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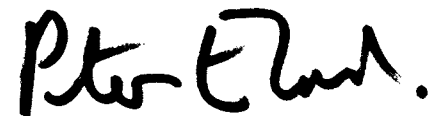
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Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher,
Velo Vision

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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION
We weren't first with the name. *Velo-Vision* is a bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany. *Velo Vision* magazine exists in friendly harmony with *Velo-Vision* in Germany.

Velo Vision is printed on paper produced from sustainable forests to Nordic Swan standards.



COVER: Taking the Estelle for a spin.

OPPOSITE: The impressive cliffs at Etretat were the destination for a day-ride on our tandem tour this summer. Both photos: Peter Eland

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THERE AND BACK

It's been rather longer than it should have been since last issue, for which apologies. Various factors conspired to make this issue late: particularly a nasty lurgy which struck me down shortly after returning from Eurobike. We'll be back on track for next issue, which will reach UK readers before Christmas as usual.

Before all of that, I did manage to actually go cycling for a few weeks in July, as you'll see from the photo opposite and other items throughout this issue. Getting

away for a few weeks by bike is a real tonic, in a way that everyday riding and weekend outings can't quite match. We took a leisurely ride westwards along the coast from Dieppe in northern France, striking it lucky with the weather and a series of spectacular cliff-top campsites.

I hope many of you managed to get away cycling over the summer, too – if you did, why not send a picture? We'll publish a selection next issue to help banish the winter gloom!

Peter Eland

GOOD THINGS COME IN THREES

Can a single bike ever be enough? Thomas Stegemann from Germany got hooked by his first recumbent, but it didn't stop there...



Every cyclist knows that there is no single bike which is perfect for every application. For example, a racing bike is suitable for everyday use and city traffic only under very limited circumstances, and of course nobody would take part in a road race on an upright town bike.

When it comes to recumbents, the same principle applies, and it's for this reason that I recently bought my third recumbent, so as to have the right tool for every job. And I'm not the only one: in our local 'Moorligger' recumbent group here in the north-west of Germany, there are several similar cases.

But let's start at the beginning...



First bike: the Bevo

After riding completely ordinary upright bikes for several decades, in March 1998 I bought a 'Bevo Bike' direct from the manufacturer, Voss Spezialrad near Hamburg. This is a compact long-wheelbase bike with front wheel drive and, for a recumbent, a high riding position, with a seat height of around 75 cm, and the bottom bracket somewhat lower. I quickly realised that it was much more comfortable than my upright bikes, and it was also rather faster. But what really enchanted me was the

wonderful new feeling of riding along sitting back and relaxed.

The Bevo-Bike is a near perfect everyday bike: comfortable, and with its high seat ideal for riding in town traffic. There is plenty of carrying capacity in the rack, which sits below the bike's centre of gravity between the wheels. The hub gear hardly requires any maintenance. And with the 'Zipper' fairing, even riding in the rain is no problem. I wrote a more thorough test report for *Velo Vision* some time ago, and this appeared in Issue 4, December 2001.

Cycle touring is also possible with the Bevo, although the seven-speed hub gear limits it when climbing. And if the slope is too steep, the front wheel slips and you have to get off. In Summer 2002 I took it on a tour through East Anglia in England, and it worked fine in the rolling hills there.

So far I have ridden over 32,000 km on this bike, and still use it almost every day. It's been a real workhorse.

Second bike: the Toxy LT

By summer 2003 I was contemplating how nice it would be to have a second, somewhat faster recumbent for days out and cycle tours. After numerous test rides and visits to trade shows my choice came down to the Toxy LT. This is a typical short wheelbase recumbent, with seat height at around 50 cm and the bottom bracket a bit higher. This ensures that the rider has a small frontal area on the bike for good aerodynamics.

Several factors attracted me to this particular bike: first that it had calm, refined handling, despite the short wheelbase. The rider sits right between



the two similarly-sized wheels, and controls the bike via underseat direct steering: a neat design by Arved Klutz of Toxy. I also liked the build quality, striking appearance, and flexible specification. This let me put together a full-suspension recumbent to my particular requirements, with underseat steering and mesh seat (which I find more comfortable than the hard shell type) for a relaxed posture, carrier rack and low-riders for four panniers, three bottle cages, SON hub dynamo, Magura hydraulic brakes and SRAM 3x7 transmission (predecessor to the current DualDrive) with twin chainrings. This gave me the range to spin up the steepest of hills, while also to 'keep pushing' downhill!

The icing on the cake was that when I unpacked my custom Toxy LT, it turned out to be the exact same colour as my Bevo!

Some time later I added a 'Streamer' fairing for weather protection, and also a rear tailbox. Designed for the hard shell seat, it naturally didn't



fit perfectly against the back of my mesh model, so I added two shaped plexiglass panels. This noticeably improved the aerodynamics and hence my speed.

This makes the Toxy an almost idea tourer and travel bike: very comfortable, but almost as fast as a racing bike! It allows me, as a not particularly athletic rider, to cover over 200 km in a day, something I would never do on an upright bike. I remember riding for 50 km one day in the early dawn light, and just gliding along through the still air on my recumbent – superb.

Overall I have now ridden around 20,000 km on this recumbent, and it's such fun that sometimes I use it for everyday utility rides just to get a little taste of that 'holiday feeling'!

Third bike: the Toxy ZR

So why would I want a third recumbent? Well, in summer 2006, and the following year, recumbent races for all comers were held in Haren-Ruetenbrock on the Dutch-German border. It was great fun taking part on the closed street circuit, riding at top speed without having to worry about traffic.

But the LT is no racing recumbent, and I am no racer, so I always ended up in the bottom third of the field. The riders who were so casually overtaking me were often riding low racers – the racing bikes of the recumbent world. So maybe I could ride a bike like that, I thought...

That summer was my 50th birthday, and I wanted to give myself a special present. I remembered that the dealer from whom I had bought my Toxy LT had an eight-year-old Toxy ZR low racer in the shop, on offer at a very good price. I phoned him and was in luck: it was still for sale. After a test ride it was an easy decision: this was my third recumbent!

Riding this sort of bike is just incredible fun: sitting just 20 cm off the ground, you accelerate remarkably quickly. With the efficient front wheel drive and low weight (compared to my other recumbents) the 20" wheels just swallow up the miles. And you reach terminal velocities which were hitherto unknown!

A friend on a 'normal' racing bike confirmed for me that it is indeed faster than an upright racing bike. But how comfortable is it? The riding position is laid back, but still very comfortable. Low racers with an even flatter posture are somewhat faster, but it becomes tiring tilting the head forward for a good enough view. I think you should feel relaxed even on a racing bike, and that is possible on the ZR. You have a good forwards view,

and the effective rear suspension (not a feature of all low racers) lets you ride even on poor road surfaces.

One problem is that on this sort of racing machine there's nowhere to carry luggage, not even a raincoat or pump. For some lucky riders there's the option of a tailbox, which both smooths out the aerodynamics and offers luggage space. A tailbox is available for the ZR, but it's so expensive!

But again I was lucky: two weeks after I'd bought the bike, someone advertised a second-hand tailbox on the internet for less than half the new price. Once I'd bolted it onto my bike I realised that it had a third benefit, alongside aerodynamics and luggage: it made the bike look fantastic, too!

So my low racer can now handle both racing and day rides, and I really enjoy going out on this bike. But it does have limitations: the ZR is hardly



suitable for town traffic, because with just 20 cm seat height it's very low down to be seen, and this also gives you a very poor

view. If the roads are wet, you get spray from the front wheel and dirt from the chain hitting you right between the legs – embarrassingly, after riding in those conditions, you look like someone who didn't make it to the toilet in time! Sorry, no photos...

On both of my other bikes it is practical for me to ride all year round, so the ZR really is a fair weather bike. Incidentally from the 2006 model onwards the Toxy ZR has been available with mudguards, but they can't be fitted to my older 2000-built model – there's no clearance between wheel and frame. Then again, how many racing bikes have mudguards?

Conclusions

Overall, my three recumbents cover a wide range of applications. The Bevo is the ideal town bike workhorse, but which can also handle longer tours. The Toxy LT is a sporty touring bike for relaxed but fast rolling, and can also be used effectively for everyday transport. And the Toxy ZR is the racing bike, ideal for blowing away the cobwebs – and capable of day trips on road, too.

All three give me the comfort and fun-factor which only recumbents can deliver. I would urge every cyclist to have a go on a recumbent – but make sure that it's for longer than 10 minutes!

It's no surprise that I now cover around three times as many kilometres by bike as I do by car. I think owning one recumbent will enrich the life of any cyclist: and owning three is a huge improve-

ment! And the cost? A quick comparison with the costs of a car is illuminating: it's been said before in German HPV circles that a good recumbent used to cost about the same as 30 tank-fulls of petrol. Nowadays it's more like 20, and falling every day. And you can always keep an eye out for a secondhand bike, too.

I think I probably own enough bikes now, but there are still all those fascinating trikes, velomobiles and even interesting uprights to try! We shall see...

Thomas Stegemann

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Toxy LT and ZR manufacturer: Tel +49 4127 922 83 or see www.toxy.de
Moorligger recumbent riders group: www.moorligger.de.vu
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