

Schlitter

Bentriker Review

If you are even remotely interested in ultra marathon cycling or performance recumbents in general, you'd have to have been living under a very large rock to have not heard of John and Jacquie Schlitter. John was one of the founders of Bacchetta, has competed in Race Across America (RAAM) multiple times and has more race wins than you can possibly count. Jacquie ain't no slouch either. She has also competed in RAAM and has held numerous distance records. Now the human powered racing world's power couple has teamed up with industrial designer and fellow long distance cyclist, Julien Mauroy, and put their talents towards creating their own brand. Their first offering is the Schlitter Encore.

Schlitter's mission sounds like an impossible one. They set out to make a custom carbon fiber highracer that was fast, versatile and cost about the same as the average aluminum recumbent. Oh... And they came up with a new cockpit design that no one had tried before while they were at it. That's a very tall order for your first time out, but they've done it. The full carbon Encore is custom built for the individual customer, can accept several different wheelsizes, can use caliper or disc brakes and retails for well under \$3000. Obviously, your first question would be "Okay where did they skimp out?" I've been riding this bike for a couple of months now and I'll be damned if I can tell. The fit and finish on the Hungarian-built frame originally developed by composites engineer and recumbent enthusiast Adam Novak is outstanding. It's definitely just as good as anything else out there. The graphics package also looks fantastic. It's nice seeing a company put some style on their bikes. It's available in red, orange and pink and there are even reflective accents here and there that light up like the proverbial Christmas tree when hit by headlights at night. The 250 lb weight limit is pretty good for a carbon bike and Schlitter does say to call them if you're heavier so I think there may be some wiggle room there.

The components on our \$2850 700C "road build" aren't spectacular but they're hardly cheap and largely equivalent to what you'd find on a similarly-priced aluminum bike. SRAM TT500 shifters and SRAM X9 and Apex derailleurs handle the shifting duties. The Encore came with an FSA compact double crankset. The Vuelta wheelset is inexpensive but light and Michelin Lithion tires are very nice indeed. According to our scales, the complete build weighed in at a very respectable 24.7 lbs. If you threw a lot of money at components, that could drop significantly, but I don't think the Encore will ever be a sub-20 pound bike. That's not as light as some of the higher-dollar carbon bikes but less than any of the aluminum bikes that fall into this price range.

The Encore's handlebar set-up is the real party piece. The "Double J Bars" are drastically different than your average open cockpit highracer bars. Rather than using a tall steering riser and straight bars, the Encore uses a much shorter riser and a curvy two-piece handlebar. This helps eliminate a problem that many riders have on highracers. That being that the top of the riser and the handlebars always seem to be in your field of vision if you prefer a very laid back seat angle. The J-Bars offer a much more unobstructed view. They are also highly adjustable in almost every axis and make fitting the Encore much easier. I have very long legs and short arms, so I often have my arms a bit overextended on the average open cockpit bike. I was able to get the J-Bars adjusted to the exact position that I wanted

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without resorting to long handlebars that cause too much interference while turning. They are a great innovation.

The Encore also has an adjustable seat angle and came with a very breathable and comfortable Ventisit seat pad. The bottom bracket height ratio is about what you'd expect for a "stick bike" style highracer but the seat height is actually quite low for a bike of this type. Since the Schlitter is available with 650C or 650B wheels, this could be an excellent option for shorter riders who want a fast bike.

One of the things that I was most impressed with about the Encore was its ride quality. Some carbon fiber highracers are smoother than others, but none of them are exactly what I'd call "luxurious." I think I could almost use that word to describe the Schlitter. I've never been on a bike this fast that handled the bumps this well. With the excellent ride, wide open view and superb ergonomics, the Encore is a very pleasant place to spend a few hours of pedaling.

And if you do spend a few hours on the Encore, odds are that you will have covered a very considerable distance. As you'd expect from a company bearing the Schlitter name, this is a very fast bike. The Encore is definitely the fastest thing I've reviewed this year. I happen to have a Carpent Raven around and in side-by-side comparisons with the same wheels, the Encore was almost identical in performance on flat ground. When climbing, the Raven's four pound weight advantage and stiffer frame gave it a slight advantage but the Encore was still very quick. It definitely deserves to be in the same conversation as bikes like the Bacchetta Carbon Aero or Metaphysic.

I can't say I have any complaints about the Encore's handling either. The J-Bars make low speed cornering a breeze once you get them adjusted correctly and the high-speed handling was very impressive. The bit of give in the frame can also be a literal life saver if you hit an unexpected bump at ludicrous speed. Another thing I really liked about the Schlitter at higher speeds was the rear V-Brake. A lot of highracers are plagued by poor braking, especially from the factory. The Encore braked very well right out of the box. If you plan on being a real maniac on the descents or often ride in poor weather, there's also a disc brake option. Of course every bike has its downsides. Right now the Encore's biggest enemy is its popularity. They just can't build them fast enough! Delivery time as I right this is about three and a half months. This is a new company and I'm sure that will improve.

In the end, your patience will be rewarded with a bike that can be basically whatever the hell you want it to be. I've seen several Encores set up similar to my test bike, I've seen 700C disc brake versions, 650C bikes for shorter racers and even a full on 650B randonneur bike with fatter tires and disc brakes. The Schlitter Encore is a truly impressive bike for an even more impressive price. The details like the Double J Bars and the reflective accents show a how much thought and effort was put into its design. What makes it all the more astounding is that, while there is obviously a lot of experience on the team, this is the company's first effort. I hope it's the first of many.



Bent rider Review

Schlitter ENCORE Highs – Great comfort, Great handling, Extremely versatile, Insanely low price
Lows – A bit of a wait time currently MSRP – Approximately \$2850 as tested More info –
<http://www.schlitter.bike>