

ROAD BIKE

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ACTION MAGAZINE

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BOB ROLL:
8 Ways To
Love Italy

BIKE FIT:
Comfort vs.
Cool

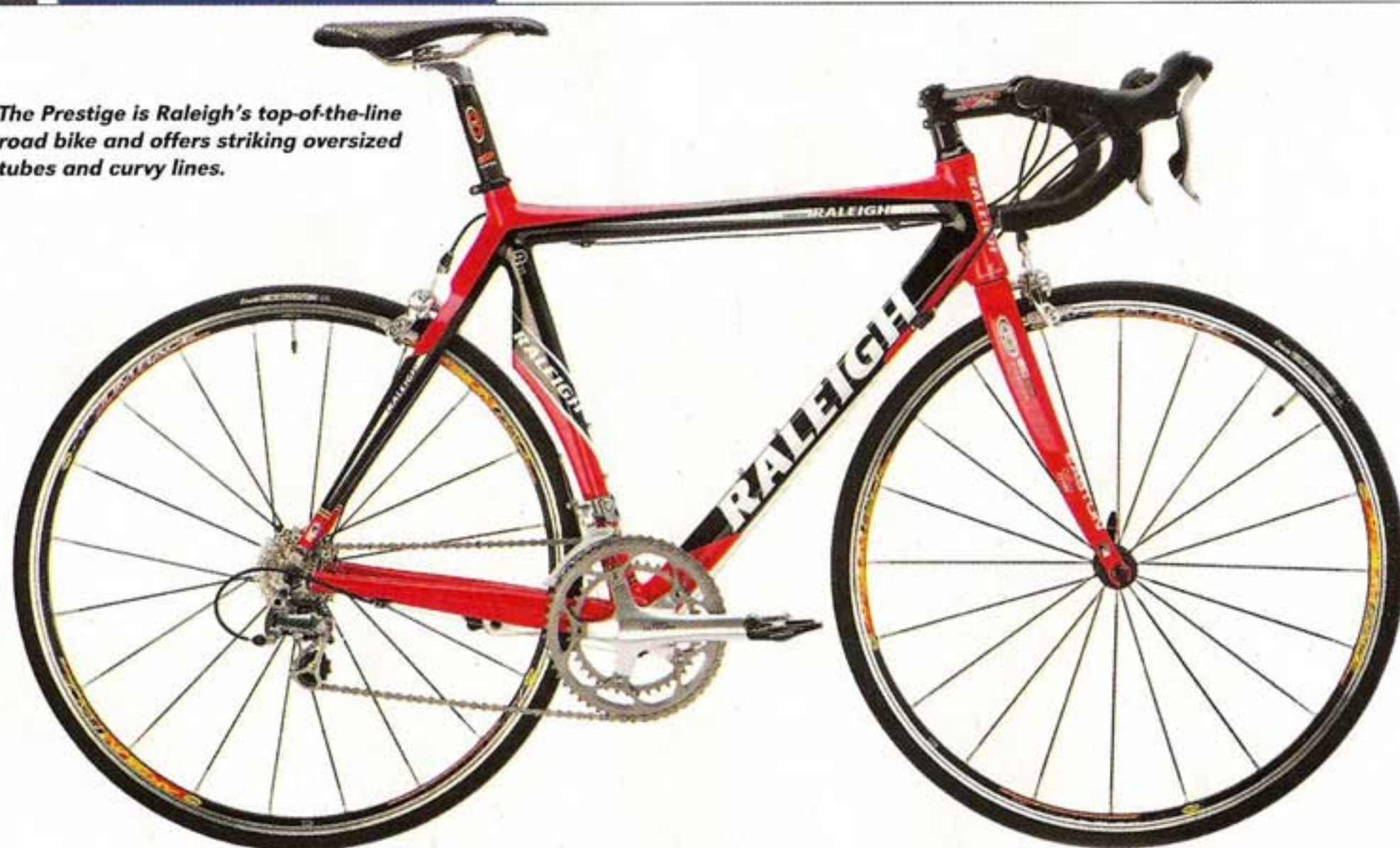
**BEST BUY
TESTS:**
6 Fast
Race
Bikes
For
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RBA

bike test

The Prestige is Raleigh's top-of-the-line road bike and offers striking oversized tubes and curvy lines.



Price: \$2750
Weight: 16.4 pounds
Info: www.raleighusa.com

the Aksium Race wheels help keep the weight low and the price within reason, and their Vittoria Rubino Pro tires were trustworthy in the corners and showed little indication of wear throughout the test. The Raleigh's second-tier Mavic wheels were smooth and reliable, but stronger test riders wished for stiffer wheels to better match the nature of the frame. Our 55-centimeter Prestige had a 55-centimeter top-tube mated to an 110 millimeter stem. We would have liked either a one centimeter longer toptube or a 120 millimeter stem. The Selle Italia SLR Gel was the only aspect of the Prestige that drew consistent criticism, as test riders felt the center-cut hole and minimalist design didn't lend enough support and caused pressure points to develop even during shorter rides. To end on a high note, Shimano's Ultegra components put in a pro-level performance and, while its shifting was not a noticeable upgrade, the Dura-Ace rear derailleur gives the Prestige bragging rights among its peers.

THE VERDICT

The Raleigh Prestige is a great bike and a great value, with performance that does credit to its legendary predecessors. The striking carbon frame and fork, great parts, solid



The seat tube arcs around the rear tire, giving the Prestige an aerodynamic and sleek edge.

handling and smooth ride make it a good option for anyone shopping for a high-performance bicycle in the middle-price ranges. At Raleigh's \$2750 asking price, one can afford to buy a new saddle. **B**

RALEIGH PRESTIGE



Raleigh is one of the oldest bicycle companies in the world. Originally based in Nottingham, England, they built a reputation for high-end race bikes that have been victorious (officially and unofficially) at all of the world's most historic races. Older riders will still remember the powerful Ti-Raleigh team that dominated the roads of Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1980, Raleigh rider Joop Zoetemelk won the Tour de France, and a Raleigh was under the legs of Laurent Fignon when he lost the 1989 Tour de France to Greg LeMond by a mere eight seconds. Today, Raleigh keeps their racing heritage alive through sponsorship of British phenom Nicole Cooke and the Raleigh Lifeforce Creation HB Pro Cycling Team.

THE BIKE

The Raleigh Prestige is Raleigh's top-of-the-line road bike. It is designed with the enthusiast-level, club racer in mind, and its very palatable sticker price and maximum-bang-for-the-buck component and drivetrain selection are showcased by a beautiful frame and fork. The sculpted carbon frame has a carbon-to-black fade paint scheme with large red overlays. One can tell Raleigh is proud of the Prestige, as the Raleigh name graces the bike 22 times (including headset spacers). Even with the proliferation of the Raleigh decals, the Prestige is striking, with its oversized frame tubes and curving lines—it simply looks fast.

THE FRAME

The Raleigh Prestige is Raleigh's best carbon frame, and is engineered to deliver a smooth, comfortable ride. Each tube has a unique shape that serves a purpose in either adding stiffness, reducing weight, or enhancing the ride quality. The toptube features a rectangular indent at the headtube. This small indent effectively creates two gussets on each side of the toptube. This helps to increase the stiffness of the front end, and coupled with the 1-1/8-inch integrated headset means the Raleigh is designed to go where

it is pointed. Keeping with the oversized theme, the seat stays on the Raleigh come together and form a one-piece wishbone structure before merging with the toptube. The seat tube is shaped into an integrated fairing that arcs around the rear tire to break the wind and to give the Raleigh an aerodynamic, aggressive look. Lower on the frame, the chainstays are large-diameter and have a thin, elevated center ridge to add stiffness without adding weight. An oversized downtube anchors the frame, and an Easton EC 90 carbon fork handles steering duties.

THE NUMBERS

The 55-centimeter Prestige came with a 73.5-degree headtube and a 73-degree seat tube angle, connected by a 55-centimeter toptube. Chainstay length and bottom bracket height were both race-ready at 40.8 centimeters for the chainstays and 27 centimeters for the bottom bracket. The wheelbase measured out to a compact 97.4 centimeters. The Raleigh Prestige weighs 16.4 pounds and is available in six sizes, from 50 to 62 centimeters.

THE PARTS

Raleigh did an impressive job when choosing parts for the Prestige. The Prestige comes equipped with a Shimano Ultegra group that is upgraded with a Dura-Ace rear derailleur, driving a 105 12x27 cogset. The all-Easton cockpit has an aluminum EA 90 stem and EA 70 handlebar, with a carbon EC 70 seatpost. The Prestige rolls on Mavic Aksium Race wheels, and 23c Vittoria Rubino Pro tires.

THE RIDE

The Raleigh Prestige is fast. All the work that Raleigh did in building a laterally stiff frame paid off. Every pedal stoke launches the bike forward. Out of the saddle sprints are done without a hint of flex from the frame, and allows sharp corners to be carved with abandon. While the frame is stiff, the ride isn't overly harsh. A lot of road shock is absorbed through the Aksium Race wheels, as well as the carbon fork and Easton EC 70 seatpost. At 1980-grams,