

BAILEY MINILUV CARBON

Tester & Photos: David Hutton



Bailey Bikes first became a blip on my radar during three days of UCI racing in Ohio. I found myself riding with some strangely tall West Coaster riding an intriguing carbon cross frame, and since then I wondered where I could snag one. So when I was asked to review a bike that had long intrigued me I jumped at the opportunity. Surprisingly, when I caught up with the guys from San Diego at Bailey Bikes to pick up the bike in Kansas City at the National Championships, the gangly rider I spent day after day suffering with, John Behrens (co-founder of Bailey), was there to make the exchange alongside the company's mastermind, John Bailey, as they were both getting ready to pre-ride the course. Their motto of "race bikes designed by bike racers" couldn't have been more clear both in their practice and their bike's performance.

The Frame

At an MSRP of \$1230 (Frame and carbon fork) Bailey's flagship Miniluv carbon 'cross frame is available to customers direct from the manufacturer. Bailey allows many ordering options for their bikes ranging from a clean slate frame only (no fork) order which allows picky buyers to build the bike from the ground up, from their top of the line \$4000 "Doubleplusgood" package of SRAM Red and carbon SILK wheels to more budget-conscious selections. Packages can also be completely custom, making Bailey Bikes extremely appealing for anyone looking for a unique build.

Similar to their build options, Bailey's flexibility and desire to meet the needs of the public shows through in their sizing options. All but the shortest riders should be quite happy with Bailey's five frame sizes, from 50, 54, 56, 58 and 60, with top tube sizes ranging from 52.5 to 60.6 centimeters. Our 56 frame had a top tube of 57 centimeters which is a bit longer than the 56 centimeters I prefer but considering their 54 frame has a top tube of 55 centimeters I opted for the slightly longer of the two. Bailey may be an especially good option for the taller crowd given the 60.6 centimeter long frame they offer. Company owner John Bailey explained that a lot of work went into

the geometry of the bike to meet the performance expectations they were looking for. What they settled on is a steep-ish 72.5 degree head tube angle paired with a 73 degree seat tube angle. The 16 centimeter head tube on my 56 allows plenty of room for those having to shoulder the bike on a regular basis, Bailey doesn't follow the current trend of many manufacturers flattening the underside of the top tubes and still opts to use round tube construction on their frames. I personally had no problem with this aspect of their frame construction as I find round tubing to be as equally comfortable, if not more comfortable than some of the "ergonomic" shaping some companies incorporate today. The chainstays are rather middle of the road in terms of length at 43.2 centimeters and contribute nicely to the ride and characteristics of the frame. The tear drop shape keeps mud from accumulating and supplies ample vertical stiffness while still allowing for some decent compliance over the rough stuff. Thankfully, Bailey's rear end allows for plenty of mud clearance at the brake straddle area which was nice to see. I am concerned however that the large, flat lug behind the bottom bracket can serve as a convenient place to hold mud, but haven't yet ridden in conditions to justify this fear.

● Bailey opted for an understated black, red, and white style with painted lugs, fading

to a simple clear coat exposed carbon on the main sections of the frame tubing. As a result, it's easy to notice two things: the carbon, which shows through well, and the name, which is more than visible thanks to the fire engine red lettering on the downtube, head tube, and chainstays. I thought it looked great.

Top tube mounted cable routing keeps the frame clean and organized and leave the nice round downtube cable-free for grabbing—something I personally appreciate considering the other frames I have owned had downtube routing for the front derailleur.

The Ride

My first ride of the Bailey was an interesting one to say the least. After an entire season aboard a completely different bike, Bailey tossed me aboard their Miniluv Carbon just one day before Elite Nationals in Kansas City. Nothing like lining up for Nationals on a bike you have only ridden once to truly test the quality of a product. Much to my surprise the bike not only responded well to my expectations and abilities, but was simply a step above my previous ride. My initial impressions were that the frame was both smoother and yet more responsive than my previous aluminum ride, but yet was nothing too extreme that I couldn't easily adapt to. The Miniluv performed flawlessly; if only my legs would have performed as well.

Following Nationals and a few months aboard the Miniluv training, racing, and trail riding I have to say the bike is still as fun

to get on for a day's spin as the first time I rode it. Being a road racer I am accustomed to feeling a drastic difference riding my road bike and my cyclocross bike, but not with the Bailey. The carbon construction, stout lugs and solid tubing produce a ride that simply begs to be ridden fast. Whether on swoopy single-track or thick mud, the Bailey does exactly what you want it to do when you want it to do it, and with quite a bit of enthusiasm. Although it is a worthy bike to train on (although it is lacking water bottle mounts of any type), or trail ride (unless it's extremely bumpy or rooted) the Miniluv is at its best on a true 'cross course. The solid construction really responds well at accelerating out of a tight corner or up a steep pitch but really shines when cornering at speed or in sections that require a bit of precision. It simply responds well, and it's clear that the frame was in fact built to be raced by people who know what racers want. As I mentioned earlier, shouldering the bike is no problem due to the simple round tube shape and the 18.2 pounds (without pedals) weight. Worth noting is that although the downtube may be a bit big for those with small hands (yes, I do fall in the realm of small-handed people), I had no problem getting adjusted, and actually came to like the thicker tubing when moving the bike to my shoulder.

My only two complaints are rather nit-picky but worth noting. The first, as already mentioned, the bike has no water bottle mounts (although their lower model O'Brien Aluminum/ carbon frame with the same geometry does). During the cross season I spend all my training aside from mountain biking on my cross bike, and not having bottle mounts is more of a disappointment rather than a complaint. You can always pick up a Twofish strap-on bottle cage. The other complaint comes in the form of shelf-like platform at the bottom bracket. For people

such as myself who are lucky enough to live in relatively dry conditions almost year 'round, this may not be a problem, but for those who live a bit further north and actually see forms of sticky, accumulating mud, I am sure this feature will result in transporting more than just the rider across the finish line.

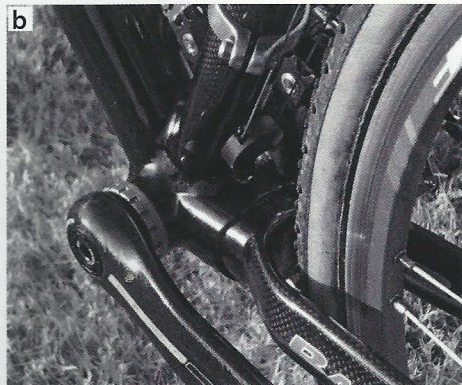
At \$1230 MSRP the Bailey Miniluv is competitively priced compared to other carbon cross manufacturers. For those looking for a do all bike capable of trail riding as well as road riding, the Miniluv can meet those needs. Above all this bike is designed and intended to be raced and is very good at doing so. The bikes responsiveness and comfort courtesy of the carbon construction will make anyone happy on a bumpy grinding course, but for those lucky enough to race in dry, fast conditions, the bike is stellar at speed to say the least. For you grass crit fans, you won't be disappointed. The bike's performance paired with the Bailey's mission to satisfy the customer's needs through endless build options gives you many options to build the carbon 'cross bike of your dreams. If you race 'cross and are looking for a great all around bike with some eye-turning carbon, the Bailey Miniluv may be exactly what you are looking for. ▽



a



c



b

a. Carbon seatstays offer vibration absorption and good mud clearance. b. Aluminum lugs bonded to carbon tubes—a proven construction technique c. Good rear-tire clearance but large lug can collect mud

Who'll be psyched?

- A racer looking for a carbon race machine without no hoopla or fads
- Picky parts people looking for a bike they can customize
- Tall, lanky riders looking for big options

Who'll be bummed?

- Fans of bright paint schemes or European pedigree
- Commuters and tourers
- Technophiles wanting the latest shapes, curves, or hydro-formed tubes

Bike Geek Vitals:

Brand: Bailey Bikes, Model: Miniluv Carbon

Sizes Available: 50, 54, 56, 58, 60

Frame: Carbon tubes with aluminum lugs

Fork: Optional AlphaQ CX20, Easton EC90 SLX,

Ritchey WCS Carbon

Weight: 1400 grams

MSRP: \$980 (frame only w/o fork), \$1230 with choice of fork, complete bikes from \$2683 to \$4000+ (depending on build),

Country of Origin: Taiwan