

Velo Vision Sample Article

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I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher, Velo Vision

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Small print

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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. Contact them on www.velo-vision.de

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Cover photograph: Testing the Greenspeed GT3. Photo: Peter Eland.

Opposite: An outburst of municipal panic about those dreaded cyclists – spotted by photographer Jason Patient at Southampton University.

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This month's inside cover image has been supplied by Jason Patient Photography:
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ROLL ON SUMMER

Hooray! The days are finally starting to get longer, the sun's occasionally peeking out of the clouds, and summer's cycling goodness is nearly upon us.

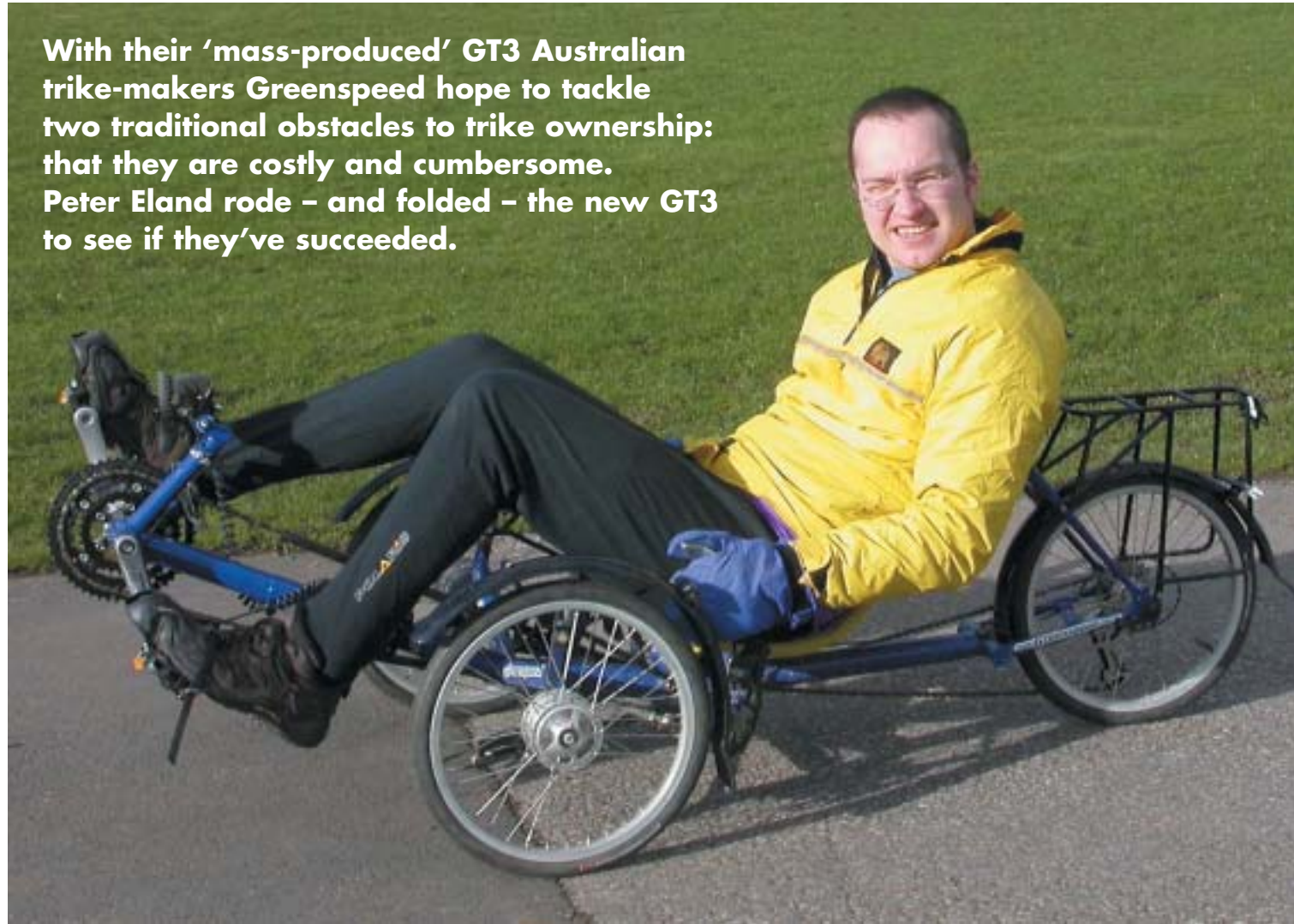
Velo Vision will be at most of the year's main cycling events, starting with the SPEZI in Germany, and then on to CycleVision in the Netherlands in early June. We'll actually have to produce next issue a week or so early so as to have it posted out before travelling over to CycleVision – luckily quite a few articles are already lined up, including a test of the Hase titanium handcycle and a review of three velomobiles.

Doing this issue's bike tests has been particularly challenging. Rain, snow and short days conspired to limit photography opportunities to a handful of freezing-cold afternoons. So special thanks go to the brave volunteers who modelled for me, even summoning an occasional smile as the icy wind whistled around their ears. And as ever, thanks also to the many reader-contributors who have given up their time, energy and warm sofas to put together reports and articles for the magazine.

Peter Eland

A GETTABLE GREENSPEED

With their 'mass-produced' GT3 Australian trike-makers Greenspeed hope to tackle two traditional obstacles to trike ownership: that they are costly and cumbersome. Peter Eland rode – and folded – the new GT3 to see if they've succeeded.



As one of the 'Big Three' we referred to in our Trikes Buyer's Guide in Issue 9, Greenspeed are among the longest-established and best-known of recumbent trike makers. Based in Australia, they've traditionally had strong sales in the USA and Australasia. While the machines are well known in the UK, sales have been held in check by import duties and shipping, which drives the price of most of their solo machines well over the £3000 mark. The other major UK manufacturers ICE (Trice) and AVD (Windcheetah) have ranges which start at around £2400.

The US market has also become tougher of late, too, with Catricle, Terratrike and many more new machines jostling for business. Greenspeed has now responded to the pressure with an 'entry-level' trike for just under 3000 Australian dollars. This is just £1355 or £2000 at current exchange rates, but adding taxes, shipping and import duty means the UK price rises to £1900. This machine, set to stir up the trike market, is their GT3 which, moreover, folds!

Now it's no Brompton, as we'll see, but the fold is designed to widen the trike's appeal by making

it easy to fit in the boot of a car. This is, say Greenspeed, how most people transport their trikes these days. And wide appeal is needed: the lowered price is the result of assembly-line production which depends on reasonably high production volumes. As a further economy the only colours available are red and blue, both with the yellow seat.

So can Greenspeed's GT3 deliver 'real trike' performance at 'entry-level' prices? Will it see Greenspeed snatch back some of the UK market from Trice and Windcheetah? Let's take a ride and find out.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The GT3 arrived in, for a trike, a remarkably small box! Careful unpacking revealed the trike 'compacted down' with wheels, seat, mudguards, chain and front boom removed. It was the work of just 20 minutes or so to get everything back together.

With packaging removed the frame can be unfolded. It pivots in the middle with a fairly hefty-looking hinge, secured by a quick-release and a clever cam-action lock. A curved 'track' ensures that the hinge is locked shut by the 'pin' to which the quick release is fixed – even if the QR is open. The QR lever has to be lifted right round before the mechanism unlocks – so I had no worries about unintended folding.

The pivot axis is set at an angle, so that the rear wheel and rack tuck neatly alongside the boom when folded. The hinge felt rock-solid when locked and, while it's not the most beautiful part of the trike, in use it's hidden away discreetly under the seat.

Wheels were then attached – the front ones simply slide onto the axle and are secured with an Allen key. Thanks to an offset rear end the rear wheel is dishless (built with the rim centred between the flanges, for extra strength) and employs a standard quick-release. It's worth noting that the GT3's rear dropouts are 'Rohloff-ready' in case you want to fit that (or any other) hub gear later.

Then, attach the seat. A single stainless steel cap head Allen bolt secured the bottom of the seat just ahead of the hinge, then the upper support simply presses into place, with two 'spikes' locating into matching holes in little elastomer pads in the seat frame. The idea is that when it comes to folding the trike, the seat is reasonably easy to get off: just free the upper support and undo the bolt. Easier said than done: the elastomer grips the 'spikes' quite hard. A 'rocking' action pulling one side then the other is the best way to ease it off.



ABOVE: Folded or (inset) packed away the Greenspeed is never exactly small, but it could be a useful feature for some

TOP RIGHT: The hinge uses a clever safety mechanism

RIGHT: The front of the seat releases with a single Allen bolt

BELOW RIGHT: The rear end of the seat simply pulls off from the 'prongs'

LEFT: The offset rear end allows the rear wheel to be built dishless for extra strength

The optional carrier rack is next to be attached. A heavy-duty tubular steel item, it's attached with four bolts. A bracket for rear light, and attachment point for the mudguard, are built in.

Finally, mirror and front mudguards complete the equipment. Both attach to the kingpins – do them up nice and tight in the workshop, as you're unlikely to be carrying a suitably-sized spanner with you on the road. The (optional) front mudguards incorporate neat red reflectors, and leave plenty of room for wheel removal for ease of puncture fixing.

With the 16" wheels all round it almost looked a bit gangly to my eyes, with the telescopic boom extended as it was for my 6' 2" height. Because it's a standard frame, one size has to fit the vast majority of riders. It could go a few inches taller than me. The manufacturers claim it'll fit anyone with an 'X-seam' measurement from 105 to 125cm. That's the distance, when you're sitting on the floor with your back to a wall, from the wall to the soles of your shoes.

The track is 75cm, quite wide compared to, for example, a Trice Mini's 64cm. This isn't necessarily a bad thing – it simply provides more stability at the expense of compactness.

Each front wheel is fitted with a Sturmey-Archer drum brake, and the steering uses the familiar crossed-over Greenspeed linkage. This puts the steering rods below the frame where they won't interfere with the fold, and also provides a nice tight turning circle. The underseat steering is adjustable for angle, and each brake lever is equipped with a simple but effective 'parking brake' catch.

The transmission is straightforward, with a 52-42-30 triple chainset up front and nine derailleur gears at the back. Shimano's Capreo groupset provides the 9 to 26-tooth cassette at the back, the nine-tooth little ring ensuring that despite the 16" wheels the trike has a very reasonable top gear of 95 inches. Low gear is around 19" – only for

heavy touring would you require lower. Gears are controlled by bar-end shifters.

The GT3 comes with rear mudguard, mirror and safety flag as standard (not the 'spinner' shown on the photos – that's mine, as the test trike came without flag). Overall weight with these fitted is 17kg or so.

The luggage rack, front mudguards, and a headrest can be fitted as optional extras. It came with toe-clipped pedals, but most riders would soon replace these with their favourite clipless system.

The front headlight you see in the pictures is my own, fitted as a necessity for winter commuting! Soon after the GT3 arrived York was covered in snow and ice, and the Greenspeed instantly became my commuter vehicle of choice. The Profile bottle cage was also fitted by me to hold the battery pack for the lights.

THE RIDE

As I rode the Greenspeed I was racking my brains about what to write here. This is a recumbent trike with very few vices. It all just worked!

That's not to say it was a boring ride. Trikes are fun machines by their nature, and the Greenspeed delivered the goods very nicely, with responsive steering, good acceleration and fine handling at speed.

The gears worked flawlessly as is usual with any new Shimano system – after the inevitable tweaking after assembly. The parts are good-quality mid-range items, and the gear range of 19" to 95" is in my view well-chosen. The extremes are useful, but what's also nice is that for everyday riding (in a flattish area) you can leave the front changer alone and just shift at the back.

The Sturmey drum brake hubs

are progressive and reasonably powerful in the 16" wheels, at least as far as I could tell in flattish York and its environs. I'd have loved to have tried them out on an Alpine descent with full touring gear but alas, the *Velo Vision* test schedule didn't run that far. They certainly didn't have the effortless stopping power of disks in small wheels: you need to squeeze the levers quite hard for maximum braking. But nor were they uncontrollably sharp. I rarely locked a wheel unintentionally – definitely not the case with some disk-braked trikes I've tried. Not that locking a wheel is any big deal on a trike...

I did manage to provoke a certain amount of brake steer, but nowhere near as bad as on the Logo trike we tested back in Issue 8. It was only really apparent when braking hard from high speed with one hand. The trike would veer to the braked side, but

controllably, and easily corrected. In normal use it certainly was not a problem.

Greenspeed are aware of the brake steer characteristics, and believe the current level is an acceptable compromise. While most of their current models eliminate brake steer almost completely with a revised steering design which places the linkage above the main frame, this would have hindered the folding on the GT3. So instead the old cross-over linkage was used, with beefed-up crossbeams. This has the side-effect of giving the GT3 a very tight turning circle, as tight as on any trike I've ridden.

I was expecting the ride from the 16" wheels, with their rock-hard Schwalbe Stelvio tyres, to be seriously harsh. As it turned out I was pleasantly surprised – on normal road surfaces there was no harshness problem at all. On

poorer surfaces such as hard-packed ice I did find myself rattled a bit – but riding the same route next day on my own 20"-wheeled trike it was much the same. Certainly the resilient mesh of the seat helps damp down vibrations.

The Stelvios had actually been fitted as an 'extra' – as standard the trike comes with Primo Comets. Refitting the original Primos and pumping then up rock-hard like the Stelvios seemed to make little difference in performance as far as I could tell – perhaps the Stelvios look a little more robust, but they're both good tyres.

Niggles? At a push I could say that the curve of the brake cables seems a little severe just before they enter the drum brakes. This could have contributed to the brake levers not quite springing fully back sometimes.

THE FOLD

So, it's designed to fit in a car boot. Now I don't have a car myself, but the few friends of mine who do were somewhat reluctant for me to try shoehorning in a tangled mass of metal. I did establish that it will fit reasonably easily in a VW Polo with the back seat folded down, which covers the smaller car end of the spectrum I guess.

It takes just a couple of minutes to get it folded down to the 'car boot' size – most of that time is spent twiddling the Allen key to release the bolt under the seat.

As to non-car travellers, the folding aspect of the trike may be less relevant. I really would think twice about taking this machine on the train – even folded, its bulk is such that no way is it going to fit in any luggage rack. It will probably just about fit if there's a space for a normal bike, but any which way, it's an awkward lump to lift in and out.

The folding frame will, for the determinedly non-motorised, perhaps be most useful for 'shipping' the trike to tour start-points, either by courier or boxed up for the journey in a similar fashion to how it arrived at our office. This means removing cranks, wheels and rack as well as the seat. I suppose it might also be a bonus in case the trike needs to be unexpectedly 'recovered' by taxi or the like due to mechanical or rider breakdown.

SUMMARY

Although for UK buyers the edge is taken off the GT3's extraordinarily low Australian price by taxes and shipping, at £1900 it still represents a chance at the 'real thing' for substantially less money than was previously possible. Though the need for economy means you'll have to accept the standard frame, most riders of non-extreme weight or dimensions won't really lose out too much.

Used with something like the Arkel panniers (see elsewhere this issue) the GT3 can be a capable tourer or utility trike, as well as a fun machine for weekend blasts in the country. With a great manufacturer reputation, few vices and good all-round performance – plus the 'fold' – this should definitely be on the shortlist.

How well it measures up to some of the other 'budget' competition is yet to be proven, though. We'd hoped to put it head to head this issue with the aluminium-framed Catrike Speed, but the timings didn't work out, so that machine (at about the same UK price) will be tested next issue. As a trike built from a very different design philosophy it should make for an interesting comparison.

AVAILABILITY

Manufacturer: Greenspeed, 69 Mountain Gate Drive, Ferntree Gully, VIC3156, Australia. Tel +61 3 9758 5541 Fax +61 3 9752 4115 E-mail info@greenspeed.com.au Website www.greenspeed.com.au Greenspeed have dealers in several countries: check their website for details. In the UK contact **Westcountry Recumbents:** 0870 740 1227 or see www.wrhpv.com



RIGHT: Mirror is standard, front mudguards optional. Note the neat reflector on the mudguard.



TOP: The strong tubular steel carrier rack is a (strongly recommended) optional extra

CENTRE RIGHT: Each brake lever is equipped with a parking brake (the bit with the spring). Stainless hardware on the lever might be a good thing.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Front brakes, each controlled by one lever, are Sturmey-Archer drums. In the small wheels they provide good braking.



ABOVE: Attachment points for lights and bottle cages are provided