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## NOT ALL BIKES ARE BORN EQUAL

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Counterfeiting affects a wide range of manufactured products, and more particularly luxury products. The high performance bicycle industry, a niche industry, has been increasingly faced with a great increase in counterfeiting. Surprised? Here are various factors that are causing this emergence of counterfeiting in an industry that we thought spared until recently.

High performance road bikes are expensive; in fact very expensive. A road bike like the ones we see on the roads of the Tour de France retails for several thousands of dollars. Nowadays, buyers who wish to change bikes are often inclined to shop online, learning about the characteristics of different bike models and their prices. In this context, several websites are taking advantage of this traffic, offering to sell bicycles which are supposedly directly sourced from the manufacturers. Actually, many of these website are selling counterfeit bikes made in clandestine factories, featuring a price well below the suggested retail price. Although the offer seems tempting, the price is still substantial, at several hundred dollars, since, as in other industries where counterfeiting is prevalent, counterfeiters are gaining huge profits on each product sold.

Another issue is that counterfeit bikes are not so easy to identify. More often than not, the counterfeit bike presents a similar geometry to the one of the genuine bike. The differences are measured in millimeters and tenths of degrees and the materials used are similar, at least in appearance. Finally, the counterfeit bike often presents a mass close enough to that of the genuine bike as well as aesthetic details like the paint job and decals are often reproduced accurately. Even for an expert, it is almost impossible to distinguish a genuine bike from a counterfeit replica upon simple visual inspection.

Are there any notable differences between a genuine bike and a counterfeit bike? Many examples of counterfeit bikes have been analyzed on specialized websites or articles published in magazines. The conclusion is almost always the same: even though a counterfeit bike is similar to the genuine bike, a counterfeit bike is not made with the same materials or with the same build quality. For instance, the carbon fiber materials used in the counterfeit bike typically have an elasticity modulus significantly lower than that of the carbon fiber materials used in the authentic bike. This choice of

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less expensive materials can cause the bike frame to be more flexible, and thus cause instability at high speeds. Furthermore, the lay-up of the layers of carbon fiber materials may be poorly executed and may cause localized weaknesses. These weaknesses can cause cracks within the bike frame.

The aforementioned issues have implications for a buyer who would be tempted to purchase a counterfeit bike, or who has purchased one unknowingly. First and foremost, the counterfeit bike can be particularly dangerous due to manufacturing defects, such as the ones mentioned above. Often, no quality control is performed after production and, carbon fiber components may delaminate prematurely, and thereby weaken the structural integrity of the bike frame.

Furthermore, the buyer is likely to have constant mechanical problems with a counterfeit model. For example, the headset can loosen unexpectedly, the pedal cranks and the bottom bracket may squeak, the collar of the seat post may break, etc. These manufacturing defects can also lead to premature wear of other components of the bike, such as the wheels, tires or the drivetrain.

Finally, the buyer is likely to have no warranty with respect to the overall quality of the bike, if a failure occurs on the bike. This can also have a significant impact on the possibility of reselling this bike.

In conclusion, if we may offer some advice, always exercise caution when shopping online and consult your authorized dealer for the purchase of your next bike. Even if pictures on a website illustrate a bike that seems to be genuine, it may very well be a counterfeit replica. Remember that if an opportunity sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

To see images of counterfeit and authentic bikes:  
<<https://thecounterfeitreport.com/product/439/Specialized-Bicycle-Products.html>>.



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