

NORCO CRR SL

This year the Norco CRR SL integrates a new 890g (for 52cm) C8 carbon SL frame. It's a significant step-up from the previous model and much lighter too. You get some big bang for the buck considering that many sub-900g frames would put this complete bike in a whole other price point category. True to Norco's fashion: you get a great complete package for less money. Considering that the likes of Svein Tuft and Symmetrics rides this machine, you have to believe that something is working!

HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Go back to the June 2006 issue of ROAD and compare the CRR rig of then to the current issue and plenty of things have changed. No longer does it house 25 Norco logos on its body, nor does it incorporate a small airfoil on the back of the seat tube, but instead the CRR has been rounded and smoothed in certain areas. One notable update is the cable routing channel on the belly of the top tube and no more bulging of the down tube and top tube. It still retains the wishbone design and a much beefier bottom bracket area and head tube. The chain stays too, have been altered with less of a "bow" or "swoop" (for lack of a better term). The chain and seat stays still do maintain that hourglass design and is a design brought back from the previous model.

The specification has changed in a few areas. The wheels are now Mavic Ksyrium Elite's and the cranks that FSA SL-K Light's. It is definitely an upgrade from the Ritchey Protocol's and Truvativ Rouleur's. The geometry seems similar, though I felt as if there was a slight slope to the new frame design: something

that I like. There are a few bikes out there that are not as known as their competitors and the CRR is one of a few that I can name with the Kuota KOM and the Felt F3 (though now with Slipstream Felt will gain crazy exposure). You go into the Profile with a slight preconceived impression of uncertainty because it's not the notable name. We are all guilty of this with televisions, stereos and the like. Once we read about it, do a little research and, if you are lucky enough, take it for a test ride, the impression changes. It happened with the aforementioned bikes and it happened with the CRR SL. Sure, I rode it about a year ago, but the memory is lost. Revisiting the 2008 version triggered the same responses I had then: it's a quick, nimble ride that is light, but solid at the same time. At just 14.9 pounds it was a dream climbing bike, especially for someone who always seems to be in the middle of "decent" and "out of" shape. The frame plays the major role in the performance, and is the unsung, workhorse hero that does the work, but gets little credit. With Shimano Dura-Ace wrapping it, the CRR SL worked flawlessly. Every shift was met and when smashing the FSA cranks for all they were worth, the acceleration was clean, steady and consistent. I've used this crank set before and though I prefer the compact version, the 53/39 still turned my tired, old legs. Here's the Ritchey gear again. Is it me or is the Ritchey WCS stuff showing up on every other complete machine out there? The one-bolt seat post is on level with the Bontrager and Easton bits with manipulation a snap. The WCS bars are clean and comfortable with great ergonomics that allowed me to venture into the drops for a while. Climbing is a notable strong characteristic of this bike, and every other discipline worked well too. Like I said in

ANGLES

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

SIZE	S	M	L	XL
TT	54.5	56	57.5	59
SA	73.5°	73°	72.5°	72.5°
HA	72°	72.5°	72.5°	72.5°

the profile from two years ago, this bike is quick. This model seems to be stiffer than the previous version and the performance certainly reflects this.

It's getting real tough to tell the difference between one bike and the other these days and in particular between this frame and the next. You can look at the stress tests from now until midnight, but the reality is that your overall decision will likely come down to the almighty dollar. The CRR possesses the latest of the latest in technology and has refined the CRR extensively over the period of a year or so. Since it costs less than \$5,000, but still boasts a top level specification, I am hard-pressed to find a fault anywhere on this machine as a whole!

LAST CALL

I like the look much better this year than the last model I profiled. Fewer logos and a burlier frame design set this one apart. I think the performance has been enhanced too with the updated frame design. It reminds me of the Scott CR1 in looks and shape and has similar reactions with notable stiffness and responsiveness. Still not prevalent in the US scene and known more for mountain bikes, Norco is that "ringer" bike like the Kuota that may surprise you. However, the Norco is in a tough pricepoint between \$4,500-\$5,000 that has stiff competition and from more known brands. Because the CRR SL has a boatload of sweet specification mated to the solid frame set, it's should fall in line somewhere near the top of your "wanted" list. *R*



THE LOW DOWN

Price: \$4,750
 Weight: 14.9 lbs. (M)
 Sizes: S, M, L, XL
 Color(s): Black w/yellow and white accents
 Information: norco.com

Chassis
 Frame: Venus C8 SL monocoque
 Fork: Venus C8 Carbon

Wheelset
 Wheels: Mavic Ksyrium Ellite
 Tires: Hutchinson Fusion2 Kevlar

Cockpit
 Brake levers/shifters: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Brakes: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Handlebar: Ritchey WCS
 Stem: Ritchey WCS
 Headset: FSA
 Saddle: Selle Italia PROlink
 Seatpost: Ritchey WCS Carbon

Drivetrain
 Crankset: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Bottom Bracket: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Cassette: Shimano Dura-Ace
 Chain: KMC
 Derailleurs (F/R): Shimano Dura-Ace