



**GOBIKE, HALFWAY
FOLDERS TESTED**

**KMX, EVOX
RECUMBENTS
REVIEWED**

**CYCLEVISION,
SPOKESFEST
REPORTS**

**BUYERS' GUIDE:
SPECIAL NEEDS
CYCLING**

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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



Cover photograph: Stuart Dennison of Bikefix in London, pictured at the York Cycle Show. Photo: Peter Eland.

Opposite: A high-wheeler at full speed, racing at Spokesfest. Photo: Peter Eland

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Please support these companies, who support this magazine.

Keeping busy

Another busy summer draws to an end, with a flurry of new bike launches, plenty of fun events to report on and, as this issue's deadline approached, an unfortunate heat-wave which made it particularly irksome to be in the office not out on the bike.

It's been busy even before deadline panic set in. Amongst other things we've revamped the Velo Vision website, improving a lot of 'back end' stuff as well as adding a better (and ever more popular) version of the free small ads service.

And as many readers will have spotted, we've also been busy doing joint marketing with our friends at A to B Magazine (www.atob.org.uk), who specialise in UK transport matters, folding and electric bikes. This has resulted in a real flurry of new readers requesting sample copies and subscribing, usually to both magazines. Welcome to you all.

But to scotch a rumour that seems to be doing the rounds, we're not about to merge! The two magazines complement each other well, rather than competing, and there's plenty of room in this wide world for the both of us. By joining forces we can reach more of the many people who'd no doubt enjoy both magazines if only they knew about them.

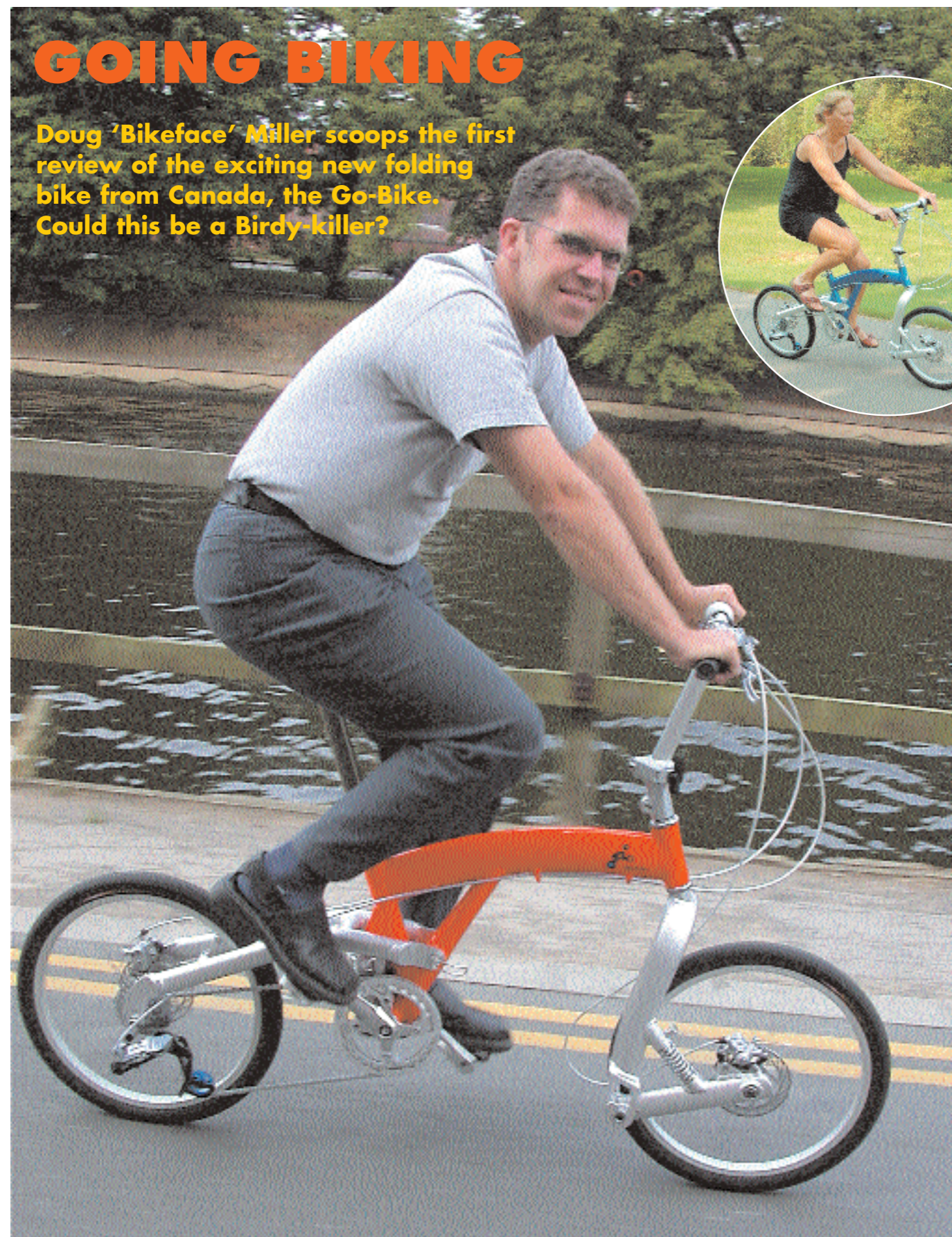
We're also happy to welcome new Velo Vision stockists in Belgium and Sweden (see News pages). While we already supply magazines to over 30 countries via the website's online shop, having someone on the spot to sell magazines and introduce new readers is always good. Any other dealers, anywhere in the world, reading this and wanting to try Velo Vision in your shop? Please just get in touch.

Peter Eland

VELOVISION

GOING BIKING

Doug 'Bikeface' Miller scoops the first review of the exciting new folding bike from Canada, the Go-Bike. Could this be a Birdy-killer?



LEFT: Philip Brook, GoBike founder, demonstrates the machine to Velo Vision during a recent visit to York

LEFT INSET: Patty Marr loved "the lightness, the looks and the fun factor"

ABOVE: The GoBike's styling won it many admirers - even while we were trying to take these pictures!

RIGHT: Doug Miller tests out the full suspension. Like the Birdy, the GoBike can handle gentle off-roading but as with any small-wheeled bike, it's no substitute for the proper tool for the job: a full-size mountain bike



BACKGROUND

When I was a kid, a not so long time ago, a bike was a bike was a bike. Two wheels and pedals and if you were lucky, a three-speed and even a basket or carrier. Well things have changed and thank the cycle gods for it. Most of the bikes of my youth were miserable beasts by comparison with today's.

The GoBike is a prime example of this evolution in the folding cycle genre. As a 'baseline' I have an old 20" 'Royal Camper' folder from the 60s or 70s. It's hard to date since there wasn't much evolution going on in bikes around then. So I'll use it as a comparison to take a look at just how far the GoBike has come - and whether several decades of research and development have produced really significant results. As a bike shop owner and cycle technician, I'll try to evaluate the advancements and, as a rider of anything with wheels and pedals, I'll make some judgments about the ride quality and handling too.

The GoBike is the brainchild of the Go Group of Boischatel, Quebec,

Canada. Phil Brook, President of the Go Group, says the design has addressed a number of issues with existing folding bikes, and that it combines good handling characteristics, easy folding, quality build and components and good looks. "Our intention is to provide a well designed mobility solution which we hope will entice people towards integrating bicycles into their daily lives."

I like to hear that: any excuse for more bikes can't be bad.

The basic GoBike comes in at 1495 Canadian Dollars (about US\$1070, £670 or €980 at today's rates). A 27-speed Dual Drive system is an option, bringing the price up to Can\$1895. The standard brakes are nicely-finished mechanical discs up front and a V-brake in the rear. The test bike was fitted with the 8-speed drive, and with optional rear disc brake (an extra 50 Canadian Dollars) and upgraded cartridge bearing rear hub (Can\$32).

The Go Group are busy setting up US and European distribution as we go to press, so prices in other countries are yet to be confirmed. It's expected they'll not be too far off the Canadian price equivalents.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The GoBike is certainly a looker. "Cool" seemed to be the first word from most mouths. It impresses me with its style. I am a strong believer that no bicycle needs to be ugly to be good: not form before function necessarily, but why shouldn't they go hand in hand? Roadies demand it.

Once I quit ogling, I focused on the details. This is where the advancements over my old Royal Camper becomes obvious. First up, pretty much every part of the GoBike is either aluminium or stainless steel - compared to the no-name steel of the Royal. The 20" wheels sport high-pressure tyres and good-looking sealed bearing hubs. The drive train is the modern and reliable SRAM 8-speed derailleur system.

The headset is a quality sealed bearing unit. The standard saddle is of a nice quality anatomic construction. Also included are

clipless-compatible pedals: they're like normal pedals as standard, but you can add a 'clipless insert' as an option, letting you use SPD-compatible shoes. And for protection against salty environments there is an optional corrosion-resistant chain (Can\$18).

A 'built into the grip' bell is a nice touch especially for crowded trails or bike/pedestrian ways.

The welding and finishing seem excellent. The main frame paint is a high gloss metallic with a raised plastic GoBike logo. The front and rear subframes are finished in a shot-peened silver finish rather than high polished aluminium. This gives it a very contemporary, slightly textured look. I'm not sure it will stand up to abrasion any better than a polished finish but it does look good. It's available in three colours: orange, blue and anthracite (smoky grey).

Nothing too exciting so far. Now for the innovations. Full suspension has become a calling card in the cycling world, and GoBike addresses this with an adjustable rear air shock – not a big travel shock by any means but it very noticeably smoothed out the ride and took some surprise hits very well.

The radical-looking front fork, while also not 'big hit' suspension, does the job well on smoothing out the handling and the ride even on the roughest surface. Its travel is not enough to be concerned about damping – good thing too as it's

basically a heavy duty spring.

The wheelbase on the GoBike is longer than my old folder, making it much more accommodating and comfortable in the cockpit. The wheelbase is more comparable to a regular sized 26" wheel hybrid or mountain bike. The photos illustrate these comparisons. This openness in the cockpit allows for a wide range of riders. I think the range claimed by the Go Group, from 4'6" to 6'2", is pretty realistic. As well as the saddle height there's a telescopic stem to raise or lower the bars.

So how does it all work as a bike and as a folder? Well, let's start starting with the folding. First I read the folding sequence and tried my luck. I got fouled up somehow and back to the instructions I went. Ah yes... missed that part. OK try again and finally I got it right. In short, it all works quite well provided you follow the sequence to the letter, otherwise it just gets frustrating.

Once familiar with the sequence, it folds very smoothly and inside 30 seconds – with practice, I could believe the manufacturer's 15-second claim if you're trying to catch a train I suppose. Getting the front and rear wheels tucked under is awkward at first but easily learned.

The bike folds to 30" x 26" x 15" (67 x 66 x 38cm) and is fairly easy to handle, carrying it by its main frame or the saddle. That's close to exactly the same size as a Birdy folded (79 x 59 x 36cm) and what's impressive is



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Just as the manufacturers claim, the GoBike is pretty much identical to full-size bike geometry when it comes to wheelbase and seat and stem locations. It's noticeably longer in the wheelbase than many folders, helping the handling.



BELOW: The folding sequence is fine once you get the hang of it, and at 12kg, the bike isn't excessively heavy. The large main frame tube makes a convenient handle



that the GoBike manages this with 20" (406) wheels, instead of the Birdy's 18" (355) wheels.

At 27lbs (12kg) the weight is also close to Birdy levels, and just a little lighter than my old Royal.

Watch your legs on the pedals. The pedals do not fold, and serve to protect main components and main frame when the bike is laid on its side. While they do not project beyond the folded package, pedals can still impart a nasty bite, being among the sharper objects on a bike. And the edges often get sharper with use.

I liked the GoBike's self locking feature on the front fork. It automatically locks open or closed and is unlocked by pulling on a metal knob. No worry about forgetting some crucial step to your safety. The rear is locked and unlocked with a traditional skewer... not the smoothest one I've used but effective. It too has a little safety feature built in by pushing the skewer to the left to release the frame.

Unfolding this bike seems to flow better than folding: everything just seems to click into place provided you follow the reverse sequence. The cables are long to accommodate the folding so they often need a quick adjustment so they don't get in the way of your riding.

THE RIDE

Now for the ride. Well, I was impressed with the ride for such a bike. I rode to town and back, 12km, with ease. I did not feel at all like a monkey on a circus bike but rather my six foot self on a real bike. The handling takes a little getting used to as with any bike but it feels closer to a hybrid style bike more than any other I ride. The steering is quick rather than the easy, lazy feel you get on larger-wheeled, regular-forked frames. But I did feel confident with it in city traffic and the upright position lends good visibility: a key to survival in the city I think. High speed turns are not so comfortable in this position though, but then it's not a race bike.

Initially, you feel the fork slightly

heavy on the right side but you quickly compensate in your turns.

The ride is comfortable with the full suspension, just the right amount to take out vibration, small pot holes and grates. I am a fan of disc brakes for the same reason I want them on a car. They work well in any weather, are easier to adjust in most cases, and they modulate well so you don't lock up the brakes so easily. These Tektro mechanical brakes are certainly capable stoppers on the GoBike. I prefer mechanical disc brakes to hydraulics for applications like this, anyway: cables are often easier to maintain, adjust and replace than hydraulic fluid.

My cycling partner Patty Marr took GoBike on a test ride as did our neighbour Cynthia. Both these women know how to ride and have a pretty acute sense of a bike's nature. They both loved the lightness, the looks and the fun factor of the bike. Patty found the folding easier with practice. She also noticed the slightly one-sided weight of the front wheel but seemed to quickly adjust to it. They would both like one – as a second bike. But remember they don't live with any space restrictions at all here in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Accessories available include a simple nylon cover, a nylon carry bag or a hard-shell carry case at Can\$270. There is also a rear rack for your panniers... almost a necessity unless you like carrying a backpack while riding. Fenders (mudguards), pump, a cool 'logo shaped' tool are added accessories.

But hey! Where's the bottle cage mount? I thought every bike needs a bottle cage even to get to the office... and certainly for the 100km spin if you are so inclined.

Come to think of it, my old Royal has no bottle cage either. Some things don't change.

SUMMARY

For the most part I think the GoBike lives up to its claims. It is a serious bike that doesn't compromise too much to double as a portable folder. But despite the availability of the wider-range 27-speed gear

Peter Eland adds:

Just before we went to press Philip Brook of GoBike visited Velo Vision in York while he was in Europe arranging distribution for the bike. I had a chance to take a brief ride, too, and he also told me about some planned improvements. These include:

- Changes are planned to the cable guides, which will allow shorter cables and remove the need to rearrange them manually after unfolding.
- The telescopic stem is to be shortened 50mm to allow a sportier riding position for those who want it – there's still plenty of upwards adjustment.
- Mudguards: Philip didn't have any with him but I saw pictures: these will be full-length items which look like they'll be effective – very important if GoBike is to have a chance in the UK market!
- Rack: Again, I only saw pictures. The current rack will be mounted on the rear swing-arm. But a frame-mounted one is being planned. They're also considering mounting a Klick-fix 'block' to the headtube to provide front carrying capacity.
- Bottle cage mounting bosses will be fitted to the front of the stem.

As to the bike itself, I was impressed. It looks stunning, rides well and, with exchange rates pushing entry-level Birdy prices up to around £850 nowadays, looks like it could be great value for anyone needing a bike which rides capably, yet folds well enough for train travel. I definitely approve of the disk brakes too.

On the downside, I also noticed the 'pulls to the right' handling issue – I think the culprit on the bike I tried was a little looseness in the front suspension pivot which left the front wheel at a slight angle. They're investigating. Also, it's fair to say I think that the Birdy has the edge at the moment with luggage capacity, with front and rear frame-mounted pannier systems, though GoBike are clearly working on this.

But overall, this is a really positive addition to the folding bike market.

option, it's still not a bike I would choose for a 100km weekend ride. Yes, if it's your only bike, you could likely take it on a century ride, but I don't think that's a realistic market target for this bike.

No bike can do it all. It is what it is – a pretty cool looking and well behaved 'get around or get to work' bike. Great for recreational riding or for keeping on board the boat or the car as an alternative vehicle – and way more fun than most cars I spend time in.

So, in the end, how does it compare to my old Royal? It was never much of a contest. While the old Royal would do at the campsite to get to the showers and down to the beach, the GoBike is hugely better, and a very capable machine. And so it should be for the price.

The GoBike is in the high-middle price range when it comes to folding bikes – it slots in somewhere

above the Brompton and most Dahons, but it's a fair bit cheaper than the Birdy, Bike Friday or Airminal. Seems to me it has a lot going for it – it does a lot of the things many of the more expensive machines do – but cheaper and with a lot of style. Can't be bad.

Doug Miller: www.bikeface.com

AVAILABILITY

The GoBike will be available in most countries shortly – but as we go to press the best way to get hold of one is to contact the manufacturers direct:

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