

CYCLOSPORT - March 2010

Bike Test by Julien Chauveau

Litespeed ARCHON C3 - CHANGE OF COURSE

We have to admit it! The first time that we spotted this new model on the Litespeed stand at the Eurobike exhibition, we were totally amazed. To the surprise of all, the famous American manufacturer of titanium frames is entering the market in carbon!

Whatever you make of it, the workmanship and care brought to this new generation of frames is a complete success. The range looks promising and, on the road, the ARCHON C3 offers serious advantages.

To embark on this season in fine form, the American Litespeed brand has a beautiful surprise for us. If aficionados of titanium are going to be disappointed by this detour, then carbon-lovers can be delighted with the result. The most famous of the American brands, which has been making titanium frames for more than 30 years, is bringing out a complete range of carbon frames. Yes, you can believe what you are reading! Litespeed carbon frames!

We have to say that we could not help noticing just how out-of-the-ordinary and impressive the frame shapes are. We also have to tell you immediately, however, that the ARCHON C-Series (that is the chosen name) is not going to please everyone. Young cyclo sportive riders or triathletes, in particular, will certainly find that it offers everything they could possibly wish for. Older riders, perhaps, less so. Whatever you make of it, there is a complete range with a frame (C1) and two complete bikes (C2 and C3). The two latter models are offered at a relatively attractive price of €2,999 for the C3 and €3,999 for the C2 set-up with Shimano Dura Ace. The frame alone, which is equipped with a higher-grade fibre, is sold at €2,799.

FRAMES AND TUBES: Shapes pushed to the limit of expectation

2 years' research and development were needed for the American company to issue this frame with its well-crafted shapes. To be known as the C-Series, it uses AeroLogic technology. This concept has been developed by Litespeed to offer better air-penetration. This is most noticeable in the seat tube. Its diameter and profile changes from top to bottom to improve the airflow at the level of the rear wheel.

Our C3 test model is designed with Premium Modulus T 700 fibre. As for the C2 and C1 models, they are made with High Module fibre (M40 and M60, respectively). The fibre of the C3 has a fairly classic appearance. The shaping is what surprises you the most. You find an oversized headtube and the fork has a cone-shaped pivot. The tubes of the front triangle also have enormous dimensions. They are amazingly flat. The shapes of these two features vary according to the size of the frames. The bottom bracket – a standard BB30 – running from it, is also oversized. Finally, if you look at the front triangle alone, you could immediately think that you were in the presence of a time-trial model! It is the rear triangle that ultimately

'rebalances' the whole machine. The slender, drawn-out, asymmetric chain and seat stays give the rear a more streamlined appearance. Six sizes are available, from XS to XL, the cut being of quite a sloping nature.

HANDLING: Ultra rigid

When you see the shapes of the frame, the overwhelming impression received, before you even step on the pedals, is that there is going to be no lack of rigidity. This first impression is confirmed after just a few kilometres in the company of the ARCHON C3.

Put simply, the frame does not move under any circumstances. It stays perfectly in line thanks to its very impressive stiffness. The result is a direct transmission of energy from the bottom bracket.

So, accelerations are easier. Clearly, the Carbon ARCHON is destined for cyclo sportive riders and a well-informed client base.

However, it can provide an even more comfortable ride if you select smaller ratios. If you opt for a higher ratio, you are going to need to expend more energy. What surprised us most was the overall comfort provided by the bike. If the down tube and head tube do not filter out all vibration, then the craftsmanship employed on the top tube (it narrows as it meets the seat tube) and over the rear triangle, proves its worth. This feature limits shocks. The bike, given a more comfortable saddle, will probably suit the long-distance cyclo sportive rider.

EQUIPMENT: An harmonious blend

The ARCHON C3 is available only as a full set-up. Marked at a reasonable €2,999, it offers a more-than-satisfactory level of equipment. There is a Shimano Ultegra groupset coupled with an FSA Gossamer (obligatory BB30) bottom bracket. This novel set-up provided us with complete satisfaction. The subtlety of the gear changes was an absolute delight and the new handlebar grips feel comfortable in use. As for the wheels, the FSA RD-60 are not offered as often as we would wish in the initial set-up. This is a pity because they deserve to be used more often. During a ride, the stiffness provided comes from the arrangement of the spokes and the high hub flange and the dynamism coming from the whole ensemble. They fit well with this type of frame.

As for the handlebars an FSA with a Wing Pro/OS -150 is used. We particularly liked the compact shape of the handlebar – which has become a standard expectation. To sum up, the set-up of this ARCHON C3 is both logical and consistent.

The Litespeed ARCHON C3 should not be given to just any rider. A battle-hardy cyclo sportive rider or a racer will appreciate its fantastic rigidity and aerodynamic shapes which ensure the efficiency of the machine. We also return to the advantage of the overall comfort level of the bike which, surprising though it may seem, is very much in evidence, in spite of the well-worked shapes. So, if you want a different sort of ride, at the same time as experiencing a lot of pleasure when the speed increases, the ARCHON C-Series is just for you. Other riders can still find titanium models in the Litespeed catalogue.

IMAGES 1-9

1. The seat tube has been given a very well-crafted, aerodynamic shape
2. Archon Composite: the new manufacturing brand of Litespeed
3. For maximum comfort, the top tube gets gradually narrower towards the seat tube
4. Even though there is an integrated seat post, the clamping system of this FSA model allows you to adjust the height by several centimetres
5. The new Shimano Ultegra transmission has nothing to fear from its big brother, the Dura Ace
6. The rear dropouts have been well-chosen
7. The bottom bracket is, quite simply, impressive!
8. The Prologo Choice Max saddle will not please all backsides. It is just a little bit exclusive and is aimed at lighter riders
9. The head tube is also oversized. It brings great rigidity to the front of the bike

ADVANTAGES (+) Great rigidity, comfort, equipment, price
DISADVANTAGE (-) Its demanding frame

TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT

FRAME	Archon Carbon	SEAT POST	Integrated Carbon
FORK	Litespeed Carbon	WHEELS	FSA RD-150
REAR MECH.	Shimano Ultegra	CASSETTE	Shimano Ultegra
FRONT MECH.	Shimano Ultegra	TYRES	Vittoria Rubino Pro
LEVERS	Shimano Ultegra	PRICE	2,999 Euros
BRAKES	Shimano Ultegra	WEIGHT	7.5kg with
BOTTOM BRACKET	FSA Gossamer BB30		
SADDLE	Prologo Choice Max		
HANDLEBARS	FSA Wing Compact		
STEM	FSA 0S-150		