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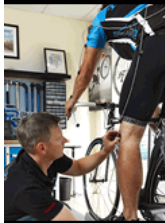
Good Campag-equipped performance bike at an excellent price

Weight: 7840g Contact: www.comtat.co.uk

By [Roger Blessed](#) - Posted on **01 March 2010**



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What do you know about Comtat? Not a whole lot, we're guessing. It's a new London-based brand that sources carbon frames from the Far East and builds them up in the UK at competitive prices. As with Planet-X and Ribble, for example, you can either decide on the spec yourself from a wide selection of parts on offer, or go for a complete bike option.

The Télégraphe is the most expensive of Comtat's four frame designs - it's £850 for the frame, fork and headset - and it's available in two different complete bike builds. First there's the Pro spec, with a high-end Campag Super Record groupset and Fast Forward F4R tubulars (£3,699). And then there's our one, which is the £1,799 Team Plus with a Campag Centaur gruppo and Fulcrum Racing 5s.

The frame is painted 12k carbon fibre built to a fairly aggressive road race geometry. It's a distinctive-looking piece of work with a beefy down tube that's squared-off teardrop in profile - if that makes any sense. Call it a round-cornered triangular profile if you prefer. Whichever takes your fancy, it's chunky reaching across the full width of the bottom bracket shell and fixing it firmly in position.

The head tube certainly errs towards the short side - 170mm on our 58cm model - putting you into a low and racy ride position. That's not so extreme that you'll get backache as soon as you climb aboard but it's a couple of centimetres shorter than, say, a similarly sized Specialized Roubaix which is designed for long ride comfort. You do get 3cm of headset spacers to play with, though, to fine-tune the front-end height.

Taller riders should note that our 58cm frame is the largest size available, and it comes with a 56.2cm effective top tube - which really isn't all that big. The other sizes are 49, 51, 53 and 55cm.

The lower headset bearing is 1.5in to add a little extra stiffness up front while deep and boxy chainstays do a similar job out back. In contrast to this oversized-ness, the seatstays are super-skinny. Think Posh Spice after a bout of flu - they're like spaghetti. The rear brake cable heads backwards inside the almost-horizontal top tube, the decals are protected by a good layer of lacquer and the finish quality is good throughout.

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Comtat's straight-legged fork is 12K carbon too – full carbon; no hidden alloy steerer – and it comes in black for the full-on stealthy effect, or white if you want a bit of contrast.

As we said, you can choose your spec for yourself if you like with groupsets from Shimano, Campag and SRAM, wheels from Campag, Easton, Fast Forward, Zipp and Fulcrum... you get the idea – there are plenty of options available. You just select it on the Comtat website and press 'go'.

In the Team Plus build you get Centaur, which is Campagnolo's fifth level groupset – solid, reliable 10-speed performance with a few cheeky little flourishes like the carbon weave on the brake levers and the outer plate of the rear mech. The Fulcrum Racing 5 wheels, designed to stand up to daily use, are a good match while 3T provide the alloy stem and carbon seatpost and bars.

The ride

Comtat might not have a long and illustrious racing pedigree but you can't argue with the Télégraphe's ride – it's quick and lively from the off. Stamp on the pedals and it responds keenly – as you'd expect from a bike weighing in at an impressively light 7.84kg (17.2lb).

It's a stiff frame with very little sideways flex around the big bottom bracket junction. Get out of the saddle to apply full-torque and it obstinately refuses to budge offline. It's a similar story elsewhere whether you're wrestling with the front end on a tough climb or haring into a fast downhill bend. We tried all our favourite patent-pending aggressive moves but the Télégraphe stood up to them all without flinching.

The Fulcrum Racing 5s aren't the lightest wheels ever but they're a good option for everyday use because of their reliability. The bearings run smooth, the slim, aero spokes cut through the air well, and they're pretty strong too. We were throwing the bike around and banking it as far over as we could, and although there was a little movement in the rims there was never so much that we suffered any brake rub. Although they lack the all-out zip and climbing prowess of true lightweights, they're solid all-rounders and we've found in the past that they tend to stay true as you rack up the miles.

As for the Campagnolo Centaur kit, well, it just keeps on performing. The mechs are precise, light and hardly ever need adjusting. The levers provide positive shifting and are superbly comfortable. And the skeleton brakes – dual pivot at the front, single pivot at the back – provide an impressive amount of power so you have the confidence to wing it on the downhills.

Whether you prefer the Campag shift action to that of Shimano or SRAM is always going to come down to personal preference, but you have to say that this is superbly engineered kit that barely loses out to its more costly stablemates in terms of weight or function.

We got in dozens of shortish 1-2hr rides aboard the Comtat and several longer rides of over 5hrs too and we never had any worries on comfort. There's enough vibration damping in the frame and forks to keep the ride smooth without any spine-locking rattling as soon as you hit pockmarked road surfaces, and Selle Italia's SLR saddle is way more forgiving than its slimline looks might suggest.

Campag's Vari-Cushion silicone hoods are comfy too and a small amount of movement in the 3T Rotundo Team bars' drops takes the sting out of any potholes when you're down there.

Verdict

Good Campag-equipped performance bike at an excellent price

road.cc test report

Make and model: Comtat Telegraphe Team Plus

Size tested: 58cm

About the bike

State the frame and fork material and method of construction. List the components used to build up the bike.

Frame: carbon monocoque

Fork: full carbon

Groupset: Campagnolo Centaur 10-spd

Wheels: Fulcrum Racing 5

Handlebar: 3T Rotundo Team

Stem: 3T Arx Team

Seatpost: 3T Doric Team

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Saddle: Selle Italia SLR XP
 Tyres: Continental GP 4000S
 Pedals: none

Tell us what the bike is for, and who it's aimed at. What do the manufacturers say about it? How does that compare to your own feelings about the bike?

Comtat say, "A very aggressive geometry and super stiffness in the bottom bracket means this has a true racing pedigree be it climbing or sprinting. Oversized downtube and extremely thin seatstays add to the beauty of this frame."

Frame and fork

Overall rating for frame and fork

8/10

Tell us about the build quality and finish of the frame and fork?

Both are good - there's rarely much to worry about on a carbon frame these days. The cable stops are pop riveted in place securely, there's nothing nasty lurking inside the tubes, and the decals are protected by a layer of lacquer.

Tell us about the materials used in the frame and fork?

Frame is a 12K carbon composite monocoque. The fork is 12K carbon too

Tell us about the geometry of the frame and fork?

Pretty aggressive, racy geometry - but nothing too wild.

How was the bike in terms of height and reach? How did it compare to other bikes of the same stated size?

It's small for its stated size. The 58cm model has an effective top tube of 56.8cm, which is fairly short, and a 17cm head tube - again, pretty short.

A Specialized Tarmac, for example, with a 58cm seat tube (measured from the centre of the bottom bracket to the top of the seat tube) has a horizontal top tube length of 60cm and a 23cm head tube.

A Boardman Team Carbon with a slightly shorter seat tube - 57.5cm - has a 58.5cm effective top tube and an 18.5cm head tube.

Riding the bike

Was the bike comfortable to ride? Tell us how you felt about the ride quality.

Comfortable enough. It's a race-centric machine so it's not designed to offer the most relaxed ride ever but we had no worries getting the big miles in. The slimline Selle Italia SLR saddle is much more comfortable than it looks thanks to a reasonable amount of flex in the hull while 3T's bar tape provides effective cushioning up front.

Did the bike feel stiff in the right places? Did any part of the bike feel too stiff or too felxible?

The Télégraphe is certainly a stiff frame. There's very little flex up front when you pitch you get out of the saddle and pitch yourself forward for a power climb and the bottom bracket stays firmly in position when you start throwing your weight about.

How did the bike transfer power? Did it feel efficient?

It's efficient, yes. Combined with the light weight, this means it accelerates briskly and climbs with a spring in its step.

Was there any toe-clip overlap with the front wheel? If so, was it a problem?

None at all.

How would you describe the steering? Was it lively, neutral or unresponsive? Middling - neutral.

Tell us some more about the handling. How did the bike feel overall? Did it do particular things well or badly?



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It's a lively, energetic bike that likes to go fast, but it's not at all difficult to control. The steering is spot on so you can whack it into top gear on the descents and go for it without worrying too much about overcooking it.

Rate the bike for efficiency of power transfer:
8/10

Rate the bike for acceleration:
8/10

Rate the bike for sprinting:
8/10

Rate the bike for high speed stability:
8/10

Rate the bike for cruising speed stability:
8/10

Rate the bike for low speed stability:
8/10

Rate the bike for flat cornering:
8/10

Rate the bike for cornering on descents:
8/10

Rate the bike for climbing:
8/10

The drivetrain

Rate the drivetrain for performance:
8/10

Rate the drivetrain for durability:
8/10

Rate the drivetrain for weight:
8/10

Rate the drivetrain for value:
8/10

Wheels and tyres

Rate the wheels and tyres for performance:
7/10

Rate the wheels and tyres for durability:
8/10

Rate the wheels and tyres for weight:
7/10

Rate the wheels and tyres for comfort:
8/10

Rate the wheels and tyres for value:
8/10

Controls

Rate the controls for performance:
8/10

Rate the controls for durability:
8/10

Rate the controls for weight:

8/10

Rate the controls for comfort:

9/10

Rate the controls for value:

8/10

Your verdict

Did you enjoy riding the bike? Yes, a quick, reliable ride

Would you consider buying the bike? It's such a crowded market place, but value for money means it's worth a serious look

Would you recommend the bike to a friend? Yes, see above

Overall rating: 8/10

About the tester

Age: 36 Height: 184cm Weight: 74kg

I usually ride: Specialized Tarmac Pro My best bike is: Van Nicholas Aeolus

I've been riding for: Over 20 years I ride: Most days I would class myself as: Expert

I regularly do the following types of riding: time trialling, commuting, sportives, general fitness riding, mtb,

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Great product but bad bad name--sorry!

Com--tat???



zaskar at live.co.uk



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