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**17 KUOTA Kredo Ultra \$6,000**  
*Hits the sleek-speed sweet spot*

Most riders will know at first sight if the Kredo Ultra is for them. Kuota likes new-school Italian styling, with showy tube contours, bold graphics and clean lines, which on the Kredo Ultra are aided by internal cable routing—even the handlebar has cable sleeves so there's no bunching under the tape. If the style speaks to you, know that the performance is there to match. ¶ The Kredo Ultra's ideal habitat would be technical circuit races to showcase its best attributes, which include supremely efficient power transfer, agile handling and intuitive, rock-stable cornering. Yet, in the continually evolving trend of top-level race bikes that don't beat you up, the Ultra, a lighter and stiffer update of Kuota's '07 monocoque Kredo, is also the kind of bike that rewards four hours of pouring your soul into the pedals. The compact geometry, oversize bottom-bracket area, asymmetrical chainstays and seatmast with micropost (you can cut the mast to fit or

leave it as is for greater adjustability) all contribute to the instant responsiveness, whether on flats or standing during steep climbs. For a race bike, the road feel is on the stiff side of forgiving. Two testers, each weighing less than 150 pounds, found the Kredo a bit harsh on heinous road surfaces, while another said, "on the spectrum of this breed, some bikes are more forgiving, some are less forgiving—this Kuota is right in the middle." **BUY IT IF:** You want a well-mannered race machine with aggressive styling. **FORGET IT IF:** Your rides include long stretches of broken pavement—you'll want something more plush. **SIZES:** S, M (tested), L, XL, XXL. **WEIGHT:** 15.0 lb. (M) **FRAME:** Kuota carbon **FORK:** Kuota carbon **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** SRAM Force group, crankset (53/39), cassette (11-23); Kuota carbon stem, Katch handlebar; Reynolds Assault 46 C wheelset; San Marco Aspide saddle—*L.M.*

**18 TOMAC Carbide XC2 \$3,699**  
*Johnny's back—and ready to rock*

After a three-year hiatus, Tomac Mountain Bikes returns with a vengeance—and a new cross-country bike design. The Carbide XC2's high-modulus-carbon monocoque front triangle uses size-specific layouts for a properly tuned ride. Alloy chainstays provide rigidity and better resistance to chain-slap damage, while the pivotless carbon seatstays offer less weight and increase lateral rigidity. The Carbide XC2 uses the same frame as the XTR-equipped XC1 but has a more affordable LX/XT parts pick. ¶ Former world champion mountain biker John Tomac was known for his ability to attack climbs and shred descents, and the Carbide has the same attributes. The efficient suspension and rigid frame let the bike climb so well that we used the FOX shock's firming ProPedal switch on only the smoothest ascents, although it does beg for a lockout fork to match the efficient-pedaling rear end. Descents that are a handful on a 90mm-travel cross-country bike

pose less of a challenge on the XC2, thanks to the predictable 70.5-degree head angle and flex-resistant front end. Each of the XC2's components are strong performers, but together they add a fair amount of weight that keeps the bike from realizing its full potential. For those who want a ride inspired by a legend, the XC2 is a great trail bike built around a fantastic frame and is worthy of parts upgrades. **BUY IT IF:** You enjoy the ups as much as the downs. **FORGET IT IF:** You're short and want a standard bottle-cage location; size small has a bottom-of-the-down-tube bottle mount. **SIZES:** S, M, L (tested), XL. **WEIGHT:** 27.1 lb. (L) **FRAME:** High-modulus carbon, FOX Float RP2 shock; 90mm travel **FORK:** FOX 32 F-Series FR w/ 100mm travel **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano LX RapidFire shifters, XT derailleurs; Truvativ Stylo 3.3 crankset; Avid Juicy 5 brakes w/ 185mm rotors; FSA XC300 wheels; Kenda Tomac Nevegal folding 2.10-in. tires—*R.K.*

**SCHWINN'S CARBON PELOTON PRO IS A MARVELOUS BIKE. THE RIDE IS SHARP AND STIFF ENOUGH TO QUALIFY AS RACEWORTHY, YET PLUSH ENOUGH FOR ALL-DAY RIDING. IT'S NEITHER WHIPPY OR SLUGGISH, RESPONDS TO YOUR INPUT RATHER THAN FORCING YOU TO REACT TO IT AND NEVER GETS IN YOUR WAY.**

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**19 SCHWINN Peloton Pro \$2,300**  
*Top-end quality comes to the masses*

For years now, our most experienced testers have been noting that the top offerings from almost every major bike manufacturer and the best independents are creeping closer to each other in performance: They're all sinfully stiff, criminally light (when measured against the UCI's weight limit) and instantly communicate that floating-on-air-yet-railed-ride sensation. ¶ And now we come to the midrange. Schwinn's carbon Peloton Pro is a marvelous bike, especially in the context of its \$2,300 price. The ride is sharp and stiff enough to qualify as raceworthy, yet plush enough for all-day riding. It's neither whippy nor sluggish, responds to your input rather than forcing you to react to it and never gets in your way—if you lose a sprint or blow a corner it's because of your legs and skill, not the bike. ¶ The trickle-down of quality has spread to a new range; the Peloton Pro frame rides a lot like its midpriced brethren, whether that's a revered

marquee such as the Pinarello FP5 (\$3,450 with Dura-Ace and FSA) or a scrapper such as the Jamis Xenith Comp (\$1,850 with Ultegra and 105). That means you get to make your choice based not on finding the one bike that fits your budget, but on preferences such as shifting systems or whether you want a bike fully kitted for racing or one for slightly less with decent training wheels. **BUY IT IF:** You want a bike for racing, centuries, and group rides, without components you need to pamper. **FORGET IT IF:** You're more Turley than table wine. **SIZES:** S, M (tested), L, XL. **WEIGHT:** 17.2 lb. (M) **FRAME:** Schwinn 'N'Litened Black Label carbon fiber **FORK:** Black Label Mono monocoque carbon fiber **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** SRAM Rival brake and shift levers, derailleurs, brakes, crankset (50/34) and 10-speed cassette (11-26); Ritchey Pro handlebar; Mavic Aksium wheelset; Schwalbe Stelvio 23c tires—*Bill Strickland*

**20 SPECIALIZED Ruby Pro \$4,400**  
*Beauty outside—and in*

Beneath the Ruby's glamour-girl appearance you'll find a down-to-earth, built-for-performance ride. It starts with the frame's light weight—a big asset as you pedal up a hill or wind up for a sprint. The Roval wheels, Specialized's house brand, also feel light and snappy. The low weight is complemented by the handling, which is on the nimble side of stable; a little lean in the saddle smoothly changes your line. Yet you can sit up and take in the scenery without fear of being bucked to the pavement because you didn't see a road divot. ¶ The carbon monocoque frame transmits plenty of info on the road, letting you feel when the surface changes, but keeps hand- and butt-harrasing vibration to a minimum. (The damping Zertz gel inserts in the fork and seatstays help, too.) The Ruby Pro's carbon isn't quite the top-level composite used on Specialized's S-Works Ruby, which is a higher-quality material that provides nearly steel-frame

stiffness combined with some yield, but it's an efficient, almost lively, incarnation of composite. Specialized claims the Az1 construction method aids the overall stiffness of the frame also. ¶ The Ruby Pro shows that Specialized succeeds in producing quality bikes for women—they're fast and performance-oriented, and are sure to make more women cyclists happy—and keep them riding. **BUY IT IF:** You want a lightweight, all-around performance bike. **FORGET IT IF:** You're a dedicated racer, or a dedicated cruiser; this bike isn't a specialist. **SIZES:** 44, 48, 51, 54 (tested), 56cm. **WEIGHT:** 16.3 lb. (54cm) **FRAME:** Specialized FACT 8r carbon w/ Zertz inserts **FORK:** Specialized FACT Az1 monocoque carbon w/ Zertz inserts **COMPONENT HIGHLIGHTS:** Shimano Dura-Ace levers, derailleurs, Ultegra brakes; SRAM 10-speed cassette (11-28); Specialized Pro carbon crankset (50x34); Roval Fusee wheelset—*Christine Bucher*