Bontrager Race, 63cm OS
 Headset: Cartridge
 Saddle: Bontrager Race
 Seatpost: Bontrager Select
 Brakeset: Hope Hydraulic
 Accessories: none

shame, especially as it has eyelets drilled out. Overall though, it's lighter and quicker to ride than a hybrid and with 28mm tyres, strikes a good balance between comfort and speed.

While the Kaffenback is effectively the same frame we've tried before, we like it as much now as we did then. In fact, we've even upped its score to a 9, thanks to a ridiculously well priced and considered package, with loads of options too. If you like the tradition, ride and reliability of a chromo frame, plenty of versatility and the classy 2006 finish, this is

the do-it-all bike for you. At £499-599, it's a steal.

The Roadrat is just as desirable. In fact, everyone who clapped eyes on it hankered after one. With the kind of frame that has you muttering, "I could dig out those old cranks, some winter wheels, and I'm sure I have a handlebar somewhere", it's the perfect excuse to recycle old kit. We'd recommend it more as a frameset than in its current build, simply because there're cheaper ways of building it up – though the forthcoming V-brake option

sounds interesting too. But whether you end up pimping it with choice components or trawling through your parts bin, the Roadrat is a refreshing, individual bike that excels both within the city and beyond – just be aware that pulling out the rear wheel is a bit of a fiddle if you're running it geared. At £255, it's very good value too.

Cannondale 8/10

Superb comfort and performance, and as light as they come

Giant 8/10

A good value option for women wanting to get into road riding

Planet X 9/10

Versatile and ridiculously good value for money – a winner

Cotic 9/10

Snappy handling, individual looks, cool and very desirable frameset – the price is pretty nifty too