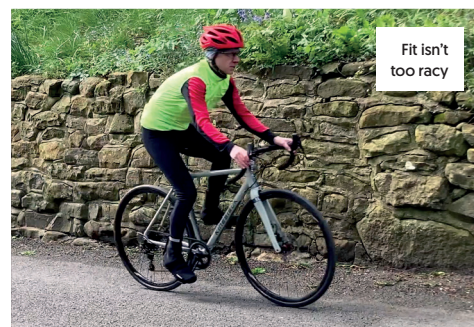




Cycle's test promise

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the Kinesis's Apex ones. They're both well modulated, with more stopping power relative to the lever effort than any rim brake I've tried. The bigger tyre footprints improve absolute stopping power as well.

The ride

Even with entry-level, innertube-only tyres, the plushness of wider, softer rubber is noticeable. It's a large part of what makes both these bikes more comfortable than racers. Having more rubber in contact with the tarmac also improves traction and therefore cornering and braking confidence. There isn't the same pressure to stick to tarmac-only routes, either.

No gearing setup will suit everyone but I like the 1x Apex drivetrain of the Kinesis. It's similar to what I use on my own road bike. The sequential shifts are intuitive and you can change down on climbs without backing off on pedalling pressure like you do when shifting a front derailleur.

A wider-range 1x cassette means the steps between gears are bigger but this bothers me far less than the cadence-spoiling 16-tooth jump of the Dolan's compact double. If you live anywhere lumpy or like to spin, you find yourself regularly shifting back and forth between the 50- and 34-tooth chainrings. So that big jump keeps on jarring. It's not like an 40-24 Alpine double, where you can just stay in the big ring most of the time.

I enjoyed riding the Dolan more overall

Other options



SONDER COLIBRI AL TIAGRA £1,099

The cheapest Colibri has an aluminium frame, carbon fork and 2x10 Tiagra with mechanical discs.

It takes 32mm tyres with mudguards. Review at cyclinguk.org/sonder-colibri-al-tiagra.

alpkit.com



TIFOSI ROSTRA TIAGRA £1,499

Aluminium frame and carbon fork again but with hydraulic Tiagra levers rather than mechanical.

Takes 35mm or 38mm tyres (with/without guards.)

chickencyclekit.co.uk

because the component choices available meant I could copy over the riding position from my own bike.

The Kinesis has a gravel-style flared drop bar that's 44cm across the hoods and 50cm on the drops. This may help off-road control but I found it less comfortable. It's also less aerodynamic on road, which is where a bike like this will spend most of its time. The Kinesis was measurably slower on country lane loops due to the bike's wider-armed, wind-blocking riding stance. There was more weight on my hands, too – a consequence of the bike's shorter head tube and steeper seat angle, and the wider bar requiring more forward lean. Still, swapping in a different handlebar is neither difficult nor expensive. ●

Verdict

Both of these bikes are practical, comfortable and versatile enough to perform a range of roles well.

The Dolan RDX is particularly good value. It's nice to see Shimano 105 with hydraulic discs at this price, irrespective of it being 12-speed. The online configurator saves you money, since you don't end up with components you'll ditch, and also enables you to fine tune your fit. Win win.

The Kinesis R1 is a practical endurance road bike that's slightly hampered by its gravel handlebar. Swap that out and it's ready for any non-racing, real-world road ride. Clearances are a bit tighter than the Dolan's but still more generous than most road bikes', and sufficient for comfortable tyres and mudguards. Don't like 1x drivetrains? Get the R2.