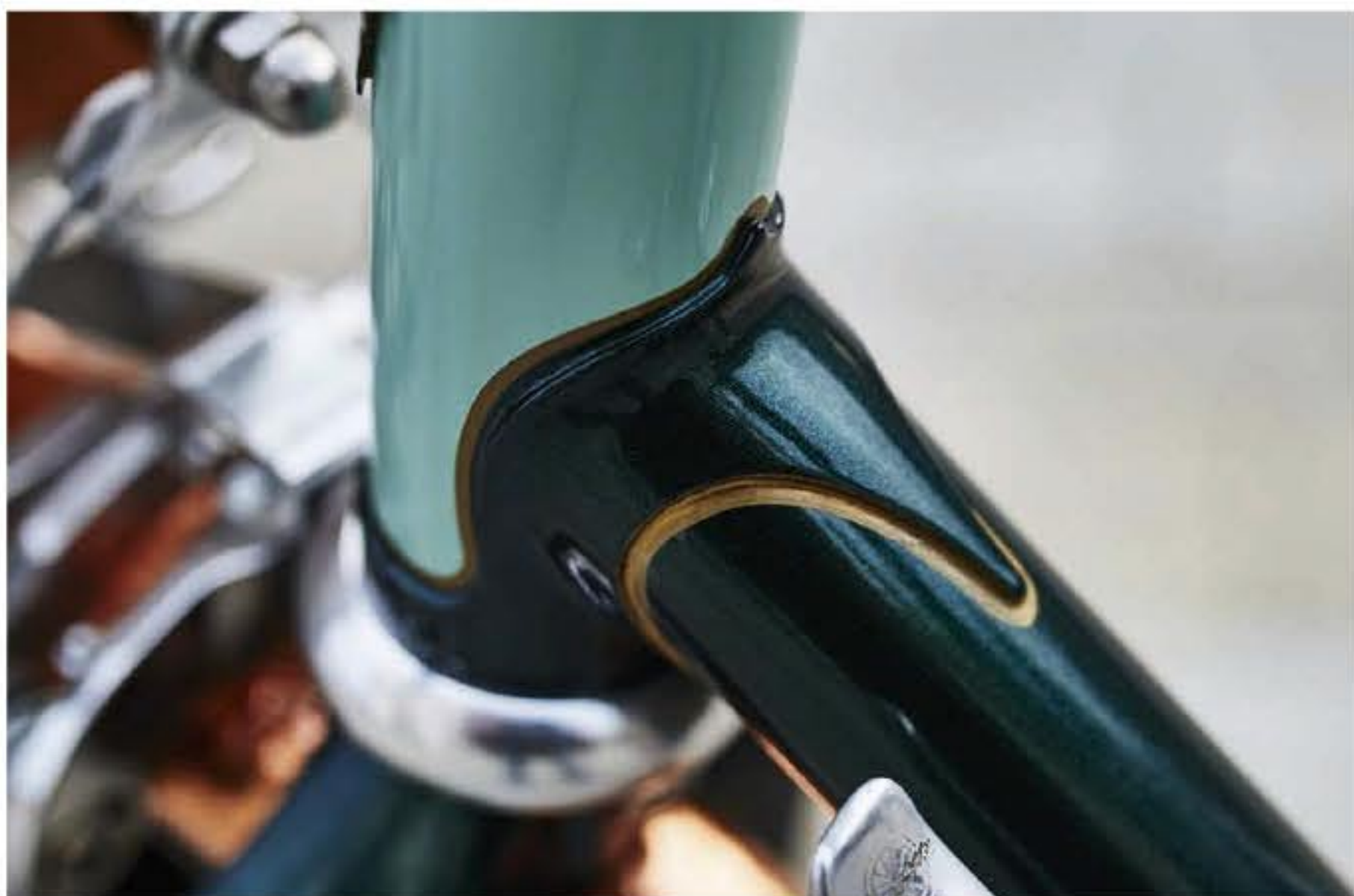


Words: Warren Rossiter Photography: Jesse Wild



LIGHT BLUE ST JOHN'S RETRO {£1,625.00}

The St John's is a love letter to classic British drop-bar bikes. With its slender-tubed and brazed Reynolds steel frame decorated in metallic green with chrome detailing and hand-applied gold pinstripe lug lining, this new machine wouldn't have looked out of place hanging in the window of your local bike shop more than half a century ago.

Beneath the beautiful skin is Reynolds 725, a modern steel whose mandril-butt tubes feature thin walls that cut weight. The geometry mixes past and present with a modern, steeper 72.5° head angle and 73° seat angle melded to a longer fork offset of 45mm, while the long 575mm top tube of our 56cm test bike is countered by the classic quill stem. It all adds up to a bike that hints at a sporty position but is really more about cruising.

That's heightened by the comfort of steel, which elicits a smooth ride that's not even interrupted by the idiosyncratic non-indexed, down-tube shifters. It's naturally not the smoothest transition from one cog to another, and the Driven RX gearing, which is 9 x 2 with



BIKE SPECS

Frame Brazed and lugged Reynolds 725 steel / Fork CB6 double-butt chromoly / Wheels Halo Retro 32 spoke / Transmission Driven RX mechs and down-tube shifters (50/34, 11-28) 9-speed / Brakes Dia-Compe 610 centre pull
www.lightbluecycles.co.uk



78 / URBAN CYCLIST

a combo of 50/34 upfront and 11-28 out back, also results in greater jumps between sprockets than on a modern bike. But once you've acclimatised to shifting old style, it's a truly enjoyable ride.

Continuing the historic theme, the centre-pull brakes ramp up from gentle dragging to pulsing and then locking on tight. It means this classic-inspired beauty requires thinking ahead - thinking about gear and brake selection - to keep things smooth.

The only niggles are with the tyres. While we appreciate the 29c Halo Courier tyre when it comes to fixed-wheel bikes, the large volume

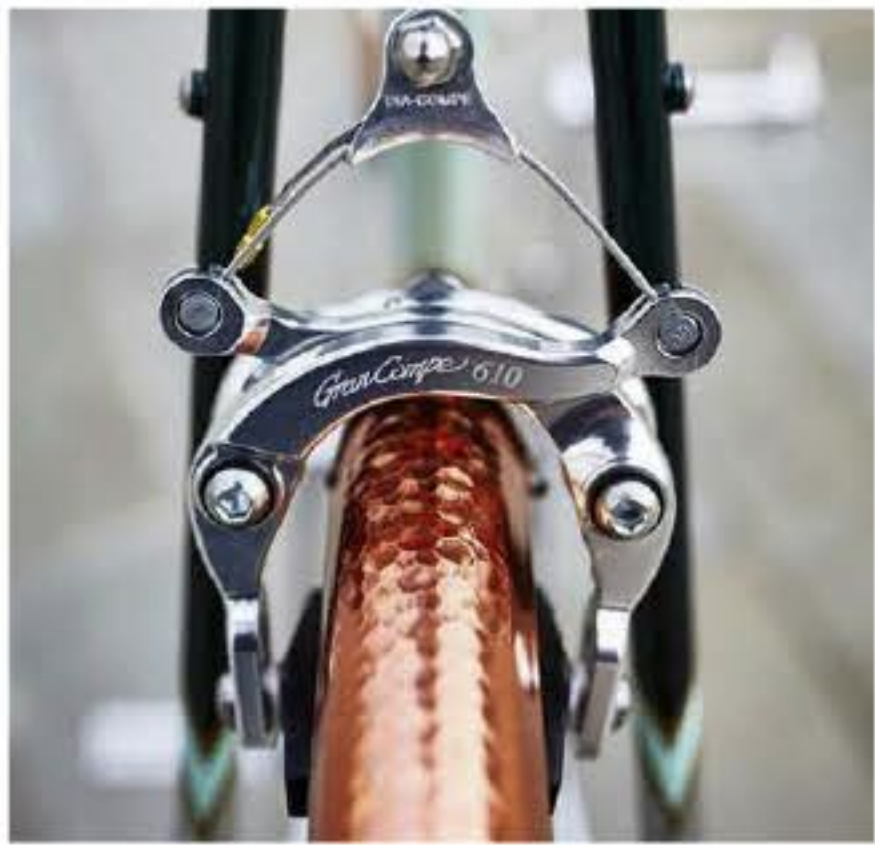


and puncture-protected construction coping well with skidding abuse and rear lock-ups, we'd switch them out for something like Vittoria's skinwall Corsas - in 25 or 28 - to add a little more zip.

If you've ever fancied battling one of the many retro rides like the L'Eroica series, but have neither the time or money for an expensive restoration job, the St John's complies to the rules and regulations of said event. Just add a set of toe clip pedals and you're good to go.

You can do it cheaper, too, as it's £1,375 without the optional accessory pack. However, you'd miss out on those lovely copper-toned, hammered mudguards, porter rack (with matching canvas bag) and thick leather saddle pack. They really elevate the bike's aesthetic, and when a bike looks and rides as well as this Light Blue, we really think it's worth it.

{ 9 } *Gloriously retro and a comfortable ride to boot*



80 / URBAN CYCLIST

INTO 'THE LIGHT BLUE'

You'd be forgiven for not knowing The Light Blue bike brand. They were established in 1895 and have been under the continuous ownership of the Townsend family ever since. Historically the brand was associated with performance bikes, but over the last decade or so the brand has concentrated on producing the Parkside and Chesterton city bikes, which have proved hugely popular among the students in Light Blue's home city of Cambridge.

However, a chance meeting in an airport departure lounge between Light Blue MD Lloyd Townsend and Keith Noronha, MD of Reynolds in Birmingham, hatched a plan for the two companies to work together on relaunching The Light Blue back into racing machines.

The first bike out of the partnership was the single-speed Trinity built from double-butt 531 Reynolds tubing. It proved popular and led to plenty of calls requesting a gear-compatible version. Cue the release of the Kings. This beautifully-lugged steel frame is constructed using 853 Reynolds steel, and features classy touches such as a half-chromed steel fork and chromed chain and seatstays.

The range is now much wider reaching, including classic Audax bikes, tourers, a sportive gem and adventure bike-cum-gravel grinder, each of them based around Reynolds steel.



URBAN CYCLIST / 81