

Velo Vision Sample Article



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I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland

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.



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Both photos: Peter Eland

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SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Bounce galore this issue – and not just thanks to the Pirol trike, with its double-wishboned air suspension. I'm also feeling bouncy at seeing the first signs of spring, and a return to riding for pleasure alongside just cycling for transport – as I seem to have been doing through much of this winter. And there's a full schedule of events to look forward to this year as well – see page 9 for the listing.

There seems to be a spring in the step of

the cycle industry too, despite the current economic woes. As this issue shows, the flow of new models and innovations hasn't dried up at all, and in the UK at least, climate concerns and a new spirit of frugality are keeping cycling in a more positive media spotlight than for many years. I'm hoping it's a good time to launch a book, as you'll see on page 7!

I hope you all enjoy this issue, and here's to tailwinds in 2009!

Peter Eland



THE PORTABLE PINO

The latest incarnation of Hase's Pino tandem adds the ability to split the frame in two for transport or storage. We tried the fully-equipped Tour model, the load-lugging all-rounder of the Pino range.

BACKGROUND

The Pino tandem first appeared in the Hase Bikes catalogue in the mid 1990s, and has been a mainstay of their range ever since. Numerous adaptations for special needs use, a full range of accessories for child-carrying and touring, plus a titanium-framed model, all followed from the German manufacturer.

For 2009 the Pino has been completely revised with a new aluminium frame which separates into two sections. This frame, with

differing equipment, is the basis for the three 'standard' Pino models: the red 'Allround' with rear rack and lights, the white 'Tour' as tested here with extra luggage racks and stands, and the 16.2 kg 'Fast' in polished aluminium with stripped-down racing components. The old non-separable cro-moly frame is still also available as the Pino Steel in black. If one of these models or colours doesn't suit, then a full custom build is possible, and framesets are also available.

An extensive accessory list is available for all Pino models, and this includes a range of special needs accessories and adaptations. The Custom model adds several transmission options including the Rohloff hub.

The UK price for the 'Tour' is currently around £5080, but prices are changing almost weekly with exchange rates and other factors, so take this as approximate. The Tour comes with almost everything on this review bike included: only the



rear Humpert two-leg stand (around £39) and hard-shell suitcase (around £370) are optional. Another option, not shown, is an add-on child crankset for around £259. This fits on and off easily, letting you swap quickly between adult and child front riders.

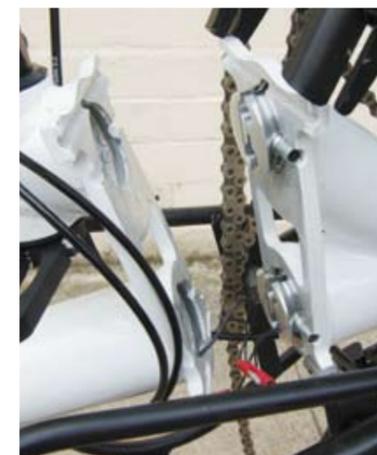
The Pino is available now from Hase dealers worldwide. Our review bike was provided by London Recumbents.

Incidentally, in Issue 24 of *Velo Vision* we published a thorough report from Dominique Barrat and Jonathan Fronhoffs, who took an earlier version of the Pino on tour in the English Lake District. Many of their observations on the general layout and handling of the bike will still be relevant to the new version.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Pino is an imposing bike, at roughly 2.3 m long (depending on boom extension) and it appears robustly built throughout. The oversized aluminium frame looks rigid and well-proportioned to offer a solid platform despite its length.

So it's even more of a surprise to pick the bike up and discover how light it is! Even with the full touring equipment on board, the Tour weighed just 26.24 kg as tested – good for any tandem, and remarkable for a recumbent tandem with two twin-leg stands, luggage racks all over and full dynamo lights. It would be easy enough to shed a few kg from that weight if you can live with somewhat reduced luggage capacity or with just one stand. As it is, it's quite easy to lift the bike single-handed through doorways or the like.



ABOVE AND BELOW: The frame separation feature splits the bike into two manageable sections.



ABOVE AND TOP: Mudguard and rack must be removed to fit the Pino in its suitcase.



The frame itself is neatly TIG-welded in aluminium, with a thick, good quality powder coat finish. Front and rear halves each house a substantial headset – one for the forks, the other for the handlebars. Between the two is the frame joint, a

technical *tour de force*. The two conical wedge systems on the front section lock into matching cavities at the back. A 5 mm Allen key is all that's needed to lock or unlock the wedges. It works really well, rock solid when attached and easy to operate.

Splitting the bike into two halves does involve a little more work, though. You need to detach the front brake lever (hydraulic, so no splitter easily possible) and its two cable guides. Then, undo the steering linkage, undo the seat back support QR and, after unlocking the frame joint, unplug the dynamo cables which connect the two halves. It all takes five minutes or so, but then you've got two reasonable-sized sections to deal with, each of which stays upright on its own stand. The

seat removes in an instant too – just spring the two sides apart so they come off their support bosses.

In this state the Pino should fit into most cars fairly easily. Fitting it into the huge suitcase (perhaps for air travel) requires further disassembly: all of the carrier racks need to come off, plus mudguards, wheels and handlebars. The racks will probably have to travel separately, as space in the case is pretty tight with just the basic bike.

Back to the bike, and the rear rider's handlebars bolt on to the frame-mounted headset 'stub' via four M8 bolts. The mounting plates are slotted, giving a good range of angle adjustment for the whole assembly, effectively altering the reach. Each handlebar end is also adjustable for height and sideways angle, so anything from an upright 'roadster' position to a leaned-over racing crouch is quite easily achieved.

There's just a single bottle cage mount on the main frame, just forward of the captain's bottom bracket. More could be stowed in luggage, of course.

Braking is handled by Magura Louise hydraulic disks, with huge 203 mm front and large 160 mm rear rotors. The levers have a hinged, single-bolt attachment, so removing the front one for frame separation purposes is very easy indeed, with no need to remove the grip.

The transmission starts at the front of the bike with a left-hand drive system from the front pedals back to the rear rider's bottom bracket. A tensioning arm at the seat mount keeps the connecting chain taut, quickly adjustable if you change the boom extension. At the back a freewheel is built into the connecting chainring, allowing the front rider to freewheel at any time, whether or not the rear rider is pedalling. Not the other way round, though – if the stoker pedals, the captain has to as well!

The main transmission is top of the range from Shimano, with 24-speed XT derailleur gearing, operated by Ultegra bar-end shifters. It all worked superbly as you'd expect, and the bar-end shifters are a good choice for touring, too, with their



TOP: Just room for six panniers. **ABOVE:** The light and efficient Schmidt 20R hub dynamo.

ABOVE: Fine attention to detail demonstrated by the chain tube end caps and support plate.

RIGHT: The mesh seat incorporates a small zipped compartment at the top, and has a foam insert base.

relatively simple mechanism. Wheels are strongly built with heavy eyeleted rims, 36-spoke front and rear. Robust Schwalbe Marathon tyres with reflective sidewalls are fitted, and SKS mudguards. Luggage carrying is one of the Pino's strong points, especially compared to an upright tandem. The rear rack (a top quality Tubus Logo model) takes the usual two large panniers plus more on top, up to 40 kg in total. In addition there's space low down between the riders for either four smallish (front) panniers or two large ones. These are supported by both the front stand assembly (which with its wide-spaced legs and capacity of 100 kg can withstand many front riders getting seated) and a low-rider luggage frame. Two small panniers each side was a bit of a squeeze to ensure enough toe clearance for the rear rider, and front wheel clearance at full lock. So I'd probably recommend just a single pair of large panniers here

– the riders in VV24 fitted huge ones from Arkel, and were happy with this arrangement. The Pino's lighting system is also top quality, with the latest and lightest-yet Schmidt hub dynamo (the 20R) driving an IQ Fly Senso Plus high power LED headlight and standlight-equipped B&M rear light. The lighting cables are guided almost entirely within the frame, with crimped-on plugs and sockets to allow the frame to separate, and for rear rack and front boom removal. It's all very nicely done, but my instinct would be to simplify the system by using the dynamo just for the front light. With a battery rear, there would be no need to plug and unplug any cables at all when separating the bike. But as it is, you have battery-free lights on tap, ideal for touring. Overall, I was very impressed by how the Pino had been put together. It's one of those bikes which you can look over and think of almost every detail 'that's neat' and 'that

looks solid'. Just one example: the chain tubes which keep the front rider's legs clean are anchored via rubber-moulded end caps, with neat little tabs which engage slots in a stainless steel plate fitted to the boom. Absolutely secure, rattle free and really tidy. **THE RIDE** As with any tandem, a few minutes' practice is a good idea on the Pino before you head out into traffic. At first the steering can seem a bit vague and light – those widely-spaced handlebars provide masses of leverage, and the weight distribution is unlike most other bikes. I think perhaps the way you need to shift your body weight while steering is subtly different on the Pino compared to most uprights. After a few miles, however, it's **RIGHT:** A freewheel is built into the rear left-hand crank, allowing the front rider to stop pedalling at will.



second nature, and that leverage lets you be quite precise as you direct the bike. It also provides stability at speed: we never had a hint of a wobble. Taking a hand off to indicate took a little extra practice – but usually the front rider can do the signalling (and wave to curious onlookers!). From the front rider's perspective the ride is quite different, too. First of all you have the comfort of the seat, universally approved of. The ability to stop pedalling was also much appreciated – a couple of practiced upright tandem stokers had to be reminded it was possible, though, as they were so used to synchronised pedalling! The front rider has small bar ends under the seat to hang on to, but initially the sensation of sitting over the steered wheel, and hence being swung sideways in curves caused comment – again after a few miles it wasn't an issue. Tight turns at low speed do need a little extra care, as the front rider's heels can clip the front wheel (or the mudguard). A word of warning can prevent this, and the freewheel system lets the

steerer keep pedalling even if the front rider needs to stop. One of the main 'selling points' of the Pino layout is the ease of conversation between the riders. All who rode it agreed that this really is a huge plus point. Even on a conventional tandem your heads are nowhere near as close, and the wind tends to blow the rear rider's words away. On the Pino the rear rider can just lean forward a touch to be speaking almost into the stoker's ear. The other selling point is comfort, and for the recumbent rider this is pretty much a given, as the seat spreads the loads so much more than any saddle. The front wheel suspension also works well to absorb larger impacts which might tend to bounce the rider. As well as physical comfort there's a much improved view compared to a normal tandem: instead of just seeing the front rider's back, the stoker gets an equal view of the road and any obstacles approaching.

The upright rider has a suspension seatpost, and this was perhaps the only component I wasn't convinced by. It's a high-end model from Airwings, but I found the sensation of sinking into it disconcerting, and the extra height needed to compensate for the sag under your weight when you sit on it makes getting on and off that bit more awkward. It also seemed to move on the larger bumps but not for vibrations. Having said that, it did absorb the 'big hits' well. The braking was simply superb on our test bike: the two Magura Louise hydraulic disk brakes didn't seem to need breaking in – they're more than powerful enough already, especially the massive front disk. Under hard braking the front forks dive a touch, as is unavoidable, and the handlebars also flex a little disconcertingly as your weight is thrown forward. But it's good to have such reserves in hand. It is very hard indeed to provoke a front-wheel skid, as that front wheel really is securely pressed against the road, and even more so under braking. Our tour report from Issue 24 did raise the issue of overheating and fast pad wear on extended descents with heavy touring gear. If you're contemplating this sort of extreme

use a rim brake could be fitted to the front wheel easily enough for some extra safety margin. The Tour is designed for use with loads on board, and the two stands fitted to the bike made a significant contribution to ease of use. Being able to prop the bike up and have it stand completely secure is a real benefit, especially for such a large machine which doesn't easily lean flat against a wall. I imagine the stands would also be an essential accessory for using the bike with child passengers, so that they could



A 203 mm disk plus suspension forks offer control and comfort for the heavily loaded front wheel.

be strapped in at your leisure, with the bike in no danger of falling over. Finally, the lights were superb. I'm used to good dynamo lighting now with the Edelux, but it was pretty much matched by the Pino's IQ Fly dynamo headlight driven by the Schmidt dynamo. An almost car-headlight like beam, easily good enough for even unlit roads.

CONCLUSIONS

The Pino Tour is a wonderfully engineered, highly refined tandem, and you do get a lot of bike for what is, at £5000+, a lot of money by any (cycling) standard. The quality throughout is impeccable: the Tour model has state of the art components, all you could require for both touring and utility riding. Those less fortunate in the wallet department could perhaps start with the Pino Allround model, at more like £3500, and build up the equipment gradually. The Pino concept is, though,

adaptable enough to be seen as an investment for many years of family transport. The up-down layout gives very real benefits for both children and adults on the front, even if some shy riders may be happier on a more conventional-looking machine – it will attract attention! It's simply a very sociable machine, with easy conversation between the riders as an instant ice-breaker with passers-by. The Pino also offers a superb platform for riders with a variety of special needs. The new frame is commendably



Bar end shifters are great: I wasn't quite so convinced by the suspension seatpost.

lightweight, while the frame joint is easy to use and solid when assembled. Being able to fit the sections into a (large) car boot makes the Pino much more versatile than ever before – and fitting it (minus accessories) into a suitcase is also impressive. So it's a big bike, a big price, and a big decision to take. Whether you, as a couple or family, will want to go down the Pino route will depend largely on you taking a test ride, and discovering for yourself whether the concept 'clicks' for you. If it does, the engineering and implementation certainly won't disappoint. **Peter Eland** **AVAILABILITY** Hase Bikes: Tel +49 2309 782 582 or see www.hasebikes.com They have dealers worldwide. Our bike was supplied by London Recumbents: Tel 020 8299 6636 or see www.londonrecumbents.com