

## Chris Boardman Pro **£999.99**

### FRAME

Up front, you notice immediately the chunky internal headset gracing both top and bottom races of the short head tube; a nice touch which gives a quality feel straight away. A gusset at the top of the down tube leads down the oversized tube to a slight ovalising at the bottom bracket. The only other tube shaping occurs on the top tube, which is heavily squashed as it emerges from the head tube, rounding as it reaches the seat tube. Chunky seatstays wiggle for tyre clearance, while straight, but flattened, chainstays do the same below.

Nicely finished welds and a solid-feeling paintjob seal the deal. The ride of the frame is given a bit of extra spring with the use of triple-butted main tubes and double-butted chain and seatstays, as well as hacking yet a few more grams off the overall weight.

### SUSPENSION

Money-saving clearly wasn't the object when Boardman specced the forks — Reba Race aren't cheap, but are worth the extra few quid. Their 3.5lb weight ticks another box, and the myriad of adjustments should keep you busy and well-tuned, while the lockout gate allows you to specify exactly what impact will drive them out of lockout and into suspension mode. The rebound and compression damping are also adjustable, and the action was superb on the trail.

### WHEELS

There's no obvious stinting on the wheels

either, with extra smooth Formula cartridge-bearing hubs tied onto beautifully finished and eyeletted Ritchey WCS rims, via stainless double-butted spokes. We have always liked the tread pattern on Conti Explorer tyres, so it was nice to see a 2.1 version specced here, as it provided a sure-footed grip when the going got slippery.

### GROUPSET

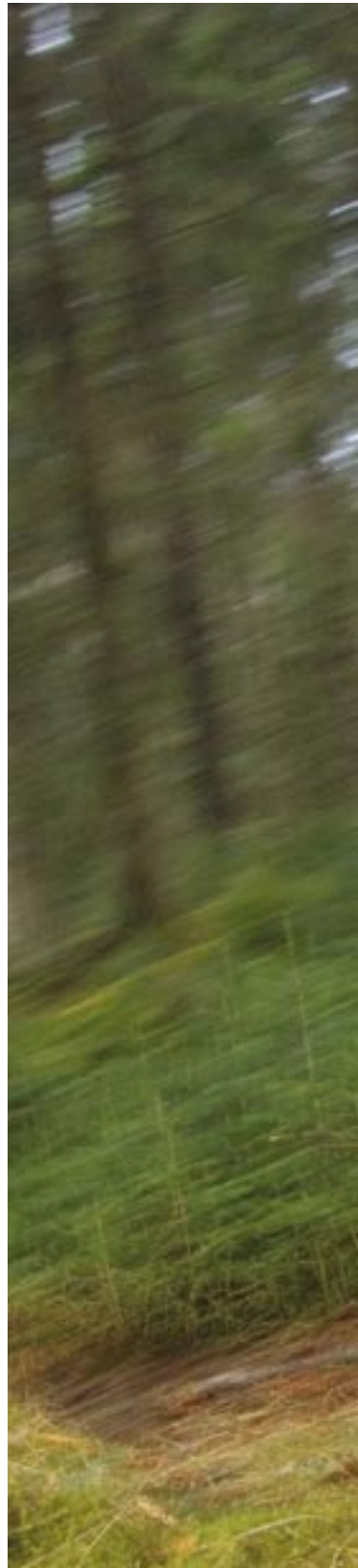
With high-end SRAM populating the groupset department (X-9 shifters pushed on an X-9 front mech, and X-0 rear), the shifting is nothing short of superb, with accuracy and power as soon as

you hit the shifter. The Avid Juicy 7s performed superbly, with a lovely, smooth lever action and predictable pad contact every time, effecting some superb stopping power in the wet or dry. All this adds up to a bike that just works very, very well, with every turn, brake and shift the best it could be. One thing though — how did they manage to spec a SRAM X-0 rear mech at this price?

### COMPONENTS

As with all the other areas of the bike, the components are almost unreasonably high spec. Ritchey WCS bars, stem and seatpost sport a fine finish and contribute greatly to the low overall weight. The bars are very wide at 27 inches, but that opens up the possibility of some of your own fettling later. The saddle is a branded Cboardman, and has a nice length to allow plenty of position shifting on the trail.

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Juicy 7s provide predictable power every time



High-end SRAM populates the groupset



And there's no stinting on the wheelset, either



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### PERFORMANCE

We literally did a double take when the Boardman first came out the box; the spec was almost too good to be plausible! From the Reba Race fork through to the SRAM X-0 mech, they really don't seem to have stinted anywhere on this bike. Of course this showed on the scales and ultimately in the ride of the bike. Everything worked crisply and perfectly — the Juicy 7s performed superbly and the gunshot clicks of the X-9 shifters left you in no doubt that your gears were on the move. There is always the question of where the money has come from of course, and logically it must be the frame to a certain extent. The simple fact of it, though, was that it worked, and worked just fine. With a reasonably stretched cockpit and short head tube it felt quite racy, but the wide Ritchey bars kept some good leverage in the steering so it didn't lose out too much on technical riding. Downhills were entertaining, but nothing you couldn't get used to.

### VERDICT

There really was very little not to like about the Boardman. From the excellent spec to the purposeful riding position, everyone who threw a leg over it instantly took a liking to it. The low weight made climbing a joy when combined with the racy position, and while technical riding was a bit more challenging than on a more relaxed frame, it was more than manageable. The best compliment it got was from a few riders who commented how pleased they would be if they had spent their £1,000 on this bike. And at the end of the day, that's what it's all about.

