

# Cervélo Soloist SLC-SL



The Cervélo's thin wall tubing has a profile similar to an aeroplane wing



The Soloist SLC-SL fills the void between the R3 and the standard issue Soloist. It aims to be the ultimate road frame

**W**hen new bikes are released, we fully expect refinements to the previous package, but what about true innovation? Does 2008 hold some real changes for the cycling world, or are we looking at a reflection of the past swathed in a new layer of carbon? Of the four bikes on test here, the Trek is the only truly new design, so how does this compare with the existing designs that have been carried through into the 2008 ranges of Enigma, Specialized and Cervélo? Read on and find out...

**FRAME**  
**Cervélo 10 Trek 8 Enigma 9 Specialized 9**  
Keen to capitalise on the popularity the Soloist has with teams, like CSC, that use this model, the Canadian firm Cervélo has created a range-heading SLC-SL version that fills the void between its lightest model, the R3, and the standard issue Soloist. It aims to be the ultimate road frame, providing an aerodynamic improvement over a round tube. Cervélo employs a similar unidirectional ultra-high modulus carbon as used on the R3, which allows an exceptionally thin wall to the tubing and an aero profile similar to a NACA (National Advisory Committee of Aeronautics) profile – the Cervélo's profile is similar to an aeroplane wing, but optimised to work at rather lower speeds – and keeps the frame under the 1kg weight threshold that's crucial for superbike status. The aero seat-tube fits with a precision we haven't seen before. The True Temper Wolf SL fork is made exclusively for Cervélo, a 100 per cent carbon design with aero profile blades.

**EQUIPMENT**  
**Cervélo 9 Trek 8 Enigma 8 Specialized 9**  
Cervélos aren't strictly sold as a complete package but ours was decked out with the Pro branded handlebar/stem that, like the frame, also comes from distributors Ultimate Pursuits. Being of a single piece construction, the bars cannot be adjusted, so they aren't for those who like – as many do – to angle the handlebars forwards and upwards, but this kit suits the Soloist SLC-SL's sleek lines perfectly. Aero-section seatposts such as the Soloist's have a tendency to slip down in the frame but we needn't have worried as this one is a reassuringly firm fit. The Selle San Marco Aspide saddle offers firm support that works best for powerfully built riders, but it is far more comfortable than it looks. (For more details, see our saddles group test in CPlus 200.)



Only one other bike we've tested is faster point-to-point than the Cervélo, and that's the £10,000 Storck Fascenario



The Pro bar/stem suits the Soloist perfectly, and the Selle San Marco saddle is far more comfy than it looks

**HANDLING**  
**Cervélo 10 Trek 8 Enigma 8 Specialized 9**  
The Soloist represents the ultimate expression of what a lot of riders are looking for in a team issue bike. The ride is unmistakably firm – even harsh – but we can only think of one bike that is as fast point to point and that's the £10K Storck Fascenario (tested last issue). Press hard on the pedals uphill and the speed with which the Soloist SLC-SL responds to your input reminds you that this is a highly effective hill climbing tool as well as a master of the flat stages. Point it downhill and again the level of steering control is exemplary, but then we would expect no less for the asking price.

**WHEELS**  
**Cervélo 8 Trek 9 Enigma 8 Specialised 8**  
The Shimano WH-7801 wheels on the Cervélo are well matched to the capabilities of the frame and fork, and Shimano has taken a leaf out of Campagnolo's book for the new design. It uses an asymmetric rear rim to increase lateral stiffness and reduce brake block rub when climbing while making the wheel less susceptible to spoke loosening. Magnesium is quite a brittle metal for a rim but they are heavily reinforced at the spoke holes. The hubs have 10mm wider flanges than before and the bearings are the tried and trusted boron-coated cup and cone design.

## The Cervélo Soloist represents the ultimate expression of what a lot of riders are looking for in a team issue bike

### CYCLING Verdict

No frame manufacturer before Cervélo has ever created a design that is so alive on the climbs and yet so adept at setting a blistering pace at the front on the flat sections of a race, so it's no surprise that the Soloist SLC-SL is the frame to have in the pro peloton right now. In many ways Cervélo has created the equivalent of a Formula 1 racing car here so while it has an uncompromisingly stiff ride it is probably the most exciting bike we've ridden in our 15-year history, and bear in mind that it came without any special lightweight components.

Although Trek's new Madone 5.2 is outwardly quite different, it shares many of the character traits of its predecessor; that was a great all rounder, and it's those who don't want the stodgy image of a sportive bike that this new model will most appeal to. This sheep in wolf's clothing has a new integrated bottom bracket and funky looking two-size seat beam concept that gives it a very attractive and distinctive appearance, and while it is hard to see the virtues of such changes in material terms it is commendably the most 'future proof' design of all those tested.

Titanium frames have a habit of holding up well against the more technically advanced carbon fibre frames and the Enigma has done nothing to change that idea. Enigma could have shaved weight by using a plain head-tube instead of one that is compatible with a fully integrated headset, but the Echo reminds us once again of why cyclists rave on about the exciting ride qualities of a steel or titanium frame. Its relative weight counts against it on long climbs, but if you are the kind of person who factors-in titanium's resistance to the hard knocks of

club racing, this is a clear winner. Specialized could almost have coined the phrase 'just go ride' with the Roubaix. Very careful thought has been put in about every aspect of rider comfort for long periods in the saddle. While it might lack the verve of the titanium Enigma, we can't think of a better bike than the Roubaix to soften the blow of the fatigue factor that can be an unwelcome aspect of a long distance sportive. Though lacking the Trek's new technological details, the Roubaix has a clearer identity and has the edge as it costs less.

### Cervélo Soloist SLC-SL

**£3,099**  
[www.ultimatepursuits.co.uk](http://www.ultimatepursuits.co.uk)  
**Frame and forks**  
Size tested: 58  
Sizes available: 48, 51, 54, 56, 58, 61cm  
Weight as tested: 6.88kg/15.18lb no pedals  
Frame: Carbon  
Frame weight: 994g/2.2lb  
Fork: True Temper Wolf Superlight carbon  
Fork: 342g/0.8lb

**Bike dimensions**  
Top-tube: 55.5cm/21.9in  
Seat-tube (c-c): 49cm/19.3in  
Chainstays: 40.5cm/15.9in  
Wheelbase: 99.7cm/39.3in  
Head-tube angle: 72°  
Seat-tube angle: 73°  
Fork offset: 4.5cm/1.8in  
Trail: 6.6cm  
B/b height: 27cm/10.6in  
Standover height: 78cm/30.7in  
Braze-ons: 2 bottles, top-tube racing number

**Frame alignment**  
Head-tube: Perfect  
Rear triangle: Perfect  
Fork: Perfect

**Transmission**  
Chainset: Shimano Dura-Ace 175  
Bottom bracket: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Freewheel: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Chain brand: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Derailleurs: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Gear levers: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Pedals: none

**Gear ratio (in)**

Sprocket		12	13	14	15	16	17	19	21	23	25
Claiming	39	81	75	70	66	62	55	50	46	42	
	53	119	110	102	95	89	84	75	68	62	57

**Wheels**  
Front & Rear: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Tyres: Continental GP4000  
Wheel weight: 980g F, 1,384g R

**Other components**  
Handlebar stem: Pro integrated 12cm  
Handlebars: as above 44cm  
Headset: FSA carbon integrated  
Saddle: Selle San Marco Aspide  
Seatpost: Dedicated aero carbon  
Brakeset: Shimano Dura-Ace  
Accessories: None