

BIKETEST

ARCALIS ARC 01

A good value from a new player

➔ In 2009, the Pyrenean climb of the Arcalis was the stage in which Alberto Contador rode away from Lance Armstrong, putting the first nail in the coffin of the Texan's hopes of winning his eighth Tour de France. With that impressive ride, Contador made a huge impact on the peloton. California-based upstart Arcalis is trying to succeed where many before them have failed: making an impact on the bike market as a consumer-direct brand. Arcalis believes there's still room for another bike brand, but one that offers bikes competitive with the best out there—just at a better value. With Canyon, Europe's largest and most respected consumer-direct brand as their model, Arcalis has set their sights high.

THE FRAME

The ARC 01's frame has a myriad of tube shapes, starting with a robust 1 1/8- to 1 1/2-inch tapered headtube. According to Arcalis, "Having the front of the bike stiff was a priority since so much of the bike's feel and handling comes from the fork and headtube. We wanted to ensure it had adequate stiffness."

Next is the quasi-aero downtube, which is not as dramatic as the Specialized Venge's, yet still gives little horizontally for the wind to grasp. But any potential aerodynamic benefit in a headwind that the downtube's shaping may serve is more than likely negated by the wind's first point of contact: the large head tube (not to mention the external downtube derailleur cable

routing). Nevertheless, the ARC 01 could conceivably have an advantage over round-tube competitors in crosswind conditions.

Both the carbon chainstays and seatstays get infused with a dose of organic material: flax fibers. The fibers are similar to cotton but are stronger and more flexible. According to Arcalis, the flax fibers provide better vibration damping than carbon alone. Museeuw Bikes garnered a lot of attention a few years back when they introduced a flax/carbon blend to their frames, which they also claim can dampen road shock better than carbon alone.

The ARC 01 offers something else not many other brands do: an integrated seatpost (ISP) design. While an ISP can end up being lighter and stiffer than a traditional seatpost, it is also very limiting due to the fact that once the seat tube is cut, there is only 5mm of height adjustment possible. If you want to sell the bike down the road, you'll need to make sure you find someone your same height or slightly shorter since you can always cut the seat tube lower, but adding back on to it isn't an option.

THE PARTS

The ARC 01 comes as a frameset (\$1799), as well as two build options: SRAM Red (\$3999) and SRAM Force (\$2999). Or, if you want a fully custom build, you can choose their "Concierge Custom Build," in which you can pick just about any components you like. Our test model had SRAM Force, which

included Easton's aluminum EA-90 stem and EA-70 handlebar, in addition to TRP brake calipers. The Italians snuck into the build to provide the new Fizik Antares Versus saddle, which quickly ended up making its way onto our favorite saddle list due to the comfortable relief-channel design. Another first for us were the ROL wheels. Their D'Huez model weighed in just shy of 1500 grams, which isn't too shabby for aluminum 38mm-deep wheels.

THE RIDE

It came as no surprise to us during our first ride on the ARC 01 that the front end radiated stiffness, which gave it a peppy feel when torquing on the handlebars to accelerate up to speed. With such a large headtube junction, we would have been shocked with anything less than uncompromised stiffness.

Bottom bracket stiffness isn't at the same level as the Argon 18 Gallium Pro (reviewed on page 72) or a Specialized Tarmac SL4, but then again, few are. Though not an industry leader in bottom bracket stiffness, the BB30-equipped ARC 01 still had plenty of rigidity to keep even the strongest of testers satisfied when cranking out the watts during hard efforts or when unleashing an explosive sprint to the line.

The ARC 01 has an interesting geometry blend, which gives it a quick feel under acceleration, consistency through the corners and stability at speed. It accomplishes this by using relatively short 40.5mm chainstays for a

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BIKETEST: ARCALIS ARC 01



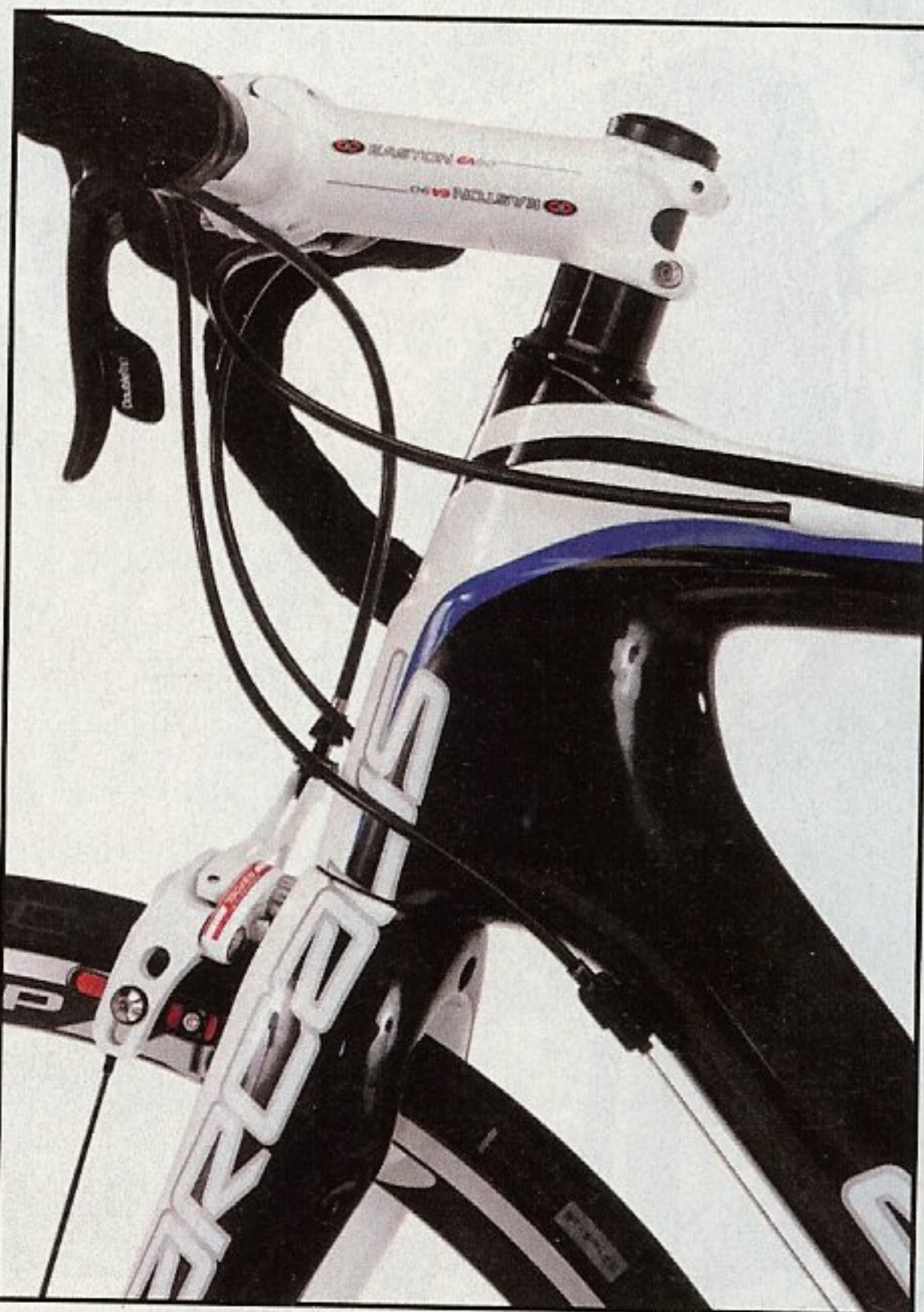
Even with a mid-level build, the Arcalis still came in at a light 15.5 pounds.

size 56cm (same length as a Specialized Tarmac), which gives it the snappy feel when accelerating, but a relaxed 72.6-degree head tube helps the ARC 01 achieve a wheelbase of nearly 100cm. The relaxed head tube angle slows the steering more than the popular 73.5-degree angle of most other race-inspired bikes, but the short rear end balances this out and keeps it agile.

The ride comfort is nothing to write home about. The front end tips the scales to the rough-riding side of things, but falls in line with the current crop of race bikes. While a lot of companies are going back to a smaller-diameter (27.2mm) seatpost in the hopes that it'll provide the vibration damping the frame does not, the ISP design of the ARC 01 doesn't give the same relief. But, if you're like a number of racers out there who like to "feel the road," then the added stiffness won't be a drawback.

THE VERDICT

It will take some time to see if Arcalis is able to accomplish their goal of consumer-direct dominance, but they're off to a positive start with the ARC 01 and their ability to give consumer's just about any custom build they desire at a good price. As is, the ARC 01 will make the majority of competitive riders happy with its weight, stiffness, handling and value. With a few refinements to the frame,



It's all in your head...tube. When it comes to the ARC 01's front-end stiffness, this is definitely true. The 1 1/8- to 1 1/2-inch tapered headtube provides excellent rigidity.

such as internal derailleur cable routing and an option for a traditional seatpost, the ARC 01 could go from a B rating to a solid A. ■

PUNCH LINES

• Integrated seatpost—good for some, bad for others



An integrated seatpost design isn't something we see much of, and while it can add stiffness and reduce weight, it isn't as versatile as a traditional seatpost.

- Race worthy for any fitness level
- Consumer direct, like it or not

STATS

Price: \$3499

Weight: 15.5 pounds

Sizes: 49, 52, 54, 56 (tested), 58cm

www.arcaliscycling.com