

**First look**

Traditional steel audax bike with a carbon fork and relatively relaxed geometry



Photography: Shirley and Simon Withers

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*There really is a zing to the Spa Steel Audax, which has a lovely, lively ride*

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### Tech Spec

#### SPA CYCLES STEEL AUDAX 105

**Price:** £1,265 as tested (from £1,125).

**Sizes:** 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60cm.

**Weight:** 9.54kg (54cm, no pedals).

**Frame & fork:**

Reynolds 725 double-butted steel frame with fittings for rack and mudguard, two bottles. Carbon fork with 1 1/8in alloy steerer and mudguard fittings.

**Wheels:** 28-622

Schwalbe Pro One tyres. Front: Bitex RAF 28h hub, Sapim Race spokes, Kinlin XR22 rim. Rear: Bitex RAR 32h hub, Sapim Race spokes, Kinlin XR22RT offset rim.

**Transmission:** no

pedals, Shimano 105 50-34 chainset, Shimano BB-R60 bottom bracket, KMC 11-speed X11-93 chain, Shimano CS-R7000 11-32 cassette. Shimano 105 shifters, Shimano 105 front and rear mech. 11-ratios, 29-12lin.

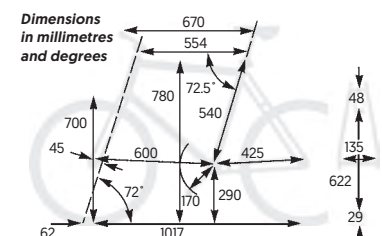
**Brakes:** Tektro R737.

**Steering & seating:** Spa EVA Cork Gel tape, FSA Wing compact handlebar, FSA Omega OS-168 stem, FSA Orbit Equipe sealed bearing headset.

Spa Navigator saddle, Deda Zero 1 27.2mm seatpost.

**Extras:** SKS CAB 35mm mudguards.

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road muck, though the gap between tyre and guard, especially at the front, is pretty tight.

Cannondale's Synapse Sora also says in the name what groupset you're getting. Nine-speed Sora is two steps down from 105 in Shimano's gearing hierarchy. The shifting isn't quite as slick and the front lever requires more effort to shift to the larger chainring. Cannondale has, however, paired an FSA compact chainset with a larger (11-34) cassette. The resulting lower bottom gear compensates for the Synapse's extra weight. Cables are routed internally, which makes for a very tidy-looking front end.

The Cannondale's disc brakes are cable-actuated Promax Decode Rs. While they lack the power of hydraulic systems, they are consistent in all weathers and are pleasingly quiet, with only the



**Top:** The Reynolds 725 frame has a lovely, lustrous paint finish. Black is also an option  
**Bottom:** It comes with a 50-34 double and an 11-32 cassette but you can specify lower gears when ordering

briefest of squeaks from the front in the wet. The other advantage – particularly for those using the Synapse throughout winter or for year-round commuting – is longer rim life.

The standard Spa Cycles Steel Audax 105 comes with Shimano RS100 wheels but the test bike features an optional, £140 upgrade: handbuilt wheels with Bitex hubs and Kinlin rims. (Wheel-builder Bobby Stevens has done a sterling job.) I think it's a price worth paying, as they ride beautifully.

The Synapse has more scope to tackle rougher surfaces than the Spa, having clearance for 35mm tyres. The Vittoria Zaffiro training tyres are basic compared to the Spa's more supple Schwalbe Ones, but they're tough and I'd be in no hurry to replace them.

There's not too much to choose