

Gear up!

A cross-section of cycling products selected and reviewed by CTC staff, specialist journalists and CTC members

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SHIMANO MT75 XT 29ER WHEELS

£205.52 (FRONT), £225.10 (REAR)

Reviewed by Editor Dan Joyce

This year Shimano launches a 29er-specific 12-36T cassette and a matching, higher-torque hub, both of which could also be of interest to touring cyclists. These XT mountain bike wheels came earlier: I've had them on my Inbred 29er for six months and have run them both with a cassette and a singlespeed sprocket. The hubs are well-sealed XT units with centrelock disc mounts. The rear hub – like the forthcoming higher-torque hub – engages quickly, picking up drive after only 10 degrees of rotation rather than 20. I like this in theory, but never really noticed it while riding.

The 24 straight-pull spokes are laced to tubeless compatible rims with a 19mm width at the bead seat, suiting tyres up to about 2.25 inches – and ideally a bit narrower. Fit is tight. The wheels seemed neither more nor less stiff laterally than my existing On-One wheels

with 32 conventional spokes. At 1850g/pair, without discs or skewers, they were 340g lighter – making them £1 dearer per gram saved.

So while they're very nice wheels, you might struggle to justify the cost unless you were fitting them to e.g. a Fisher Superfly for XC racing and/or especially wanted some lighter weight tubeless wheels. For general riding, I'd recommend the new Shimano 29er rear hub (and cassette) and, given a compatible fork, a through-axle front hub, then have them built up by hand with your favourite 32-hole rims.

Details: Madison, www.madison.co.uk



SPA CYCLES RIGIDA GRIZZLY/XT WHEELSET £257

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

Rigida's Grizzly rims use a tungsten carbide coating that has proved incredibly resistant to wear. After a month of being knocked around remote tracks and trails in SE Asia, mine still look new. The rims have also proved stronger than their 540g weight would suggest, and should be able to handle everything but the most heavily-laden roughstuff

tours. The wheels themselves are built to Spa Cycle's typically high standards, laced with double-butted spokes all round, except on the rear driveside which uses Sapim Strongs for extra strength. The 36-hole rims also contribute to a tough, laterally stiff wheelset.

Braking in the wet is very good, though the rims can squeal initially, and there's a safety indicator for when you do eventually wear them out. The 19mm internal rim width on the 26in wheels will take wide MTB tyres while the 700C version should fit 28-50mm rubber. You'll need to use more expensive ceramic-specific brake blocks – others wear down like butter.

Details: www.spacycles.co.uk, 01423 887003



SPRINTTECH MIRRORS £20/PAIR

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden



These mirrors obviously can't be used with bar-end shifters there, but apart from that they provide a rear view on most drop handlebar bikes. The view

is somewhat limited by a saddlebag, but if you tote a rack-pack or panniers you'll find the small plastic mirrors give a clear enough image of what's behind. They're convex, so things look much smaller and further away than they are. The mirrors mount ball-and-socket wise into rubber bungs and hold their position better when riding than parked. They're easily knocked out of position against a wall and also scratched. But on-the-fly adjustment is simple. A mirror is no substitute for turning your head, but these ones are a useful and affordable addition. Other colours are available, including black.

Details: [from wildoo.co.uk](http://from.wildoo.co.uk), tel: 0870 977 1550

DNA SAUCER ZERO-REACH STEM £9.99

Reviewed by CTC Member Russell Wiles



There are a few reasons to reduce the reach on a bike – to improve comfort, to convert from straight to drop bars, or (in my case) to adapt a secondhand tandem that was the correct size except for reach. As the tandem came with a 60mm stem there was little scope

for reducing the reach further with a conventional stem. Enter the DNA Saucer – a chunky looking item that is well made and finished and which replaces the existing stem and puts the bars in line with the steerer. It is designed for 1 1/8" threadless steerers but as with all threadless stems it can be shimmed to fit 1" steerers. It is designed for 25.4mm bars but, as it is a removable face plate design, 26mm bars will fit as well. The stem measures 70mm from base to centre of bars and has a 56mm top cap. It requires 35mm of exposed steerer. I now feel more comfortable and in control on the bike as I am not so stretched out.

Details: Billy's, www.billys.co.uk, tel: 01223 568368

SKS CHAINBOARD £19

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

Don't want to wear tights or trouser-clips? Fit a chainguard! After searching all the bikeshops in Cambridge – where cycling isn't just a sport – I found the Chainboard by SKS. It's stiff and strong and matches their chromoplastic mudguards. To fit you remove the cranks and bottom-bracket and secure a propeller-like support via the latter. The top of the chain is shielded by a section of tough 'chromoplastic' laminate, along which a rear piece slides to adjust the length. Although the chainstays on this 26in wheel bike were even shorter, it was easy to trim a couple of cm off this top section. There's a choice of rear attachments, including a rubber-lined clamp. There are three sizes of Chainboard. This is the 38-teeth (or fewer) size, for use with hub-gear bikes. The 44T and 48T Chainboards are designed to work with triple chainsets and have a slight rise to clear the mech. Fit one to

make your tourer or hybrid a more practical runabout. From: Townsends Light Blue Bicycle Shop, 01223 315845. Or try SKS importers www.madison.co.uk



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EXUSTAR STELVIO £75 APPROX

Reviewed by Technical Editor Chris Juden

There were just a couple of things about these excellent shoes that warranted improvement – the plastic tongue and the ‘too chunky’ sole. The newest Stelvio shoes have a leather tongue and a smoother sole, here shown with SPD cleat attached. I was worried that Exustar might use a narrow sole with a tiny heel that would be less stable to walk on and wear down rapidly if you did. The one they’ve chosen for the new Stelvio swaps deep slots for narrow sipes whilst keeping the width and thickness that makes these shoes so versatile and durable. The new model doesn’t provide quite as much grip on muddy paths, but is otherwise just as good to walk (and ride) in and looks better on pavement. If the cleat cut-out is not removed, these shoes are equally suitable for ordinary pedals with or without toeclips.

Details: Sizes 37 to 48, imported by RSI: www.ariane-int.com, tel: 0208 838 0150



FLIP VIDEO ULTRA £99.99

Reviewed by helmet camera ‘vigilante’ Dave Brennan

The Flip Video Ultra is marketed as a simple-to-use, relatively cheap digital camcorder. It is, but in an attempt to diversify the market for the Flip they have also released an Action Mount to allow you to fit the camera to (for example) a helmet or handlebar. The mount uses Velcro straps for attachment, which does not work at all well. I found it impossible to attach securely to either my helmet or handlebars. The camera is heavy and kept sliding around uncontrollably during rides. If you used the camera on a helmet (as recommended) it would certainly get you noticed (see picture)!

The camera will also only allow up to 60 minutes recording with no possibility of expansion, so no chance of filming long rides. The camera also felt quite fragile and was not waterproof, although a waterproof cover can be purchased at extra

cost. The video itself was actually of quite good quality, but as the camera and mount are not designed for rough use, I would look elsewhere if you want to record your rides.

Details: www.flipvideo.co.uk



PLETSCHER MULTI ZOOM £17.59

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert

Carbon forks are infamous for juddering with cantilever brakes. The cause, I’m told, is flex in the forks, particularly the steering column, feeding back into the cable. My Specialized Tri-cross was a case in point. I wanted to improve its braking by fitting Tektro CR520 brakes (as reviewed in Cycle), but how to avoid judder? Chris Juden’s advice was to suspend the brake cable from an ‘uphanger’ on the fork crown, cutting out the flexy steering column. Once common on MTBs, this component proved hard to find.

The KF Uphanger appears designed for steel forks, but fitted easily and securely onto the more bulky carbon crown of the Specialized. The change in performance was dramatic: the combination of CR520s and the rigid uphanger giving powerful, efficient braking with absolutely no judder – even when following Tektro’s instructions to fit the pads with no toe-in. The extra clearance between brake pad and rim has also eliminated brake rub, which I was getting with Mini Vs. I would strongly recommend this combination (Tektro wide-profile cantis plus uphanger) for any drop bar bike with cantilever or V-brakes.

Details: bought from www.dotbike.com. KF is a brand of www.fisheroutdoor.co.uk, so the product – code BP1272F – should be available from most bike shops. You’ll also want an in-line cable adjuster.

Best of the rest

REVOLUTION HYDRATE HYDRATION PACK

£24.46 *Cycling journalist Michael Stenning*



Hydration packs are arguably the easiest way of drinking aboard a mountain bike. The aptly named Hydrate incorporates a host of other features including: a front pocket for stashing keys, mini tools and other nick-nacks; an external bungee for stowing a windproof; a high visibility rain cover; and an LED tab. The 1.5 litre bladder has a huge 90mm screw-top mouth, which makes for effortless filling and easier post-ride cleaning. The vented construction and tactile straps ensure good airflow, maximising comfort in milder weather whilst the sternum and waist straps prevent annoying bag sway. The bite valve incorporates an end cap to prevent contamination from mud/road grime. Overall, great value.

www.edinburghbicycle.com, tel: 0845 257 0808

BBB WATERPROOF SHOE COVERS

£25 APPROX *Reviewed by CTC member Amy Juden*

My nicest cycling shoes are made with some kind of mesh. This is good for the 'three fine days' that



define an English summer, not so hot in the ensuing thunderstorm! As for the rest of the year... these shoes really aren't much use without rain and windproof covers. These 'Waterflex' covers by BBB, as the name suggests, keep the rain out and stretch to fit. The

outside is PU rubber and the inside a bit fleecy. It's enough to keep the chill off. Sub-zero I need extra socks in a size bigger shoes, which these covers also fit. Quality features include Kevlar reinforcements at the toe and other wear-prone edges, taped seams, a YKK zip and reflective stripes.

Imported by greyville.com (01543 251328), fit shoes 39 to 48 in five sizes.

CORINNE DENNIS PADDED UNDIES £19.99

CTC Campaigns Officer Adam Coffman

Most 'undershorts' are cut long like cycling shorts, and aren't comfortable under trousers when you're sitting at your desk all day. These cotton/Lycra mix pants (men's and women's available) have the same kind of synthetic pad but are cut like normal underwear. On my 20-mile round trip commute in normal clothes, they have been very comfortable.



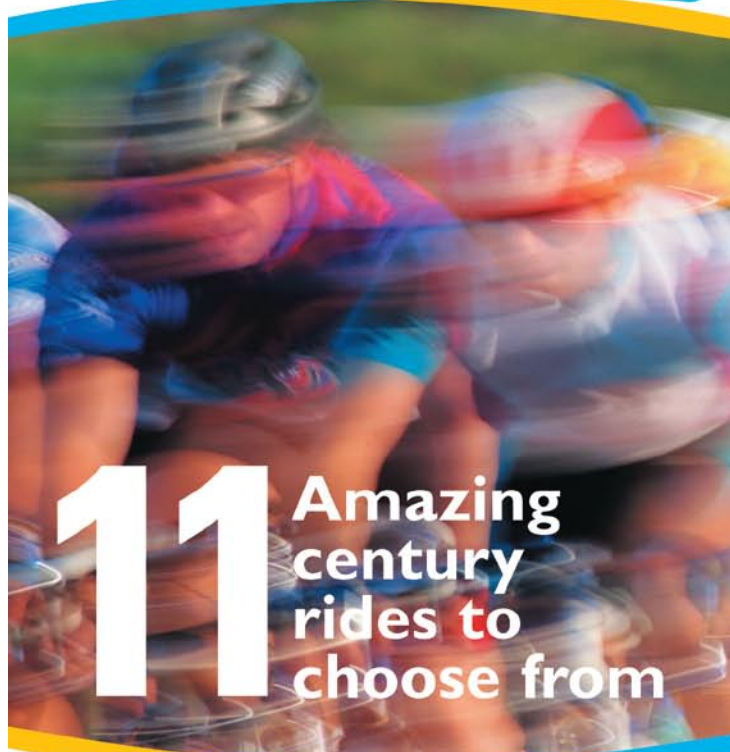
www.corinnedennis.co.uk, tel: 01757 289800.



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