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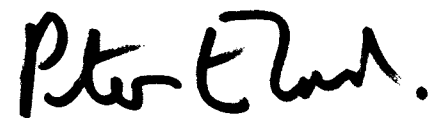
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Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher,
Velo Vision

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The Environmental Centre, St Nicholas Fields, York, YO10 3EN, UK
Tel/Fax +44 1904 438 224 (from UK, 01904 438 224)
Email peter@velovision.com
Website www.velovision.com

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER: Peter Eland
ART DIRECTOR: Brian Holt
WEB PROGRAMMER: Simon Ward
PRINTER: Stephens & George Magazines Ltd, Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, UK. Tel 01685 388 888

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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION
We weren't first with the name. Velo-Vision (note the hyphen) is a progressive HPV-friendly bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, who also make their own recumbents. *Velo Vision* magazine is working in friendly harmony with Velo-Vision in Germany.

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



COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Riding the Strida. Photo by Peter Eland.

OPPOSITE: The *Velo Vision* trailer is usually used to move bike boxes around York, but here it's helping some friends move a sofa. Photo by John Isles.

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EUROBIKING

I hope, dear reader, that you will excuse the late appearance of this September issue – as last year, we delayed publication so as to include the report from Eurobike, which takes place in early September. It really is the focus of the European cycle industry, with many manufacturers timing their R&D effort to have their latest and best ready to exhibit to the thousands of dealers, journalists and distributors at the show.

As a journalist, I'm privileged to have perhaps the best job of them all: seeking out the interesting and the new, without having to get into the nitty-gritty of buying and selling. The manufacturers and designers are keen to tell me about their work, and I try to repay their enthusiasm and hard work by reporting their innovations as fully as possible. Perhaps the most difficult part of the process is the editing: cutting down the masses of photographs and notes to a length which won't overwhelm the rest of the magazine. I've done my best, as ever, and I hope the report will let you enjoy a vicarious visit to perhaps the greatest cycle show on earth.

Peter Eland

WORK OF GENIUS?

The Mobiky Genius has a new take on folding: not super-small, but super-fast. And unlike most very small-wheeled bikes, it puts the emphasis on riding performance, not size. So is it a convincingly clever package?



BACKGROUND

The Genius is the first product from French company Mobiky – and as we saw at Eurobike, next year will see them bring out a larger 16"-wheeled version. They have distributors worldwide. Our test bike was provided by CycleCentric, who sell the machine via dealers in the UK. There's just a single model currently available, the £449 Genius, in a choice of five colours. A protective fabric cover is included, and as an optional accessory (£69) a padded carry bag is also available.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Genius is an odd little bike, but with a certain quirky style. Yes, those 12.5" wheels are tiny, but the relatively long wheelbase gives the bike a fairly 'normal' (for a folding bike) overall size and look when unfolded. The frame parts are very well-finished, with lots of shiny metal, silky anodising and tidy details. Everybody loved the 'trumpet valves' for the handlebar fold. The design and finish certainly help justify the price. Incidentally everything is aluminium alloy or

stainless steel and so non-corroding, no doubt with an eye to the boat-owner market.

At the centre of the bike is a large and fairly complex die-cast aluminium section, with a foam-padded carry handle at the top. The beams to the front are supported by sealed bearing pivots, rather than the bushings you might expect, making for smooth motion and a rigid assembly with no detectable play. At the front, there's a 'proper' headset steering system, with the telescopic stem sliding in a plastic bushing (so it can't rotate) and secured by a quick-release.

I liked the telescopic seatpost, with the sections getting thicker towards the base in line with the stress imposed by the rider's weight (the makers set a maximum of 111 kg or 245 lb).

The transmission is via a well protected two-stage chain, providing three gear ratios via the 'new generation' Sturmey-Archer three-speed hub gear. This has an alloy shell and a tidy plastic shift cable attachment, and is operated by a modern-style twist grip. The chainset is also a good quality alloy model and is fitted with plastic folding pedals.

The 12.5" wheels are fitted with 2¼"-wide Kenda tyres (62-203) rated at a modest 35 psi. Bent valve



stems mean it's reasonably easy to attach a pump head. Rims are alloy, spokes are stainless. At the back is a band brake, very like the ones used on the A-Bike reviewed a few issues ago, and at the front is a diminutive 'Artec' mechanical disk brake. Brake levers are good-quality alloy ones from Tektro.

There's no luggage or lighting provision built into the Mobiky – for loads you'd be expected to use a backpack or courier bag, and for lights it should be no problem to attach some to handlebar and seatpost in the usual way. But they do include a very neat stand, with three spring-loaded positions – one for 'out of the way' when folded, and the other two to hold the bike upright when folded and unfolded respectively.

Weight as tested was 14.24 kg – that's a fair bit over the 13.5 kg quoted by the manufacturer. But our scales are pretty accurate, so I'm not sure how to account for the discrepancy.

THE RIDE

As with most small-wheel bikes, the Mobiky takes a few minutes to get used to – the steering feels a little skittish at first, and the handlebars very narrow. But surprisingly quickly it feels natural, and the handling is then really rather good. The frame feels rigid even with a fairly tall and heavy rider like myself, so there's no uncertain squirming as you pedal. It also feels strong and steady enough to roll over most urban surfaces, and the wheels are large enough to cope with most bumps short of a full-blown kerb. Riding one-handed as you indicate wasn't as secure as I'd like, sometimes, but it's OK with care.

The long wheelbase certainly helps as well, meaning you can accelerate powerfully from a standstill without worrying about doing a wheelie – often a problem on folding bikes with the rear wheel tucked right under the rider.

It was also impressive to see how the Genius coped with riders of different heights. The manufacturers suggest it will fit riders from 4'4" to 6', yet at 6'2"

I had no problem, and there was still over an inch of seatpost adjustment left. Shorter riders also liked the bike, and one took it out on a gentle day-ride one weekend without any problems. The handlebar height can be varied according to preference – the long stem travel meant that shorter riders could put it right up for an upright riding position, while I chose to leave it part-way down for a more leaned-over, sporty ride.

The transmission worked well and quietly, but it was hard to escape the feeling that the combination of a fairly heavy bike, double chains, hub gears and those 12.5" tyres were robbing some energy. But this was never going to be a speed machine, and any lack of efficiency wasn't enough to prevent a lively ride. The transmission seemed to 'churn' a bit only under power. Let it cruise along and it rolls well.



Braking was good, too – again perhaps the long-wheelbase helps in keeping the handling predictable as you stop. The front disk brake took a little while to wear in and to be adjusted 'just right', but provided smooth, powerful and reasonably well modulated braking thereafter. I never got much braking power out of the rear band brake, though.

Overall, the Genius offers a ride which, though it's some way off that of a full-size bike, I'd find perfectly acceptable for riding in traffic for short or even medium distances.

THE FOLD

So – it passes the riding hurdle – how about folding? This is where the Genius comes into its own.

For the first stage of folding, simply reach down and squeeze the bar behind the bottom of the seatpost, and the seatpost itself, together. This lets the seatpost drop down so its end is just off the ground. Now you just lift on the carry handle, and the bike folds itself together, finishing with a pronounced 'click' as the latch behind the bottom seatpost clamp locks the swingarm into the folded position.

If you'd left the stand pointing backwards while riding, by happy design it's now perfectly placed to hold the folded bike upright.

But the real beauty of this quick fold – which I'd say takes even less than the three seconds the manufacturers quote – is that it leaves you with an obviously folded bike which you can take onto trains or the like without hassle, wheeling it along easily with one hand. In this first stage of folding, the steering still works fine, so it's easy to trolley the bike along and steer it as you go. Then complete the fold when you're at your seat.

Or, if you want to return to riding mode, that's almost as quick: just lift the seatpost and 'bump' the bike down – it all locks into place and off you go.

Completing the fold simply involves dropping the telescopic seatpost with the two quick releases. Drop the stem (another quick release) and pull the cables clear. Then fold the handlebars: lift the 'valves' and swivel the bars down until they lock in place parallel to the stem. Finally fold the two pedals, and you're done. Folded size is around 25" x 12" x 32" (63 x 30 x 77 cm). It's a tidy package which stands securely on the stand. You can still trolley it, or lift it by the carry handle.

The process is pretty close to foolproof: the only thing to remember is to drop the stem before folding the bars. And watch, when unfolding, that a cable doesn't get caught over the brake levers. But really, it's simple enough if you're happy using quick-releases.

One user told me that the quick



ABOVE: First squeeze the locking bar behind the seatpost – this then drops down.



ABOVE RIGHT: Next, lift by the handle, and the bike folds together.



RIGHT: After the quick fold, the bike can still be rolled and steered trolley-fashion.



FAR RIGHT: To complete the fold, drop stem and seatpost, use the 'valves' to fold the handlebars, and fold the pedals.



fold feature is a real treat when rushing for a train. You can actually do the fold while you're walking along the platform – just reach down, squeeze, and lift up on the handle. Then just keep going and wheel the bike on board. It's apparently a much smoother and more satisfying experience than having to stop, fold the bike, and then get on the train.

CONCLUSIONS

The Mobiky has a lot going for it – solid build, appealing design, acceptable ride and a super quick fold to the 'trolleying' mode. The full fold isn't much slower, and it goes to a small, tidy and stable package.

At over 14 kg it is heavy, though the trolley mode lessens the impact. There's also the price to consider: £449 is well into Brompton territory – that's a bike with a different set

of strengths and weaknesses, to be sure, but also a popular choice for good reason.

The design is in any case beautifully executed, and brings a new type of folder onto the market. It can quick-fold seamlessly as you move between transport modes like almost no other folder – this alone could be highly attractive for some commuters, and the compromises made to achieve that aren't too severe. So a cheery 'chapeau' to the French designers for the achievement.

Genius? Very close. Good kit? Certainly.

Peter Eland

AVAILABILITY

Available via many dealers worldwide. In the UK, see www.my-mobiky.co.uk for a list or call 01954 789284. Manufacturer website: www.mobiky.com.