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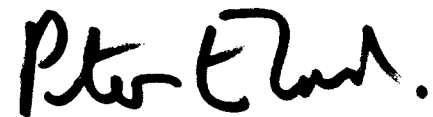
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I hope you enjoy the read.



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* (note the hyphen) 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.



COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Riding the Cadenza. Photo: Peter Eland.

OPPOSITE: The weir on the River Ouse at Naburn Lock near York provides a turbulent backdrop. Photo: Peter Eland.

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TOO MUCH TESTING!

This is an issue somewhat stuffed full of reviews: perhaps too many. I think we've done justice to everything we've tested, but with a total of four bike tests plus masses of short reviews, it's been something of a logistical challenge.

Everything needs to be ridden as much as possible. Everything needs to be photographed several times: first while still clean, and then in use, preferably when it's sunny, and when I can persuade some of my friends to come out on a bike ride and have their pictures taken for the action shots.

Then, between sending the magazine to print and mailing it out, I'll try to get the review bikes cleaned, disassembled, carefully packed up and sent off. After that there's a few glorious weeks of actually having some spare space at home and in the office before the next batch of test bikes arrive, usually in huge cardboard boxes...

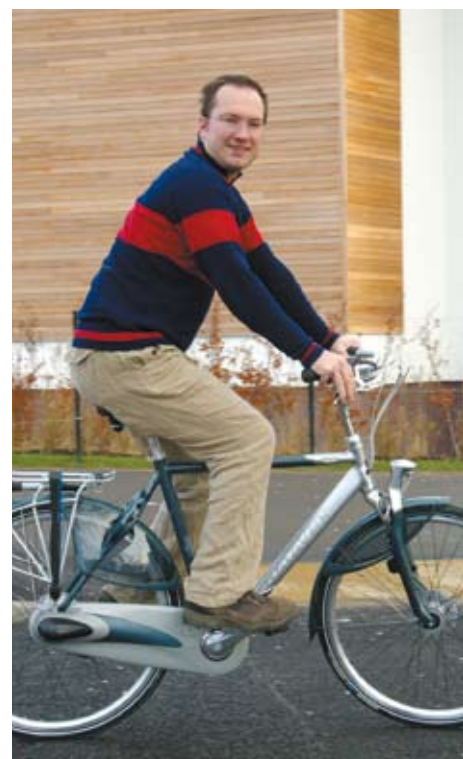
I'm certainly not complaining: I know how lucky I am to get to try all of these interesting bikes. I hope our reviews allow you to share some of the pleasure I take in riding them. And I'll try to scale back a bit for next issue!

Peter Eland

A WHOLE LOT OF BIKE



“Expect a lot of bike”, said the UK distributor as he shipped the Batavus Adagio NuVinci to Velo Vision. Unpacking it, we found out why. It’s the first bike we’ve tried with the NuVinci continuously-variable drive, and it also boasts a host of other features. So is this a bike that’s worth the weight?



BACKGROUND

Batavus are one of the oldest and largest cycle manufacturers in the Netherlands, and have a full range of bikes on offer. The Adagio NuVinci is among their ‘Royal Class’ of premium machines with, as we’ll see, pretty much every feature you can think of for comfort and ease of use. It’s also the top model among the four in the Batavus range which use the NuVinci continuously-variable hub transmission system: Batavus are among the first manufacturers to equip their bikes with these hubs.

Batavus bikes are imported to the UK by Amstel Cycles, and dealers include The Littlehampton Dutch Bike Shop, Amsterdammers in Brighton and Station Cycles in Cambridge. Our test bike as supplied retails at £1217 in the UK. No accessories are listed, presumably because everything is included already!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

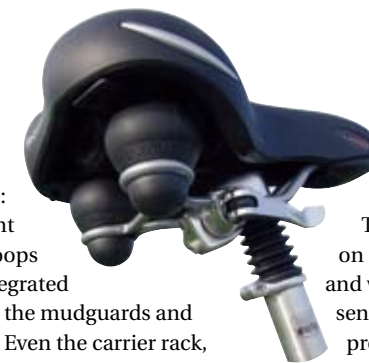
You’d think that after 28 issues of doing *Velo Vision*, I’d be fairly familiar with the diamond frame bike. To some extent I am, but unwrapping the Batavus was different. It’s a traditional bike in many ways, but with so many extra and different aspects to it that it also felt unfamiliar, a new departure.

This impression starts with the frame: it’s curvy, organic, with those sinuous seatstay bulges around the frame lock, tubes which shift shape along their length, and the bold-yet-subtle ‘BATAVUS’ lettering hydroformed into the tubing of the downtube, so that the lettering protrudes a few millimetres above the surface. The welds are smooth, almost like fillet-brazing in places, and the finish is superb in sparkling metallic blue and bright silver. Cable runs are all internal, and the headset is the smooth, integrated type.

The curves continue with the

components: from the front fork as it swoops up to the integrated front light to the mudguards and dressguards. Even the carrier rack, the cranks and the pedals keep up the theme: apart from the spokes, there’s hardly a straight line in sight. Overall, the effect is modern, almost futuristic, solid-looking and also comfortable, as curves usually are. Looked at with an engineering eye, it’s equally impressive. So many custom components, so neatly integrated – no doubt with a fearsome tooling cost somewhere

down the line. The first thing to adjust on a new bike is the saddle, and while Batavus have sensibly opted for a theft-proof Allen key clamp for saddle height adjustment, the saddle’s angle and fore-and-aft adjustment is handled by a quick-release. This makes particular sense when combined with the adjustable stem, of which more later. The saddle itself is a substantial padded model from Lookin, with huge elastomer ‘springs’. If you ride very upright it’s supportive, if perhaps a bit squishy for some



ABOVE LEFT: The built-in Trelock frame lock can immobilise the rear wheel. I’m told there is also a cable available which plugs into the side of the lock, letting you secure the bike to something solid.

ABOVE RIGHT: Tidy routing as the cables disappear inside the frame.

LEFT: The integrated headlight has built-in angle adjustment plus a standlight function, so it stays on for a few minutes when you stop.

tastes. It's fitted to a Post Moderne suspension seatpost.

Moving forwards to the handlebars, again any new rider will want to adjust height and reach, and perhaps the angle of the bars within the stem. Batavus lets you achieve this tool-free: just press the red plastic button on the side of the 'Ergo Matic' stem and lift the large lever: this unlocks the whole assembly, and it can be re-positioned with just light pressure. Just close the lever to lock it again.

The result is a wide range of riding positions from 'bolt upright' to almost 'racer crouch', and further adjustment is available by sliding the quill stem up or down. This does require tools – a special long Allen key which fits through a hole in the adjustable part of the stem to reach the wedge bolt.

Also built (theft-proof) into the stem is a wireless cycle computer. As you adjust the stem angle, the computer can be swivelled in its housing so that it's still facing you – how's that for detail!

The bars themselves are satin-finish steel, equipped with soft leather grips and Batavus-branded brake levers. These have an extra-wide curved surface where your fingers press on the levers: another little touch for extra comfort.

Both brakes are Shimano roller-brakes, a low-maintenance solution and almost impossible to lock up, but perhaps a little lacking in power if you need an emergency stop from speed. The front wheel also accommodates a Shimano hub dynamo, which drives the LED headlamp integrated into the front suspension forks. This has an 'auto' mode so that the lamp switches on automatically in darkness, a standlight, and there's also a little adjustment wheel to adjust the beam angle.



Before we leave the wheels, take a look at the valve caps. They're marked 3.5: that's the pressure in bar at which the indicator in the cap changes from green to red. It's a neat idea to remind you to pump up the tyres when needed – if you remember to glance at the valves before you ride.

Also take a look at the front mudguard – an elegantly-curved confection with built-in flap, and little side shields (to keep your knees clean, perhaps?). The mudguard stay attachment point and wheel axle nuts are neatly concealed at the bottom of the fork by a little plastic moulding to preserve the clean look. These are missing in most of the photos, as I only found and fitted them towards the end of the review. The same applies to the blanking pieces which fit in at the top of the fork legs.

Moving back along the frame, there's a set of bottle cage bosses on the downtube and, naturally, a long bike stand fitted behind the bottom bracket. This provides a stable footing for the Adagio when parked,



and is easily kicked out of the way as you set off.

The carrier rack is a complex aluminium model, again a Batavus special, complete with integrated rear light. I thought the attachment to the seatstays was particularly neatly done, with a curved metal plate marked 15 kg – the rack's capacity – running to a solid-looking aluminium clamp.

Little plastic and rubber pads provide a grippy, non-marking surface for whatever you put on it, and an elastic strap is built in to hold stuff down. A mini-pump is cunningly concealed within the rack, easily to hand, yet not too obvious to thieves. I'd probably still want to remove it before leaving the bike in public.

The rack structure provides plenty of side support for panniers, but a very minor gripe is that the rail onto which panniers hook is curved, meaning that panniers with very rigid hook systems (such as Carradice or Arkel) may not fit. Various Ortlieb and Vaude ones fitted no problem, as there's plenty of flex in their plastic backs.

Underneath the rack is another curvy mudguard with integrated dress-guard. The transparent window makes it less obtrusive visually, and also helps if you need to clear out a leaf or whatever. It's all fixed firmly, rattle-free, by a multitude of little plastic clips and steel stays.

The built-in frame lock is actually a Trelock model, concealed within the sculpted seatstays and behind yet more plastic moulding. This sort of lock has a captive key while the lock is open – when the clock is closed (which immobilises the rear wheel) the key releases. The idea of these built-in locks is to prevent opportunist theft, and it's fine for that. No thief will get far in a hurry carrying this bike.

On then to the transmission, and I'll save a detailed discussion of the NuVinci for later in this issue, where we'll be comparing in detail all four of the hub gear systems from this issue's test bikes. In this case it's driven through a typically-Dutch full chaincase formed from substantial plastic mouldings. These snap apart for wheel removal but, with the extra complications of roller brakes and

the NuVinci hub, it's really no job for the faint-hearted: if possible fix punctures without removing the wheel, or go to your dealer. On the plus side, the chaincase keeps both your clothes and the chain clean: no need for trouser-clips on this bike.

Finally, along with the bike comes a 'goodie bag' containing a rather nice leather-bound 'logbook' and instruction manual, a well-finished Batavus leather bag and straps to attach it behind the saddle, a multi-tool, puncture kit, and the long Allen key needed to loosen the stem. Plus a useful bit of black cloth to wipe your hands, a spare key for the lock, a leather key-fob, a Brooks saddle cover, and a small tin of leather grease to keep it all looking good.

Weight as tested was a touch over 25 kg for the 57 cm gents frame, a significant weight for a solo bike, but arguably justified by the features. Also bear in mind that the NuVinci hub alone contributes around 4 kg to that total.

THE RIDE

With saddle and bars set to your liking the Adagio is immediately a comfortable perch, with the leather handgrips filling your palm well and the saddle offering wide support.

It's not the most nippy of bikes, as the name Adagio suggests, but nor is it as slow as that implies. Acceleration is moderate, but once up to speed the bike rolls along fine, with the weight making little difference. It's a very smooth ride indeed, with the full-size wheels and suspension doing a fine job of evening out the road with little bounce. Most of the time I forgot I was on a suspended bike, which is usually a good sign.

I particularly liked the quick-release stem feature – the ability to drop down to a crouch in headwinds was most welcome. I also moved it very upright on occasion, when pootling along slowly with friends. My usual position was to have them fairly low, meaning I could be riding a low-maintenance Dutch bike without the typical very upright riding position. I do like that position – stately, and relaxing, but I find the wind resistance frustrating when I need to actually go places.



So the ability to change at whim is wonderful, and the stem adjustment is super-easy. It locks securely in place, and is quite rigid: you have to be really heaving at the bars to make them flex at all. Overall, the bike feels sturdy and solid. The frame, with its very oversized tubing, responds well to pedal pressure, and climbing out of the saddle doesn't shake its composure.

The NuVinci drive operates silently and smoothly (see later this issue for more detail). But for some reason, at a certain ratio or speed about 1/3 up from bottom there's a sort of thrum through the pedals – I suspect this is a resonance of the chain or the chaincase, rather than in the hub. It's only very mild, and disappears with a slight change of ratio, so it's more a curiosity than even a serious niggle.

I found the gearing a bit high for my taste, but I do favour a higher cadence. The NuVinci's range of

350% should be more than adequate for riding in the flat, but I'd have liked it shifted a bit lower. I'd run out of low gear relatively frequently, but rarely found myself in top. A change of sprocket and/or chainring could sort this out easily – ask your dealer.

Braking from the two Shimano rollerbrakes was adequate and reliable, and the levers very comfortable. I'd have liked a bit more 'bite', myself, but there's no significantly better solution with the very low maintenance of the rollers, and they're fine for normal use.

The lighting system worked well, with a good beam from the LED headlight.

Given the amount of equipment it was carrying, I was impressed that over the entire test there wasn't a loose bolt or a rattle anywhere on the Adagio. Everything just worked, silently and without fuss, and this gave a quality feel to the ride.

CONCLUSION

At £1217 the Adagio NuVinci isn't cheap by any standard, but you do get a lot for your money – a whole lot. I'm almost surprised it isn't more expensive with its integrated design, superb finish and wealth of features and custom components.

The logbook and extras package that comes with the bike is a lovely touch too, giving the purchase a sense of occasion and permanence, and the feeling that you're buying from a company which really just wants to sort out your transport once and for all without worrying about pinching pennies.

So it's a luxury liner of a bike, with every conceivable convenience built in, with everything enclosed and with perhaps the ultimate easy-to-use drivetrain. Sure, at 25 kg it's heavy, and it won't suit sporty riders at all. But on the flat that doesn't matter, and for a bit of extra weight you've gained comfort, reliability and a lot of design sophistication.

The NuVinci hub is a great fit for this bike, and the sort of cycling for which it's intended. Please do turn a few pages on to read our detailed comments about the hub – it's a distinctive feature of this bike, and not available from any other European manufacturer so far.

My only caveat would be that if you need to lift the bike regularly (up stairs, onto a car bike rack or whatever) then the weight could well become an issue. It's also not geared for use in hilly country, and also the weight would count heavily against it in those circumstances.

I see this bike as ideal for the sort of rider who really doesn't want to be bothered with maintenance (or even getting tools out to adjust it), who wants a super-reliable, super-comfortable bike, and who appreciates quality. If that's you, this Batavus won't disappoint.

Peter Eland

AVAILABILITY

Manufacturer: www.batavus.nl
UK importer: Amstel Cycles UK
Tel 01903 730222 or see www.amstelcycles.co.uk. They say dealer enquiries are welcome.