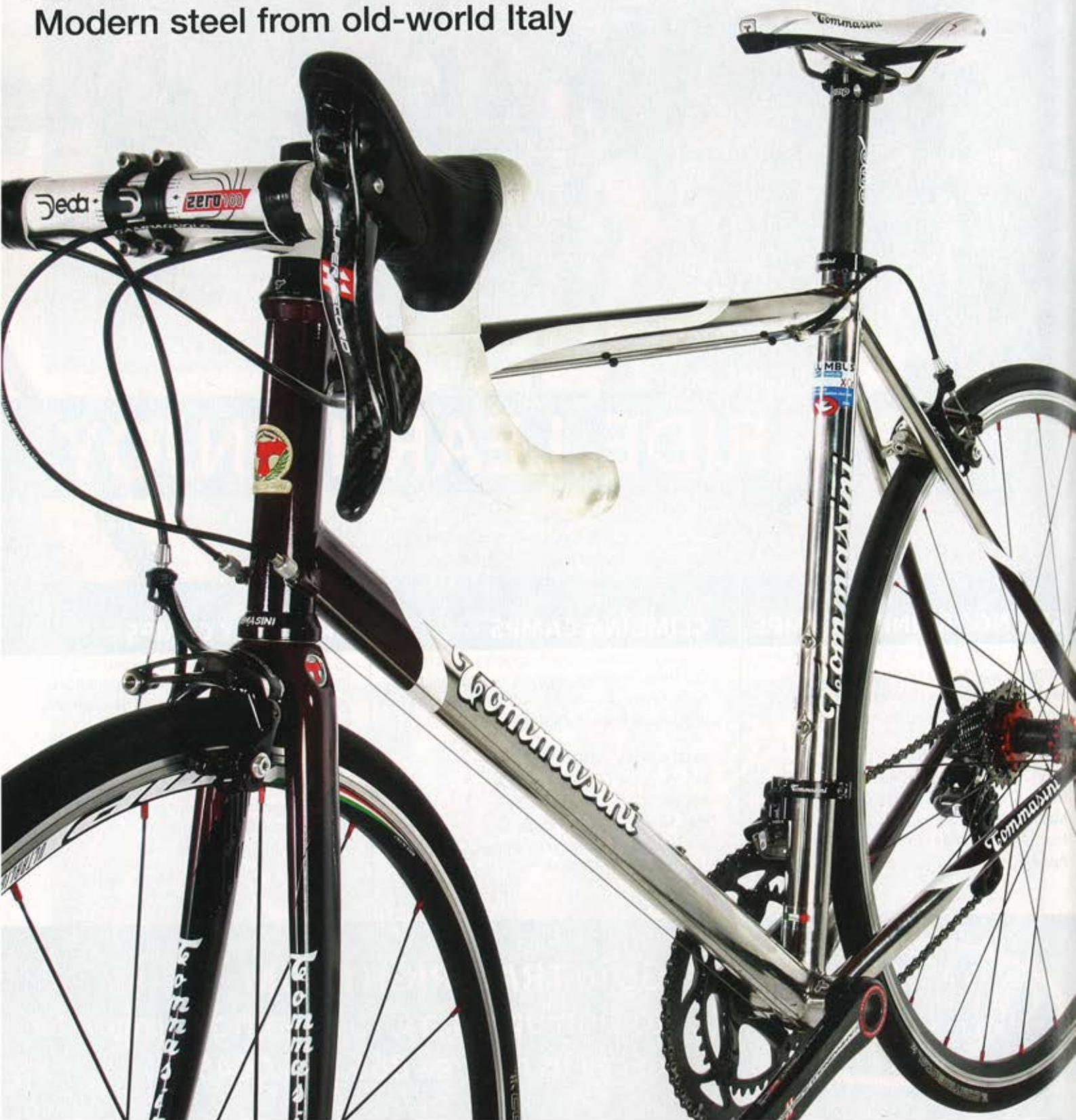


**BIKETEST**

# TOMMASINI X-FIRE

Modern steel from old-world Italy



## BIKETEST

This won't come as news to any regular *RBA* reader, but as enamored as we are with all the latest in carbon fiber finery, we continue to have a fascination with steel bikes. However, as opposed to those who go on about steel frames because they're more "real" or have more "soul" than any other frame material, well, we don't buy any of that barmy. Over the years we've ridden plenty of steel bikes that not only provide a level of added durability, but, most important of all, a really good ride quality.

Equally, it should be no less surprising that we've found Italian steel bikes have often been among the most enjoyable. That's where the Tommasini brand comes in. Founded by Iro Tommasini in 1957, and although the family-run factory (located near Pisa) churns out carbon and titanium frames, they are one of the few remaining brands to produce handmade steel frames.

### THE FRAME

As old-school as the Tommasini

name is, the X-Fire represents the new age of steel with its use of Columbus stainless steel XCr tubing. The frame is meticulously built, and, although not as noticeable as it is with carbon, the tubes used for the front triangle are all shaped. In addition to the contemporary tubes, the X-Fire gives another nod to modernity with its use of a polished carbon fork with a 1 1/8-inch steerer.

And if you think we find ourselves enamored with the Tommasini just because of the name on the down-tube, you'd be mistaken. What makes the Tommasini special is that custom paint and geometry are available at no upcharge. You read that right—not a single Euro is tacked onto the bill because that's the way Iro Tommasini thinks his customers should be treated. Yeah, go ahead and make light of Italian frame builders now!

### THE PARTS

Tommasini's importer, Red Rose Imports, only sells frames, but befitting an Italian legacy frame like the Tommasini, our test bike was equipped with a Campagnolo Super Record gruppo. There is no getting around the fact that the Campy parts are simply

fantastic. The separate shifters that allow for a full drop down or climb up the cogset with a single shift is unique and nice to have.

Further deepening the X-Fire's Italian flair are the beautiful PMP aluminum wheels that are hand-built at the PMP factory in Bergamo, Italy. PMP also makes carbon wheels, but Greg from Red Rose opted for the aluminum hoops, because not only do the machined and red-anodized aluminum hub flanges mated to carbon shells look exotic, he knows how much better the ride quality is with them. Sold separately, the wheels sell for \$1299.

### THE VERDICT

On the road the X-Fire definitely had a different feel to it versus the lugged Tecno that we've tested previously. The frame is stiffer, and you definitely feel more road imperfections. In terms that might be more agreeable with a modern audience, the stainless tubes are to steel what high-modulus carbon is to "black plastic" bikes. Between the 99cm wheelbase and slightly less snappy acceleration (compared to a high-end carbon frame), one test rider still felt the X-Fire would be a good race bike in terms of

its stiffness and inherent durability. That latter asset is something that we know plenty of people still ponder when laying down over three large for a new frame.

There are five different models that make up Tommasini's family of steel bikes, including the steel-lugged/carbon-tubed CarboFire (\$3795) and the sweet, old-school, lugged and chromed Tecno (\$2595), which remains one of our all-time favorite steel bikes. Despite the disparity in rides between the Tecno and X-Fire, we found one constant remained: riding a bike with such a notable legacy really adds to the overall experience. Neither the lightest or stiffest, bikes like the X-Fire remain something special to ride. ■

### PUNCH LINES

- The look and feel of steel
- Custom color and geometry at no upcharge
- Less of an all-day rider than the Tommasini Tecno

### STATS

Price: \$3995 (frame and fork)

Weight: 16.2 pounds

Sizes: 44.2, 46.2, 48.2, 50.2, 52.2, 54.2 sloping (tested), 56.2cm



The X-Fire gives a nod to modernity not just with its stainless steel tubes, but also a carbon fork and 1 1/8" steerer.



The welded X-Fire provides a noticeably stiffer ride than found on the lugged Tecno. You've got to love the polished tubes.