

Kit reviews

GEAR

COMPONENTS, KIT AND BOOKS SELECTED AND REVIEWED BY SPECIALIST JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Review requests
 Is there a product that you would like us to review? Let Cycle know and we'll consider it.
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PROS
 + Excellent stopping power
 + Easy to fit pads & levers

CONS
 - Fragile screws & clamps

Magura
MT2 DISC BRAKE £39.99
magura.com

AT JUST £40, Magura's entry-level disc brake is a tempting prospect for flat-bar bike builds or as an upgrade from most mechanical discs. The headline price isn't the whole story. As with many brakes, you'll need to factor in a rotor (£21.99 for a Magura Storm one) and a brake mount adapter (around £10). Additionally, you'll need a bleed kit (mine was £14.99 from Epic Bleed Solutions). Each MT2 comes with a two-metre hose, which will need cutting down and bleeding. That could be a barrier to the more casual cyclist that this brake might appeal to.

The MT2 lever is symmetrical and thus left/right interchangeable. Installation is easy thanks to a split, two-bolt clamp. The lever is made largely of a secret material Magura call Carbotechnology and that I'm going to call 'some kind of plastic'. It's lightweight: with an uncut, oil-filled hose, the MT2 weighs only 264g (plus 116g or 142g for a 160mm or 180mm Magura Storm rotor).

Unfortunately, it's fragile: I cracked one of the two-bolt handlebar clamps with a trivial amount of torque. I also stripped the head of one of the Easy Bleed Technology screws. (I

bled the brake by rotating the lever through 180 degrees and using the bleed screw on the other side of the reservoir.) Fit with care!

Like virtually all hydraulic brakes, both pistons move so the calliper can be centred over the rotor and – once everything has bedded in – left alone. The pads are easy to replace. They are located magnetically rather than via a fiddly spring clip, with a bolt through the eyelet at the top of the pads instead of the cotter pin employed by some budget brakes (e.g. the last Avid Elixir 1 I bought).

The MT2 lever is broad and comfortable, and easily adjusted for reach. Braking is powerful. The feel, however, is wooden. I removed the MT2s from my mountain bike because the on-or-off braking wasn't well suited to technical riding. I fitted them to my wife's off-road bike, which is more of a hybrid. Subtly modulated braking is less of an issue on smooth, wide tracks – or roads, for that matter. If those places are where you'll be riding, and if you fit it carefully, this is one of the better budget disc brakes available. For mountain biking, I'd choose either of the brakes in the sidebar on the right. **Dan Joyce**

OTHER OPTIONS



1 AVID BB7 MTN £65
 The price includes a rotor but not a lever (Avid Speed Levers are £23/pair) or cabling, so it's a little dearer overall. But this highly-adjustable mechanical disc brake is excellent when correctly set up.
sram.com



2 SHIMANO DEORE M615 £64.99
 No rotor but the hoses are pre-cut (1000mm front, 1700mm rear) and fully bled, saving you cost and hassle. The benchmark in budget hydraulic brakes, it's reliable and well modulated.
shimano.com

Middleburn R02 X-TYPE 94BCD CHAINSET £417

middleburn.co.uk

- PROS**
- + Small chainring sizes
 - + Crank length options
 - + Fit and finish



HAMPSHIRE-BASED Middleburn has been making handsome chainsets along the lines of the R02 since the 1990s, and still offers classic square-taper cranks in the shape of the RS7 and R01 designs. The R02 brings the design right up to date with a 24mm 'oversize' axle that fits contemporary Shimano Hollowtech II-style 'external' (i.e. sitting outside the bottom bracket shell) bearings. The test sample was installed in Middleburn's own external bearings, which retail at £80.

Unusually, the hollow aluminium axle is attached at the factory to the left-hand crank. It uses a tapered, 'lobular' interface and large 10mm hex bolt and should not be disassembled. This leaves the right-hand crank with chainrings easier to store and ship than if it incorporated the axle. Once the left-hand crank and axle are installed in the frame, the right-hand crank assembly is fitted and its 8mm aluminium hex bolt tightened to 45-50Nm of torque.

There is no provision to adjust the lateral spacing between the cranks, so a springy wave washer placed between two flat ones next to the left-hand crank provides axial

positioning. The wave washer needs to be compressed to do its job of pushing the crank away from the bearing. My sample showed a gap between washer and bearing face of 3mm, which I took up using two of the several plastic shims provided with the Middleburn bottom bracket assembly – but not mentioned in the instructions. They come in two thicknesses and, if needed, provide a handy means of adjusting the crank tread in the search for symmetry.

R02 crank lengths are the useful 165, 170, 172.5 and 175mm sizes. The tread, or 'Q' factor, is a fairly wide 168mm, which is hardly a major concern for most purchasers but might be worth considering. The 46mm chainline places the chainrings around 2.5mm further outboard than usual for a road double, but I had no problems shifting using a correctly-adjusted Ultegra 10-speed front mech.

The appearance of the ensemble is a pleasing mix, the organic, flowing lines of the hot forged, machined, hand-polished and anodised 7075 aluminium crank arms contrasting with the crisp CNC-machined edges of the chainrings, which are offered in hardcoat, black or silver finishes. The



Above: The R02 cranks are available in 165, 170, 172.5 and 175mm lengths

modular design uses a separate spider; this one has a 94mm BCD, which allows the use of a 30t inner ring along with a 46t outer.

Known apparently as 'super compact', 46-30 is a great combination for lightly-laden touring and general leisure riding, the 30t inner giving a 25in bottom gear with a 32t rear sprocket. In use, the chainset itself feels every bit the quality piece of componentry its looks imply and, if more expensive than the obvious competition from TA, it is readily available and, of course, made in the UK.

Richard Hallett

OTHER OPTIONS



1 TA CARMINA CHAINSET £300

94mm BCD spider gives 29t inner chainring option. Square taper axle, extensive crank length selection. chickencyclekit.co.uk



2 SUGINO OX601D CHAINSET £169.99

110mm/74mm twin BCD format allows inner ring down to 26t. External bearings, three crank lengths, smart finish. hubjub.co.uk

Ortlieb MESSENGER BAG £90

ortlieb.com

A S A RULE, luggage is better on your bike than your back. But not always. For short trips around town, on-your-back provides convenience. Off-road, it isolates the load from bumps for better handling. And sometimes you need to carry stuff on a bike that isn't equipped to do so. I no longer have a car, and this bag enables me to ride out to cycling events on my road bike, mountain bike, or time trial bike with whatever I need. That can include 2x3ft 'cycling event' warning signs...

I've cut those signs into 2x1ft strips and rejoined them, so they fold. The Messenger Bag, which has a nominal height and width of 50x39cm, is the smallest bag into which they'll fit; Ortlieb's Velcro strap extension (£3.60) buys a bit more height. Ortlieb make two bigger backpacks: the 49-litre Transporter Bag (£110) and the eye-wateringly expensive 60L Messenger Bag XL (£243). At 39L, the Messenger Bag will be big enough for most cyclists. It's so big that it can intrude into your peripheral vision. You need to turn your body to look behind properly – a glance isn't enough.



Above: Waist and chest straps keep the bag stable on your back, and the shoulder straps are comfortable

PROS
+ Huge capacity
+ Waterproof & comfortable

Like other Ortlieb bags it's completely waterproof. It's made of PVC-coated polyester and cordura, with welded seams and a rolltop closure fastened by Velcro. Inside there's one cavernous space: no pockets, no dividers, just a backplate to stiffen the bag. Bag accessories are available, such as A4 and A3 document folders, a waist strap pocket, a phone pocket, and a U-lock holder. Each costs around a tenner.

For such a big bag, it's surprisingly comfortable when riding. The back is well padded, as are the easily-adjusted shoulder straps. Chest and waist straps stop the bag moving about while pedalling hard, and they help distribute the weight onto your torso and hips rather than just your shoulders. I've got a metal plate in one collarbone and can wear this bag without discomfort. For anything other than short journeys, you will get a sweaty back – not an issue for me, as I'm in cycling gear if I'm going any distance with it.

There are reflective patches on the sides and some piping in the shoulder straps, along with a couple of D-rings. The bottom corners are reinforced to prevent scuffing. It's very sturdily put together overall. One of my sons eventually managed to tear a shoulder strap free of its rivets on an older version of this bag, but he was using it to carry free weights (enough of them that I could scarcely lift it). For bike-portable loads, it should last years.

If you don't need the Messenger Bag's vast capacity, Ortlieb's 24-litre Velocity backpack (£75) is a better bet. But when you need to carry a lot on your back – whether you're commuting, using it as a kit bag like me, or even, since it will just pass as cabin luggage, going on holiday – this takes some beating. Recommended. Weight: 1300g: Colours: yellow, black, red, blue, orange, and white.

Dan Joyce

CONS
- Reduced peripheral vision



OTHER OPTIONS



1 CARRADICE SUPER C COURIER BAG £55

This bombproof cotton duck shoulder bag holds up to 24 litres (40x30x20cm) and has secondary strap to keep it stable. carradice.co.uk



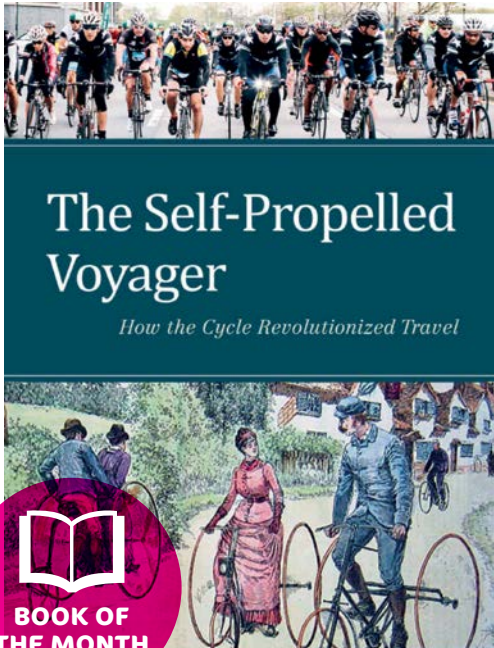
2 POLARIS AQUAUGHT BACKPACK £70

Good value 30-litre waterproof backpack. The rolltop closure is supplemented by unnecessarily-long buckled straps at each side, which is a bit fussy. polaris-bikewear.co.uk

Book reviews

BOOKS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS



Duncan R Jamieson

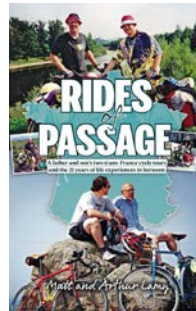
THE SELF-PROPELLED VOYAGER £56

rowman.com/RLPublishers

IN HIS HISTORY OF CYCLE touring, American academic and touring cyclist Duncan R Jamieson draws on a treasure trove of cycle-touring literature, from the 1870s up to the blogs of today. His lively approach to the material brings the subject to life as he charts the evolution of bicycle travel from perilous plaything of wealthy young men to a truly democratic beast of burden, weaving illuminating biography with social history.

Along the way are familiar names, from pioneers like Thomas Stevens, Frank Lenz, Ian Hibell, and the Crane cousins through to bestselling travel writers like Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell, Bernard Newman and Dervla Murphy. But there are lesser known characters to meet as well, such as Robert Louis Jefferson, an enigmatic Anglo-American who in 1895 rode from London to Moscow and back in 50 days.

Jamieson's chief shortcoming is the reliance on published travelogues of long-distance cycle tourists, and specifically those published in English. He therefore overlooks notable figures such as the Italian Luigi Masetti, the Frenchman Paul de Vivie, and the German Heinz Stücker. But it's a very readable book, whose hefty price-tag will probably deny it a wider audience. **Jack Thurston**



Matt & Arthur Lamy

RIDES OF PASSAGE

ridesofpassage.info

PROBABLY THE FIRST BOOK to mention Cycling UK, Rides of Passage charts two tours across France from the Channel to the Mediterranean by cycle journalist Matt and his father Arthur. The rides are the same(ish) route, but split by 21 years. They present a heart-warming and amusing account of a father and son reconnecting as they relive their youthful adventures and reminisce on the years between. Despite the difficulties of French working hours and painful injuries due to a brand new Brooks saddle, it's a romp of a ride and read. Most readers will readily identify with at least some aspects of the journey. **Sam Jones**



Chris Boardman

TRIUMPHS AND TURBULENCE £20

penguinrandomhouse.co.uk

THIS IS MY FIRST BOOK review about a cyclist rather than cycles, but maybe not the last if they are all this interesting. Boardman's style of writing is very 'light' and has just the right amount of dry humour. It covers a lot of events that you will be familiar with, but adds a lot of detail that will be new to you (and was to me). For example: we learn that he broke his collarbone on the run up to the '92 Olympics. I don't remember him mentioning that at the time! Lots more about balancing family life with racing, the later years with British Cycling, Halfords etc. And I even get a brief mention. A very close look into the life of one of our greatest cyclists. **Mike Burrows**



THE BICYCLE BOOK £20

dk.com/uk

BICYCLE HISTORY books can be dry. This one is a coffee table hardback with lots of good pictures to bring it to life. The text is a little basic, so it's better suited to newcomers to cycling. The format of covering cycling by tracking its history from the first boneshakers to modern race bikes is ambitious but gives good structure and encourages you to read whole book as a story rather than just dip in and out. Inevitably, it's spread a bit thin, but it's not bad. **Roland Seber**



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