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Ahrens Whole Shot Cyclocross Frameset

By Shannon Mominee
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Tester: Shannon Mominee, Age: 35, Height: 6', Weight: 175lbs., Inseam: 33"

Country of Origin: USA

Price: \$1150 (frame only)

Weight: Frame – 3.8lbs. (with headset and seat collar), 21lbs. as built with pedals

Sizes: 48-60cm in 2cm increments, 58cm (tested), custom geometry available

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Mike Ahrens began fabricating bicycles in 1996 in San Jose, California. Ahrens is a mountain biker with the vision, tools, and knowledge to create steel and aluminum handmade frames for the mountain, cyclocross, and road rider.

Ahrens stock geometry cyclocross frame, the Whole Shot, is fabricated from butted Easton Ultralite 7005 Aluminum tubing with a machined head tube, bottom bracket shell, and chainstay yoke. My size 58cm mean-green test machine arrived with a Chris King headset and Reynolds Ouzo Pro CX carbon fork. I used the SRAM Rival components [reviewed in issue #127](#), a Velocity Dyad wheelset, and some pieces I had to complete the build and get the wheels spinning. All together the bike tipped the scales at 21lbs.

Out of the box, the powdercoat color reminded me of the Incredible Hulk and the smooth, braze-on-free frame looked sleek and stout. While assembling the bike I noticed cable guides down the drive side seatstay for running full housing from the top tube to the rear derailleur, a nice option for the grit this bike would encounter. The rear brake cable routing is also on top, which leaves the underside of the top tube clear of cables for quick, snag-free shouldering. The front derailleur cable routing follows the down tube, where a barrel adjuster is mounted.

My first ride aboard the Whole Shot was to pedal home, since I used parts from my commuter to build up the frame. After few pedal strokes I realized the head tube felt steeper (72.5° vs. 72°) and the bottom bracket shell higher (by 6mm) than my personal 'cross bike. In the dirt the 40" wheelbase and 16.75" chainstays created a platform that was easy to whip around and rail into the corners. Handling felt about as snappy as my road bike and allowed me to dodge rocks and pick my way through singletrack under complete control. Steering was precise and so quick that I found myself squeezing the front wheel between trail obstacles instead of running them over.

Standing to climb was rewarded with instant forward momentum and had me climbing the Pittsburgh hills like a champ. The aluminum frame is stiff, but not harsh, and I detected no frame flex while pumping the bars from side to side. Rolling down steep or off-camber hillsides had my hands aching from squeezing the cantilevers against muddy and wet rims. The snow and leaf-covered trails had me riding light on the front end, but the Ouzo Pro, weighing a mere pound, did an awesome job of calming my nerves, dampening my mistakes when I hit concealed objects or rode trails distorted by heavy hoof prints and making pulling up on the front to hop logs or clear curbs seem effortless.

On doubletrack it was fun to let go of the brakes, cruise at speed and rhythmically swerve to maintain momentum past debris and evade horse poop. Leaning into turns the Whole Shot held its ground. The bike handled predictably and accelerated immediately. Mud caused no clogging against the seat tube and chainstays, nor inhibited shifting. The widest tire mounted into this frame was a studded 35mm Kenda Klimax that left ample room for snow to clear the lower yoke. Straight gauge, hand-formed chainstays provided plenty of room for my heels to pass even when wearing winter riding boots. I also used the Whole

Shot to commute from January until the end of March and was completely satisfied with its crisp steering on pavement, especially when swapping the knobs for a smooth set of 28mm wide tires.

Although I didn't have the opportunity to race the Whole Shot in a cyclocross race, shouldering the bike felt light and comfortable while running up a series of 77 stairs daily to cycle across a bridge when my normal commuting route was closed for construction. The main triangle is free of water bottle cage mounts, leaving this space wide open for shouldering, even with the semi-sloping top tube. Ahrens' race frames normally don't include bottle cage mounts, but they can be added if desired.

My Ahrens tester was a first generation frame and contained one minor flaw. When removing the rear wheel, the nut on the quick release skewer had to be completely unscrewed so that the wheel could clear the hood on the dropouts. This issue has already been addressed and future models come equipped with dropouts manufactured by Paragon Machine Works. Other than that the Whole Shot is one mighty frame.

The stock, aluminum frame geometry features a semi-sloping top tube and is designed around the Reynolds Ouzo Pro and Easton EC90 Carbon CX forks. Both have a 45mm offset and 395mm fork length, but custom frames can be designed around a specific fork. Ahrens' frames are built with butted tubes that are selected by intended frame size to maintain a light weight-to-strength ratio.

Stock Whole Shot frames are available in seven sizes from 48-60cm for \$1150 with a durable powdercoat finish. For \$1550 a Chris King headset and Reynolds Ouzo Pro CX fork can be included. Custom geometry costs more, starting at \$1250 for steel and \$1350 for aluminum. Ahrens includes a one-year warranty on aluminum frames and a five-year warranty on the welds.

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