



Biketest

First look

Versatile aluminium all-rounder with disc brakes, decent clearances, and practical touches



SIMON WITHERS

Simon has been a cycling journalist for over 25 years

Comfort, not speed

Road bikes don't have to be designed for racing. **Simon Withers** tests long-distance all-rounders from Spa Cycles and Cannondale

There's more than one way to design a comfortable road bike for year-round riding, club runs, sportive or audax events, and commuting. The two test bikes both have 28mm tyres, a carbon fork, rack and mudguard mounts, and geometry that's designed for long days out rather than racing. But the similarities pretty much end there.

Spa Cycles' Steel Audax 105 is a traditional take on the endurance road bike, with skinny steel tubes, rim brakes, and a name that underscores what it's for. Cannondale's Synapse Sora typifies modern trends, featuring much larger diameter aluminium tubes and disc brakes. While there is a difference in price, both bikes look to be good value. Spa's bikes always are, and Cannondale's Synapse is only £150 more than in 2018 – a nice surprise in these inflation-ravaged days.

Frame & fork

Spa's Steel Audax has a TIG-welded Reynolds 725 chromoly frame, though all sizes except the 50cm model have a carbon-bladed fork with a straight

1 1/8in aluminium steerer. The test bike's fork steerer had been left long, which results in a lower-back-friendly ride that's good for urban riding and touring. It's excellent for seeing and being seen but you could cut down the steerer – or run more of the spacers above the stem – for a lower and more athletic riding position. The frame's rear triangle has separate mounts for the rack and mudguards, and the chainstay bridge is mudguard ready.

While the TIG-welding isn't quite the neatest I've seen, I don't doubt its functionality. The frame should last a lifetime as the steel is 'ED coated'; this 'electrophoretic deposition' ensures a uniform thickness of paint. The finish is excellent: beautifully deep and lustrous.

There's clearance for 28mm tyres with mudguards. Even without 'guards you'd struggle to fit tyres wider than 32mm, so it's best suited to tarmac, smooth tracks,