



Fast reactor

Merida Reacto Team-E

£9000 ▶ Mark Cavendish's latest ride is aero and light

We've always been fans of Merida's Reacto bikes and, to be honest, aero road bikes in general. From the many iterations of Cervélo's S-series bikes to Specialized's now sadly deleted Venge range, to the far more comfortable than it has any right to be Trek Madone, we've been impressed with these machines. Yes, they may weigh a little more but they carry and hold speed like no other road drop-bar bikes.

With the previous-generation Reacto, Merida brought some comfort into the equation with its S-Flex seatpost, featuring a cut-out with an elastomer section bonded in. It wasn't Trek Madone IsoSpeed comfortable, but it took the edge off rough surfaces exceptionally well. The new Team-E does exactly the same job, and the latest S-Flex post now has a rear light built into it, too. The new bike attempts to improve comfort further with its reshaped frame and reconfigured carbon layup and, vitally, Merida has dropped weight. The last high-grade Reacto we rode weighed in over half a kilo more than this model (and that one didn't have 55mm-deep wheels).

Bucking the trend

With plenty of road testing under our belts on the Team-E, we've come away hugely impressed with



The Reacto comes fitted with a Dura-Ace power meter chainset



The fork has an integrated disc cooler to improve braking

what Merida has achieved with a pure aero bike. The other big players have all taken lightweight GC bikes (the bikes the brands expect the majority of their pro team riders to choose) and made them more aero. This goes for Cannondale's SuperSix EVO (our current Bike of the Year), Trek's new Émonda, BMC's Teammachine and Specialized's Tarmac SL7 (see p66). In contrast, Merida has flipped this on its head and taken its most aerodynamic race bike and made it lighter and more comfortable.

The question remains – has it succeeded? Well, quite simply, yes. The Reacto is pretty slammed with a 592mm stack and a long 402mm reach on our XL test bike (stack is the vertical height from the centre of the bottom bracket to the top of the centre of the head tube; reach is the horizontal distance between the same points). The head angle (74 degrees) and seat angle (73 degrees) are also both on the steep side. It imbues the bike with a real urgency in its handling.

This Team-E Reacto is absolutely at its best on flat-out roads and rolling terrain; it's hard to explain just how exciting it is moving fast. The bike feels slim, narrow and arrow-like. It cuts through headwinds with ease and handles crosswinds without drama; the same can be said for the Vision Metron 55SL TLR wheels. TLR means they're tubeless compatible, and we'd like



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SPECIFICATIONS

Weight 7.9kg (size XL)

Frame CF5 carbon with integrated disc cooler

Fork CF5 carbon with integrated disc cooler

Gears Shimano Dura-Ace Di2 (52/36, 11-30)

Brakes Shimano Dura-Ace, 160mm rotors

Wheels Vision Metron 55SL TLR

Finishing kit Continental Grand Prix 5000 25mm tyres, Vision Metron 5D one-piece bar/stem, Prologo

Scratch M5 Nack saddle, Reacto S-Flex aero post with integrated light, Shimano

Dura-Ace power meter, Merida carbon bottle cage



Climbing performance is usually the downfall of an aero bike but the Reacto impressed, helped by its stiff bottom bracket

The one-piece aero cockpit has lots of hand holds



Dura-Ace disc brakes and matching Ice-Tech rotors

The racy gearing provides an ample range



to have tried the bike set-up that way, but it comes with non-tubeless Continental GP 5000 tyres in a 25mm width, which, if you're not going tubeless, is arguably the next best thing. They're a fierce challenger to our current favourite, Vittoria Corsa G+, and catching up fast.

Feel the power

Climbing performance is usually the downfall of a full-on aero bike, but the Reacto impressed here too, helped by its stiffness through the bottom bracket and the power meter, we found ourselves taking advantage of the data on our Garmin head unit and riding to power on every ascent. The Dura-Ace Di2 groupset comes complete with a Dura-Ace power meter chainset. Yes, we know £9000 is a lot of money, but not many of Merida's rivals can offer the same equipment levels for this price. For instance, Specialized's new Tarmac is £10,500 for an equivalent spec. We also appreciate that Merida has set up the 'blind' buttons on top of the Dura-Ace shifters to enable

HIGHS

Very rapid yet smooth riding; excellent spec

LOWS

Aggressive ride position best suited to riders wanting speed above all else

BUY IF...

You want a bike that's fast everywhere and fully equipped to the highest standards

upshifts (right hand) and downshifts (left hand) when riding on the hoods.



The S-Flex seatpost now features a built-in rear light



Disc cooling fins are integrated into the frame as well as fork

upshifts (right hand) and downshifts (left hand) when riding on the hoods.

The gearing of a 52/36 chainset and an 11-30 cassette is about as racy as standard bike builds come nowadays, and we found it to be an ample range no matter how the road turned. As for the rest of the build, the Vision Metron 5D cockpit with its angled forward, aero-bladed shape has lots of good hand holds, and the semi-compact drop means you'll spend far more time down in a flat-out race position than you normally do, which has a positive affect on your average speed. The premium Prologo Nack Scratch carbon-railed saddle is firm, but we found it very comfortable – although, as ever, saddles are such a personal choice.

When it comes down to it, we're hugely impressed by this new Reacto. Maybe, just maybe, Merida making its aero road bike more versatile – as opposed to its rivals making their lightweight general classification bikes more aero – will prove to be the better approach.

THE VERDICT

Very fast and aero yet lightweight and comfortable

★★★★★