



Giant TCR Advanced SL 2 \$4,200

We have to break out the superlatives for this out-of-the-box racer. It's the lightest and stiffest frame that Giant has ever produced—the same one (albeit without the integrated seat mast) that was ridden to more pro wins last year than any other bike. Granted, the SL 2 is hung with a more affordable mix of Shimano Ultegra components and Mavic Ksyrium Elite wheels. But make no mistake: It's still an absolutely race-worthy rig. It's such a well-rounded package, in fact, that three testers each gave it a perfect 10 on their score sheets—but, and this is the most telling part, in three different categories: climbing, descending, and pedaling responsiveness. 16 lbs, 56cm; giant-bicycles.com

Cervélo P4 \$6,800

Arguably the most anticipated bike of 2009 (it was kept behind glass at bike-industry trade shows last fall), the triathlon/time-trial-specific P4 hosts several radical advancements. To hide the rear brake from the wind, engineers tucked it inside the frame, behind a removable panel. They also designed a wing-shaped bottle to smooth airflow near the cranks. Though it works aerodynamically, the bottle's odd shape and position make drinking a challenge. "It's almost impossible to reach down that far while in the aero bars and not crash," said one tester. Still, there are other ways to drink during a TT (like the CamelBak RaceBak, \$100). And in terms of performance, this is the fastest aero bike we've ridden. 17.4 lbs, 56cm; cervelo.com



Time-trial bikes like the P4 are too heavy and unstable for normal riding, but their **aero technology**—shaped tubes, bladed forks, and deep-section wheels—is making its way to regular road bikes, with Cervélo's S3 (see review at outsideonline.com/cycling) leading the charge.



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KILLER VALUE \$

Cannondale Six 5 \$1,760

Cannondale is now manipulating carbon fiber for high-end race bikes as well as anyone, but the company hasn't completely abandoned its deep aluminum heritage. The Six 5 weds a carbon rear end and fork, which minimize painful road vibrations, to a stiff aluminum front triangle for pedaling efficiency. The frame sprints and climbs as well as or better than any other bike in this price range. The slightly raised front end takes strain off the back and neck, and the compact Shimano 105 cranks made quick work of the hills. "When I saw the price, I wasn't expecting much," said one tester, "but I really don't have any complaints. It's a very well-rounded ride." A true starter race bike. 18.8 lbs, 56cm; cannondale.com