

# BIKE OF THE YEAR

## BEST MID-BUDGET HARDTAIL

Not so long ago, some sort of evil, over-bouncy suspension fork would have had us mopping up excited puddles, then some bikes even started wearing cable disc brakes. Now if you haven't got good hydraulic discs, a decent fork and a competent hard working transmission then don't bother turning up to the £500 party.



## CLAUD BUTLER CAPE WRATH

This nifty package has got the lot

£500  
Complete bike

Falcon [www.falconcycles.co.uk](http://www.falconcycles.co.uk)

Tested: MBUK211



Along with co-brand Falcon, Claud Butler have always been really strong in the lower price points and the Cape Wrath is no stranger to our awards listings. Competition was stiffer than ever this year though, with several bikes from bigger and smaller brands running close.

What marked out the Cape as the superhero here though is its excellent overall balance and some

smart spec'ing. The frame is aesthetically current with square shaped head tube and rear stays, but they're not so stiff you're suffering for fashion on longer rides. Nice UK detailing includes plenty of mud room and fixtures for that classic UK accessory, the face saving Crud Catcher.

Reasonable Suntour fork and almost complete Shimano Deore transmission isn't unique on bikes

at this price but it certainly puts the CB right up near the front. From there, the excellent Quad disc brakes and a usefully light and agility enhancing Ritchey wheelset take it right to the top.

Add Truvativ and Tioga finishing kit in all the right shapes and sizes for all-round handling confidence and it's the competition that'll be feeling the Wrath of Claud Butler.