



saddle, skewers and a rather natty titanium seat collar were all in-house items. The only letdown came with the bar tape, where the VN printing wore off after a couple of weeks, leaving the cockpit looking scruffy.

Noise annoys

Tape issues aside, the rest was good. The transmission came from the ever-reliable Shimano Ultegra, with a go-anywhere triple chainset; the wheels, no-nonsense Mavic Open Pro rims on excellent Chris King hubs.

Chris King hubs are among the finest money can buy — super-smooth, with incredible longevity. They do however have a unique freehub ‘whirr’, which at speed can be quite high pitched. Not everybody’s cup of tea and could be the spoiling of an otherwise quiet outing in the lanes.

The Yukon came fitted with mudguards that — thinking there might actually be a summer in Britain this year — we removed. They went back on again two weeks later. After all, if the comfort factor of titanium is one of its big selling points, and this being a machine designed to be ridden all day, we might as well go the whole hog and be as comfortable as possible.

And comfortable we were. A 72deg seat angle with 73deg at the head, curved seatstays, generous clearances — without being unnecessarily large — and those carbon forks with 25mm Continental tyres, kept everything very smooth. Throw in the justifiably renowned ride qualities of the



Transmission comes courtesy of Shimano

3AL/2.5V tubing used by Van Nicholas and you have a magic carpet ride.

But we know what you’re thinking: it must be as dull as a Harry Potter-convention in Milton Keynes. All comfort and no zip makes for a dull ride, surely?

Not a bit of it. The Yukon handled very pleasingly and had a sprightly air about it that encouraged a decent pace. Of course it could plod if plodding was required, but why plod when you can zip? What’s more, why not carry on zipping for hour after hour, and then zip all over again the day after?

The Yukon became, over the course of the summer months, the default bike for practically every ride, despite other eminently suitable machines being available. From sportives to training sessions to evening chaingangs, the Yukon was the one for me, despite some sideways looks from training partners. Maybe they were just admiring the handsome lines of the Van Nicholas. It is a neatly constructed frame that makes for a fine-looking bike. Look after it and the Yukon will stay that way for a very long time.

“You could list your titanium frame in your will and get another lifetime’s mileage out of it”



Chris King hubs laced to Open Pro rims

been working in titanium for eight years now and freely admits to being obsessed by the stuff. His specifications are built up in China before being shipped to the company’s Dutch base for assembly, where a range of road and mtb machines are assembled. The custom bike builder on the Van Nicholas website gives the buyer endless permutations or the frame-only option.

The Yukon is the less expensive of VN’s two Audax-cum-touring frames, although marginally the lighter at 1.62kg for the 58cm model tested. It is coupled with the company’s own-branded carbon forks, one of many items sporting the Van Nicholas logo on our test machine. Brakes, bars, stem, seatpost,

Ian Cleverly

BACK in the late ‘80s, companies such as Litespeed and Merlin in the States started putting out titanium bikes in earnest, and a small but dedicated band of devotees waxed lyrical about the magical properties of the ultimate exotic frame material.

But somewhere along the line, titanium got sidelined, as the big manufacturers put their eggs in the carbon basket. The small-scale bespoke manufacturers kept plugging away, though, and Ti remains a true alternative in the vast array of top-end bikes on the market. And in the case of Litespeed, small-scale became medium-scale: demand is consistent for the wonder stuff.

After the headlong rush for carbon, the discerning bike buyer is taking another look at titanium to see what it has to offer. After all, the same properties that got people excited back in the ‘80s still hold today: the ride quality is superb; resistance to corrosion and fatigue are unbeatable.

Look after your titanium frame and there is no reason why it shouldn’t look (and ride) the same in 20 years’ time. You could list your titanium frame in your will and the lucky beneficiary would, theoretically, get another lifetime’s mileage out of it. How many frames can you say that about? Van Nicholas founder and designer Jan-Willem Sintnicolaas has

Bike test
Van Nicholas Yukon £2,665



Photos: Anthony Butler

One V-sign to be proud of, for life!

CONCLUSION

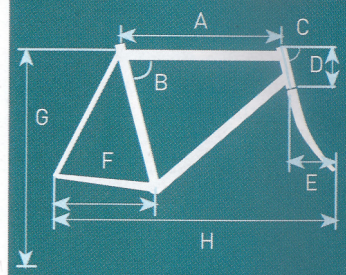
VAN Nicholas has got the cost of the Yukon down to a very reasonable level for a titanium machine. Factor in the in-built longevity (all VN frames come with a lifetime guarantee) and it actually works out to be a snip. Order through a UK dealer and it gets even cheaper, due to reduced shipping costs. For a mile-eating steady-Eddie that can be pressed into service for friskier purposes when required, the Yukon is spot on.

VAN NICHOLAS YUKON

Distributor	Van Nicholas, www.vannicholas.com
Price	£2,665 as seen
Frame	3AL/2.5V titanium
Fork	Van Nicholas AX carbon 1 1/8in alloy steerer
Size range	50-60 in 2cm increments
Weight	20.3lb [9.2kg] (inc pedals)
Groupset	Shimano Ultegra
Alterations	None
Gear ratios	50/39/30 with 12-25
Wheels	Mavic Open Pro on Chris King hubs
Tyres	Continental Ultra Race 25mm
Bars	Van Nicholas anatomic
Stem	Van Nicholas 110mm
Seatpost	Van Nicholas titanium
Saddle	Van Nicholas
Size tested	58cm

OVERALL RATING

9



SIZE TESTED: 58

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
56.6	72°	73°	16.5	4.5	42.5	82	102

