

Old School Cool

Two years ago, I wrote enthusiastically about my Audax machine of the day and its evolution to suit my riding requirements. The bike was a 2015 Defy, all cutting edge endurance chassis, carbon wheels and big tires, electronic drivetrain, extended gearing, trick chainrings, armchair and all modern conveniences. It was a supremely capable machine, but never a great ride.

The right tool for the job certainly, but not a bike above all other when it came to creating an event out of rolling down the road. It was pretty bland, and so after 9000-ish fairly uneventful and uninspiring kilometres, I sold it.

<https://audaxqld.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/building-the-ultimate-machine1.pdf>

Meanwhile I'd been reunited with my old race bike from decades ago, a Rossin Record. I'd refurbished it and fitted a modern drivetrain and wheels and this machine subsequently came to be known as Bling. This bike always makes any ride huge fun, and so it was getting plenty of miles. Owners of vintage steel machines will appreciate the way these bikes go down the road and descend. It's a great joy to ride in the hills for sure and the opposite of the modern day two wheeled cycling appliance.

It was not all rainbows and unicorns however being unsuitable for vintage events post restoration. These typically require downtube shifters and external brake cables. I had fitted an 11 speed Campagnolo gruppo because I intended to ride this bike a lot. Geometry is uncompromisingly performance orientated unlike the engine and so long days out are not common.



<http://gallery.heinrich.id.au/rossin>

Enter Frank, a slightly younger brother to Bling. Frank is a Rossin Professional of 1986 vintage and arrived equipped with original drivetrain and wheels, unrestored. A top shelf machine in his day, Frank sported pantographed everything, tubular wheelset and a complete Campagnolo Super Record drivetrain. This bike new probably cost more than a few cars I've owned over the years. The frame has crimped tubes, the technology of the day employed to make the bikes stiffer, lighter and more responsive.

I replaced the wheels and brake pads and discovered the seat post was in need of replacement. I soon came to realise that Frank had not been greased in decades and everything tightened over time until it broke - including the crank. Vintage SR cranks are quite common so acquiring replacements are not a challenge, but an opportunity now presented itself to reimagine Frank for vintage events which typically include at least as much vert as your average Audax ride.

Frank, as in frankensteined. Purists can stop reading now.

What happened next is a later vintage Campagnolo Record triple crankset and suitable front mech was acquired and fitted (53, 39, 30) in combination with a long cage attached to the original Super Record rear mech. A Shimano rear cassette had already been fitted (11-30) along with a Shimano chain. Owing to down tube shifters it all worked just fine. The brakes previously had modern blocks fitted and braking is stupendous on the new wheels.

Frank is more agile and responsive than Bling, completing his first brevet earlier this year and will be the bike of choice for brevets in future. With long legs and extended gearing, Frank is not scared of long distances or any hill, is supremely comfortable on 28mm tires and stupidly fast when conditions permit. Descending and braking are what you might expect of an Italian thoroughbred racing machine and is perfect for rides long and short owing to different geometry than Bling.

Frank is also an occasion every time I head out, and really the sort of thing I had hoped for from the Defy.



<http://gallery.heinrich.id.au/frank>