



Gocycle GO!



Tim Reynolds looks at two radically different interpretations of an electric future, while over the page he assess a conventional, 'crossover' supermini.

Practicality and fun are at the heart of the Gocycle. The brainchild of Richard Thorpe, an ex-McLaren F1 designer, this sleek electric mobility solution is stylish and very high tech.

I spent a pleasant, sunny afternoon trying out the Gocycle around central Amsterdam with Jan Tondeur (pictured) who runs Green-Miles, the distributor for this electric bike in Belgium and Luxembourg.

The Gocycle can be ridden as a normal bike – and it is a very good conventional cycle – but

it is the design and the seamless integration of the electric power unit that makes this bike an outstanding vehicle for the urban environment.

With a magnesium injection moulded frame and forks, 'pit-stop' easy-release wheels and a 250 W proprietary design electric motor that directly drives the front wheel, this is a light bike weighing in at only 15.6 kilos. The bike also features a completely enclosed, multi-speed chain drive – no oily cogs to rip your clothes! And the design allows the bike to be broken down easily for storage or transport.

But you need to try it to appreciate the joy of this machine. It is comfortable and effortless cycling. The bike has a small turning circle and disc brakes that makes handling fantastic. The added input of the electric motor is imperceptible, unless you flick a little red switch for the equivalent of a 'turbo boost', but you are travelling at 20 km/h with ease. Inbuilt electronics measure a multitude of parameters to assess exactly how much electric power to apply.

Even better you can tune the bike to your own requirements via the Gocycle connect app



■ MALE BOX

available for free download on your iOS or Android device. The bike and device connect by Bluetooth. Using the app also allows the 25 km/h top speed limit to be exceeded.

Overall the Gocycle was exceptional fun and could make any urban commute a joy (Biblical



weather not intervening, of course). Sure it is expensive but not hugely to talk about... more than other electric bikes. And for the style of a McLaren, it's a bargain! ■

MORE INFORMATION:

The Gocycle G2R is available in white, matt black or grey. It has a 250 W motor and a top speed of over 40 km/h once the limiter is withdrawn. It has hydraulic disc brakes and a maximum powered range of range around 65 km. Battery recharge takes 5.5 hours. The basic bike costs just under €3,500 including VAT. For more information, visit www.green-miles.com or www.gocycle.com

BMW i3: THE ELECTRIC CAR?

The big news of the autumn for electric cars is the launch on the Belgian market of the BMW i3. Press vehicles are only available in November in Belgium, but I hear that customer test drives are already booked up well past Christmas.

And for a very good reason: the BMW i3 is a very clever electric car. It is made largely from carbon fibre shaped into aerodynamic forms on a superlight aluminium frame. Lower weight in the body means that the battery can be smaller for a given range, which itself cuts

more weight and, in turn, means lighter suspension, wheels and brakes are required.

The result is a trim weight of just 1200 kilos that its 127 kW electric engine can accelerate from 0-100 km/h in just 7.2 seconds. On a single battery charge the car should manage a range of up to 160 km. An optional petrol-driven range extender is also available.

Inside the i3 has the premium quality one expects from BMW with a decent amount of room for four people. The retail price in Belgium will be €35,500 which is also premium. It will be interesting to see how many test drives turn into purchases.

MORE INFORMATION:

visit www.bmw.be



TO CROSS *or not to cross*



I have been wanting to test out a 'cross' car since I noticed the proliferation of the genre at the Brussels Auto Salon in January. Now cross doesn't mean that the vehicle is particularly sullen, rather it is short for SUV (sports utility vehicle) crossover. At the moment such vehicles claim only a 6% share of Europe's B (aka supermini) market segment, but sales are growing fast and could reach 10% of all car sales in the very near future.

My car of choice is the Peugeot 2008, which despite its name, was launched this year. The car shares around two-thirds of

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its components with the very beautiful Peugeot 208 that I test drove in 2012 (see issue 41). However, it shares almost none of its exterior good looks.

Like its similar playmates, the beefy Mini Countryman or the frankly grotesque Nissan Juke, the Peugeot 2008 isn't built to win a fashion parade. It is all very sensible and practical

angles. It's very square, almost box like in fact.

But it is not too obese. It shares the 208's lightweight construction basis and has the same wheelbase. The 2008 is a bit bigger though – 20 cm longer, almost 10 cm taller and 2.5 cm wider and it boasts a ground clearance at just over 16cm higher than the 208. A useful feature given that I took it for a drive up to the old Hougoumont farmhouse on the Waterloo battlefield.

Despite the extra height the car gives a good quality ride, but it does lean over a bit at times at which point passengers may reach out for non-existent grab handles on the roof. Perhaps the one design fault here?

INTERIOR CHARM

On the inside the 2008 retains the charms of the 208 including the 'toy car' power steering wheel, which actually is a boon for urban driving and for manoeuvring on a country dirt track. My model also featured the luxurious head-height LED strips and a panoramic glass ceiling. And there is much more space for lanky kids or cargo with the 360 litre boot expanding to an ample 1,194 litres with the back seats down.

There is reasonable storage space around the driver too, with a large and deep, centre console

and two coffee cup holders! But the handbrake is more than quirky and looks like it could be a central arm rest with its 'hammer of Thor' design.

The overall ambiance seems designed to make you think you've bought yourself a miniature Range Rover – but this isn't a 4x4. However, it does feature an electronic traction control that should enable this family car to take on most road conditions – from snow to coastal sand, as well as the odd muddy, country track.

Overall, I liked the 2008 almost as much as I loved the 208 – and on a practical level the 2008 is a hard to beat a small family vehicle that is roomier, wider, taller and longer but still fun to drive. ■

MORE INFORMATION:

Tim drove a Makaha Brown Peugeot 2008 Allure 1.6 litre e-HDi with Oxford black interior trim. The car has a top speed of just over 188 km/hour and can accelerate from 0-100 km/hour in 10.4 seconds. The 1560 cc diesel engine delivers 84 kW via a six-speed, manual gearbox to the front wheels and emits 106 grams of CO₂ per kilometre. The base price for this vehicle is €22,350 but with options included is €25,170 (including VAT). Prices for the 2008 range start at €14,900 (including VAT). For more information, visit www.peugeot.be



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