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CCC 02985
APRIL 2011

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BIKETEST

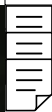


BH PRISMA

All the bling of big brother at a fraction of the price

Photo: Pat Carrigan

→ BH's rich European history began 100 years ago in Spain's Basque region. Since their first Vuelta a España win in 1935, BH has been heavily involved in the pro racing scene, notching up wins in the world's biggest races. While there's no denying BH can build a top-level racer, are they capable of blending high performance with the comfort that anyone can appreciate?



BIKETEST

The Prisma excelled at sprinting and powering over short climbs.

THE FRAME

New to the BH line for 2011, the Prisma targets customers looking for the performance of a Porsche in the comfort of a Cadillac. Albeit the Prisma is in a completely different category than the G5, BH's flagship model, it still borrows plenty of technology from its big brother. With a claimed sub-1100-gram carbon monocoque frame and 400-gram carbon fork, it allows the Prisma to weigh in at a respectable 17.5 pounds. Our 54cm test bike had a 150mm head tube, 30mm taller than the G5's, which was enough to get the stem at a comfortable height.

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The 1.5-inch tapered head tube and carbon fork have a nearly seamless integration, giving it a clean, muscular look that is backed with superb lateral front-end stiffness. The BB30 bottom bracket joins together a massive downtube and oversized rectangular chainstays, all of which are the core to the Prisma's ride characteristics.

THE PARTS

BH offers the Prisma in two Shimano parts options: Ultegra and 105. Our test bike was Ultegra-equipped and included a compact 50/34 crank. The Ultegra

shifters are precise and have their signature light-action feel, but also have more lever-throw than some riders prefer. BH chose to stick in the Shimano family with the RS20 wheels, which have color-coordinated stickers that match the frame—a nice touch. The Prologo saddle also has custom colors to match, giving the bike a sharp look. FSA's Wing Pro Compact handlebars are always a favorite with the test riders, since their ergonomic shape gives your hands numerous comfortable position options. The FSA OS-150 stem finishes off the cockpit duties, while Vittoria Rubino Pro tires do the dirty work.



BIKETEST: BH PRISMA

We came away as impressed with the Prisma's ride as we did the green accents.



THE RIDE

Our first test ride on the Prisma was in the rolling terrain of Escondido, California. The twisty, rough roads of the area were the ideal testing grounds for first impressions. Straight out of the blocks, the Prisma felt fast; hard out-of-the-saddle efforts didn't phase it. The lateral stiffness of the head tube and bottom bracket provided good power transfer during the hardest of efforts. The bike's light 17.5-pound weight, coupled with a 34/28 low gear, made the steep climbs plenty manageable no matter how leisurely you wanted to go up them. Descending was smooth, due to the Prisma's relatively long chainstays (3.5mm longer than the G5's), giving the bike a consistent feel without the twitchiness that a more aggressive racing geometry could exhibit. The Prisma's true nature showed through on the rough, chip-sealed roads, giving it a smooth, vibration-free ride over the unforgiving tarmac.

THE VERDICT

The BH Prisma has all the attributes of a Pro Tour-level racer, but the taller head tube, longer wheelbase and compact gearing give it the comfort most mortals can appreciate. The Prisma is also available in a Shimano 105 version, with the same frameset, for \$2199. ■

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The BB30 is at the center of the Prisma's massive downtube and rectangular chainstays.



A tapered headtube offers excellent stiffness and keeps the front end on the straight and narrow.

PUNCH LINES

- Comfortable ride without sacrificing its racing heritage
- Matching frame, wheels and saddle graphics give the bike a pro look
- Downtube barrel adjusters allow you to adjust your derailleurs while on the go

STATS

Price: \$3199

Weight: 17.5 pounds

Sizes: 52, 54, 56, 57, 58.5cm

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