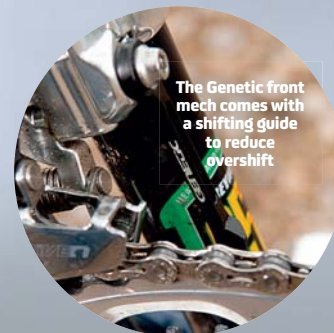




Sadly you don't get a Cambridge degree thrown in with every purchase...



The Genetic front mech comes with a shifting guide to reduce overshift

THE LIGHT BLUE KINGS

£1799.95 > Are those slender old-school looks hiding up-to-date rideability?

The Light Blue bicycle company first surfaced in 1895; the name referred to the colours of Cambridge University. It's been dormant for a generation or two but has just been relaunched by the current incarnation of the same family company, Ison Distribution.

Despite its proud retro styling, the frame is by no means hindered in ability by its last century aesthetics. On the contrary, the geometry is ideal for fast touring or the occasional competitive outing, with only a few aspects of the retro-inspired finishing parts initially messing with the riding enjoyment of this classy Reynolds 853 tubed frame. You're not obliged to match finishing kit to the frame style. The down-tube shifter bosses accept guides for bar-based

WE SAY...

- ▲ **HIGHS** The visual appeal of classic lugged, brazed, half-chromed tubes
- ▼ **LOWES** We suspect a lot of potential customers would like mudguard/rack eyelets on a bike like this
- **BUY IF...** You love the visual appeal of retro but want to ride a modern bike

shifting, the rear brake cable is tidily tucked away under the top-tube and, apart from contrast-panel graphics, half chromed stays and fork and gold-lined lug joins, only misplaced retro-lust induces the need to search out retro-styled kit to go with the 1in headset and quill stem.

A much discussed topic among those who've been riding since before indexed gears and carbon frames is that of which bike bits have improved the most, and to what extent those improvements have boosted speed, handling and comfort. We're happy to state that the biggest boost to comfort and convenience over the past two decades is bar-based indexed gearing combining brake levers with a properly comfortable place to rest your hands. Going back to friction down-tube shifters and old fashioned brake levers is a retro step too far for a frame that's as well put

together as this. The 2kg Kings frame deserves modern kit.

The tight, sprightly ride of a skinny Reynolds 853 frame is a joy on the sort of roads that leave you feeling punished

by the harsher ride of aluminium or big-section carbon frames. The Kings is bang up to date in terms of handling, climbing, descending and cornering pressures, but its curvy fork and slender tubes create the sort

of coil-sprung shimmer that only lighter and more costly titanium comes close to in terms of feel. There's room for up to 28mm tyres if you feel a need to add more comfort, plus there's a metallic red colour option.

WORKSHOP VIEW...

Friction power shifters on down-tube make derailleur cable tension adjustments redundant. Lugged 853 tubing is the real deal.

VERDICT Tight, nimble but relatively relaxed ride feel with classic looks

CYCLING RATING ★★★★★

SPECIFICATION **WEIGHT** 9.78kg **FRAME** Reynolds 853 lugged steel **FORK** Steel, 1in steerer **GEARS** NRX, Sun Race **BRAKES** Dia Compe BRS **WHEELS** Halo alloy **FINISHING KIT** Gran Compe saddle, Schwalbe Lugano tyres, Genetic bar, quill stem and seatpost