BIKE WE LIKE

Stunning looks and a revolutionary approach to aerodynamics from Wilier's Cento10 Air

WHAT IS IT?

If you watched the Giro d'Italia back in May this year, you might have spotted the Wilier Cento10 Air being ridden by Wilier Triestina-Southeast's Filippo Pozzato. It's a showcase for the very latest in aero road-bike technology from the illustrious Italian firm, which has launched the bike to commemorate its 110th birthday – hence the name, which is correctly pronounced 'chen-toe dee-ay-chee'.

IT'S A STUNNER, BUT IS IT AS FAST AS IT LOOKS?

In designing the Cento10 Air, Wilier has gone back to the drawing board to consider the issue of aerodynamics. Conventional wisdom has it that tubes need to be as thin as possible and frame clearances as close as possible to allow air to flow smoothly over the frame and wheels, thereby reducing drag. But with the Cento10 Air, Wilier has gone completely the other way, *increasing* the gaps – look at the seatstays, for example, which flare out wide from the junction with the top tube. The idea is to allow air to flow more freely around the rear wheel, avoiding the problem of high pressure caused by air trying to squeeze through tight gaps.

IT'S ALL VERY NEAT – WHERE HAVE THE CABLES GONE?

One of the highlights of the Cento10 Air is the new Alabarda handlebar, a custom carbon monocoque design with integrated stem and flattened top for further aerodynamic advantage. It also has ports to allow all the cables to run internally from the brake levers, and if you choose a model fitted with electronic gearing, the junction box tucks neatly inside the stem. Because this makes the cables less accessible, there's a clever integrated cable adjuster in the down tube for on-the-fly front mech trimming.

ANY OTHER TRICK FEATURES?

The custom-made carbon seatpost has a flat-back profile, and both the seatpost and stem clamps use integrated expanding bolts that lie flush with the surface – small details that further enhance the bike's aerodynamic efficiency. The Mavic Cosmic wheels have a lightweight carbon fairing to help them cut through the air, mated to an alloy rim that's treated with Mavic's proprietary Exalith coating for superior braking performance. And the brakes themselves are Shimano's excellent direct-mount models, in which the pivots are bolted directly to the frame, making them stiffer, lighter and more efficient.

IS IT LIGHT AS WELL AS FAST?

Wilier claims a weight of just 990g for the frame, down from the 1,120g of its

Frame: Carbon monocoque 60ton frame & fork

Groupset: Shimano Ultegra 6800

Chainset: Shimano Ultegra, 52/36

Cassette: Shimano Ultegra, 11-28

Brakes: Shimano Ultegra 6800 Direct Mount

Bars/stem: Alabarda integrated / Carbon monocoque

Seatpost: Ritchey Cento10 Air custom made

Saddle: Selle San Marco Aspide

Wheels: Mavic Cosmic Pro Carbon Exalith

Tyres: Mavic Yksion, 25c

predecessor the Cento1. This isn't thanks to some miraculous new wonder material, but has been achieved simply by refining the lay-up of the carbon, working out which areas need less material and how to arrange the fibres to maximise strength. The result is a frame that's notably stiff and responsive but flies uphill as well as on the flat.

OK, SO HOW MUCH WILL ALL THIS SET ME BACK?

The Cento10 Air is a high-tech pro-level racing bike, so it doesn't come cheap. This Ultegra-equipped model with Mavic Cosmic Pro Carbon Exalith wheels is listed at £4,799, and even the most 'basic' model won't give much change from £4,000. For most of us, that puts it firmly in the luxury/fantasy bracket, but when you're at the business end of the peloton, the advantages a bike like this confers can be the difference between victory and second place – or 'nowhere', as it's better known. 🚲

WILIER CENTO10 AIR
Price: £4,799
Contact: wilier.com

Wilier has gone against conventional wisdom on aerodynamics by *increasing* clearances – at the seatstays, for example – to improve air flow