

Unapologetically aggressive, Felt's F85 delivers a fast, fluid ride at a very impressive price



FELT F85

£799 > Can Felt's reasonably priced American flyer challenge the bigger names?

This Felt cuts a distinctive swathe through most of the more brightly coloured 2015 bikes, though if the 'Army' shade isn't you, a more muted black is also an option. But the butted aluminium tubing, carbon/alloy fork and Shimano Tiagra kit are all bang on for the money.

The weight is very good too. It's just 220g heavier than the Cannondale CAAD 8 105 tested overleaf, which is 200 quid more expensive. And while that 9.3kg weight doesn't push it into the super-light category, it is on a par with Tour de France-winning bikes as recently as the mid-'90s.

The geometry is very much at the racier end of the spectrum. The frame angles are similar to both the Cannondale CAAD 8 and Specialized's Allez, one of the go-to budget race bikes. All three have pretty classic angles around 73 degrees, but the Felt has a shorter wheelbase than either and

— more noticeably — a 2cm shorter head-tube, just 15cm on our 56cm frame. This head-tube houses a tapered 1¼-1½in steerer, which contributes to a strikingly sharp front end and great cornering. That short wheelbase does mean frame clearances are quite tight, though, making tyres wider than 25mm non-starters.

This aggressive, head-down riding position is still tempered by a decent amount of comfort from a quite modestly priced machine. There's less going on with the tubing than with some frames, for example the seatstays are pretty chunky and straight. But the narrow seat-tube flares out towards the bottom bracket shell and holds a 27.2mm seatpost, which certainly helps with the comfort, as does the decent Felt saddle.

Ten-speed Tiagra isn't quite up there with the 11-speed 105 now found on a lot of £1000 bikes, but it's effective and efficient, and the compact

chainset and 12-28 cassette form a versatile pairing. And though the wheels themselves aren't exceptional, Felt has future-proofed them; not only are they tubeless ready (unusual at this price), but the rear hub is 11-speed compatible.

Elsewhere, Felt's own kit is up to the job, with comfortable, grippy gel bar tape and stylish bar end plugs highlights. The brakes have cartridge callipers too and the Zaffiro Slick tyres performed well during some treacherous testing conditions, though we'd consider something tougher in the long term, or lighter rubber if you're competing.

If your budget doesn't quite stretch to a grand and you're looking for a racy rather than recreational road bike, the F85 really is a flyer.

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HIGHS Super-racy ride for the money
LOWS Average wheels

CYCLING RATING ★★★★★

SPECIFICATION WEIGHT 9.3kg (56cm) **FRAME** 7005 aluminium **FORK** Carbon, aluminium steerer
GEARS Shimano Tiagra 50/34, 12-28 **BRAKES** Unbranded **WHEELS** Felt Road RSL3 tubeless ready
FINISHING KIT Felt bar, stem, 27.2mm aluminium seatpost and saddle, 23mm Vittoria Zaffiro Slick tyres