



First look
Sensible geometry, practical frame fittings and room for 28mm tyres. The components are decent, too



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A shallower head angle and longer chainstays yield a more stable ride
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Tech Spec SPA CYCLES AUDAX MONO

Price: £820 as tested (from £795, frameset £375 at time of writing).
Sizes: 50, 52, 54 (tested), 56, 58, 60cm.

Weight: 9.69kg/21.32lb (inc guards, no pedals).

Frame & fork: TIG-welded, double-butted Reynolds 725 steel frame with 120mm rear-facing dropouts, 68mm threaded bottom bracket, and fittings for rear rack, mudguard and two bottles. Carbon fork with 1 1/8in aluminium steerer, 100mm QR dropouts and mudguard fittings.

Wheels: 28-622 Schwalbe One tyres, Kinlin XC-279 rims [622x17] rims, 32x3 Sapim Race spokes, Sturmey Archer HBT 30 hubs with solid axles & track nuts.

Transmission: no

pedals, 165mm Spa TD-2 chainset with 42t narrow-wide chainring, First Components DX-30 square-taper bottom bracket, 1/8in KMC Rustbuster chain, 1/8in 18t Spa fixed sprocket, 1/8in 18t Sturmey Archer freewheel. One ratio, 63in.

Brakes: TRP RRL-SR levers, Tektro R737 callipers.

Steering & seating:

Spa Cork EVA Gel tape, 380x31.8mm FSA Wing Compact handlebar, 80x6° FSA Omega stem, 1 1/8in FSA Orbit Equipe threadless headset. Spa Navigator saddle, 27.2x350mm FSA layback seatpost, Spa seatpost clamp.

Equipment:

35mm SKS CAB mudguards, two Spa alloy bottle cages.

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They're fitted with Schwalbe One tyres – the rebranded Schwalbe Durano and a decent all-rounder. I'd switch to Schwalbe One Plus (Durano Plus as was) if I were buying an Audax Mono primarily for commuting.

There's some choice with the specification, which is why the test bike has an 80mm stem and a 38cm handlebar: I asked for them. Similarly, I picked the 42/18 gearing because 63in will get me up and down local hills. You get a freewheel as well as a fixed sprocket on the flip-flop hub, and could have a tooth or two's difference between them.

The chainring is a narrow-wide one you normally see as part of 1x drivetrains. While you don't really need this, a narrow-wide ring's improved retention should reduce the risk of unshipping the chain, which is dangerous on fixed if it jams.

The test bike has upgraded TRP RRL-SR brake levers (+£25). These are among the more comfortable non-integrated levers I've used. If you'll only ride fixed, you can legally dispense with the rear brake as you can slow the rear wheel through back-pressure on the pedals. If you'll ever ride with a freewheel, you must keep both.

The ride

It's a few years since I was riding fixed on a daily basis. I'd forgotten what a leg-taxing,



Top: Plenty of steerer height and a stem to suit your back
Bottom: You must pedal through slow speed turns on fixed so toe clearance is good

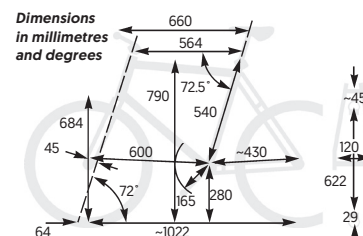
full-body workout it can be. Riding fixed won't just make you pedal more fluidly; it'll make you fitter, full stop. There are really only two ways to go faster on a bike: pedal faster or push a bigger gear. Fixed-wheel trains both.

To spin smoothly you need a gear that suits you and your terrain. The Audax Mono can provide this because you choose it. (Not sure? Try 42/18, 42/17 or 42/16.) You also need the contact points just so, to avoid bouncing around like a sack of potatoes. The Audax Mono helps with this, too, as you can choose the bar, stem and cranks.

I don't know that I'd do a long audax on fixed but I'd happily do 100km on this one if I could ride at my own pace. Fixed doesn't work so well if you have companions on gears as you get dropped on descents, and I found single free oddly unsatisfying. ●

Verdict

With practical fittings, less racy geometry and clearance for 28mm tyres, the Audax Mono has the key things I want from a fixed-wheel frameset. The fact that the complete bike comes with well-built wheels and components you can tweak to your taste makes it an even better buy. I'd like a smidgen more space under the brake callipers but if you're looking for sensible fixed-wheel bike at a sensible price, this has to be on your shortlist.



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