

JAMIS XENITH SL

Jamis re-engineered their Xenith SL for 2008, and it shows. The name of the bike is an obvious reference to the word zenith, meaning the highest point. With the added "SL," it better be super light. It's easy to name a bike, but does the Xenith SL live up to that moniker?

The Xenith SL is an ultra high-modulus, carbon fiber monocoque designed frame. Jamis' obvious goal was to create a light weight frame. They accomplished this by using a lightweight protective clearcoat instead of paint, and carbon fiber dropouts, with the exception of the replaceable, drive-side aluminum dropout. While these tweaks by themselves don't make a big difference, when combined, they start to reduce frame weight. Jamis claims that some frame sizes come in at under 850 grams. Not too long ago, 900 grams was the magic number for frame weight. The matte-black pipes of the Xenith SL are engineered for stresses occurring in particular areas. The down tube and top tube are shaped in what is called a "tri-oval" – that's market-speak for oblong tubes. Beyond the marketing terminology is actual function. The shape of the tubes optimizes lateral rigidity while still providing comfort. The chain stays are asymmetrical, again in an effort to reduce road vibrations that can travel up the tubes as well as stiffening the back end for the stresses it must endure in a full sprint. The bottom bracket area was also stiffened this year to make a solid platform to put the power to the pedals. Not to be overlooked, the fork is a full carbon monocoque with carbon fiber dropouts.

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

With the big beefy tubes and monocoque frame, I expected a rather harsh ride. Then we weighed the

complete bike. The XL sized Xenith SL, kitted out with the SRAM Red group, Zipp 404 tubulars, Easton stem, seat post and handlebar, without pedals, came in at 13.7 pounds. Seeing that number, I thought this might be a lightweight noodle, something only suitable to post up with at my local coffee shop and brag about how light it is. My first ride was our local seven-mile climb. With the bike, now with pedals, coming in over 14 pounds, I expected to be able to push it into my red-zone with ease. I was not disappointed. I pounded the pedals with abandon, hoping to gain some last minute fitness before I hit the road to start covering the races. The Xenith SL surged with every stroke of the pedals. I had purposely postponed testing this bike right away so I could have the excuse of racing it during the beginning of my season. The expression that racing is the hardest form of testing is true. That is why you often see prototype components at early season races. Case in point: 2007 Tour de Georgia, "sharp-eyed" Schamber spotted rough looking SRAM shifters on then Saunier Duval rider David Millar's Scott bike. These were in fact the first incarnation of the Red group. Now fully refined, SRAM is classifying the Red group as their top-of-the-line group. I'm no stranger to SRAM shifting, so I wasn't too concerned about throwing it into the deep end by racing with it.

Once the gun sounded, I charged through the first turn, elbow to elbow with the rest of the local racing heroes. The Xenith SL proved to be a nimble handler. Leaning into a downhill 90° turn at speed, with riders either side of me, was a breeze. In a tight situation like that, the last thing I needed was a bike that tended to wander off my chosen path. Smooth as silk, we took the turns, lap after lap. When it was

ANGLES

Measurements in centimeters [TT= top tube; SA= seat angle; HA= head angle]

SIZE	48	51	54	56	58	61
TT	51.4	52.9	54.4	56.5	58	59
SA	73°	73°	73°	73°	73°	73°
HA	72.5°	73°	73°	73°	73°	73°

down to the closing loops, I needed to move up and place myself in the top five riders. Picking my way through the middle of the peloton, I moved up place by place. The bike made me feel confident enough to slide into a position that I might have normally balked at. Charging out of the last turn, about 400 meters to the finish line, I took my normal hand position when using SRAM shifters: Palms in the drops; fingers wrapped around the pulled back shifter. In this position, a quick inward turn of the wrist is all that is needed to shift down, critical when you're bar to bar with the competition. As the speed ramped up, the Xenith SL surged for the line. With a quick twist of my wrist, I was able to shift up and make my thrust for the line. While I didn't win, I realized that the Xenith SL is a true racing machine.

LAST CALL

The Xenith SL is another bike that has changed the notion that a lightweight frame means a flexible ride. This couldn't be farther from the truth. The one curious feature of the specifications is the choice of gearing. The big ring is a 52 and the inner is a 38 tooth, in contrast to the usual 53/39 rings. For me, the missing tooth on the rings wasn't an issue. The SRAM Red's smallest cog is an 11, more than suitable for most applications.

With all top of the line components and a complete bike that weighs in at 13.7 pounds, the Xenith SL lives up to its name. *✍*



THE LOW DOWN

Price: \$6500
 Weight: 13.7 lbs. (61cm)
 Sizes: 48, 51, 54, 56, 58, 61cm
 Color(s): Matte Black
 Information: jamisbikes.com

Chassis
 Frame: Monocoque high modulus carbon fiber
 Fork: Full carbon fiber monocoque

Wheelset
 Wheels: Zipp 404 carbon tubular
 Tires: Vittoria Corsa Evo-CX tubular

Cockpit
 Brake levers/shifters: SRAM Red
 Brakes: SRAM Red
 Handlebar: Easton EC90 Equipe SLX
 Stem: Easton EA90
 Headset: Cane Creek
 Saddle: Selle San Marco Aspide
 Seatpost: Easton EC90

Drivetrain
 Crankset: FSA K-Force Light
 Bottom Bracket: FSA w/ceramic bearings
 Cassette: SRAM Red
 Chain: KMC X10SL
 Derailleurs (F/R): SRAM Red