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M E E T S
C Y C L I N G

Every once in a while, elements from seemingly different worlds come together to produce something really quite special. Former McLaren engineer Richard Thorpe used to design racing cars that fleet down tarmac at breakneck speeds. During his stint at McLaren, he was also doing some bicycle designing on the side. Interesting stuff, but nothing major.

Even back then, he regularly cycled to work as he loved the freedom and convenience of the bicycle. What he didn't love though, was the tiring, sweaty, and sometimes greasy result of the commutes. In fact, he got so fed up that he quit his job designing fast cars to focus all his energy on creating something he was convinced would work – not the fastest, most aerodynamic speedster; but the ultimate commuting bike.

THE BIKE

The Gocycle was the eventual fruit of his labour; the first version called the G1 was launched some years back. It was a somewhat revolutionary new take on the idea of an electric bike (or e-bike for short), especially back then. But being ever the perfectionist, there were still many bits that did not satisfy Richard Thorpe. The G1 was discontinued and he went back to the drawing board to rework those bits.

One of the biggest challenges faced was that existing aftermarket (aka readily available) parts limited his designs. It made him work around existing designs – not something he was keen on doing. He then decided to take things into his own hands and push the project to the next level – he designed and fabricated parts that he needed by himself.

By the time he relaunched the new G2 model, Thorpe's design was covered by over 12 international patents, going to show the extent of how much he took matters into his own hands.

To kick things off, the not one single weld is seen on the frame. The environmentally-friendly moulding process uses injection-moulded magnesium technology. This creates a lightweight yet durable frame that looks really neat. All cables are internally routed to keep the overall sleekness and for added protection. The patented and concealed drive system known as Cleandrive prevents external elements to get to the parts, hence prolonging durability. Charles Baey from Inner City Rhythm, Gocycle's local distributor, said, "Even the chain does not require servicing and may only need to be changed once every couple of years. Should the need arise, we will be able to service or replace the parts for Gocycle owners."

Electronic three-speed shifting also means you never have to deal with replacing worn shifter cables.

The Gocycle is not marketed to be a folding bike, but fold it does; kind of. Okay, it breaks apart more than it folds. A swing arm at the bottom bracket swings what is essentially the chain stays. The steering column folds clean too, with all cables and wires flowing neatly to prevent any sort of abrasion. Because of the internal shifter and motor unit integrated into the dropouts, both front and rear wheels are completely identical and can be swapped about. The 20" rims use the same fabrication technique as the frame, making them really light. Thorpe's PitStopWheel is clearly something from his F1 days at McLaren. Three quick-release clips replace traditional skewers for a fuss-free system that takes half the time and a fraction the effort. Once the parts are taken apart, the bike can be easily stowed away in the car or in a bag to carry on board the train or bus.

The complete bike weighs 15.6kg – flyweight in e-bike terms. Design-wise the Gocycle G2 is one of the best around.





THE RIDE

E-bikes have more often than not been interesting to us. This was quite different. We didn't just find it interesting; we loved it. Sure, there are bits that we have our doubts about (we constantly reminded ourselves this bike wasn't built for supreme handling at scary speeds), but as a bike designed for commuting, it does this pretty darn well.

The three-speed transmission, featuring a Shimano Nexus system, helps you get up any hill without much fuss with the help of the little 200-watt motor in front. On the flats, the biggest gear churns and gets up to a speed of 25km/h before the electronic assistance maintains that speed. Shifting can also only be done when shifting to a higher gear, while downshifting is done automatically.

Another interesting thing to note is the Gocycle app for your Apple or Android device with the purchase of one of these bikes. Once installed and synced, the app lets you tweak settings of each preset mode on the Gocycle. Currently, four preset

modes are available that range from minimum to maximum assistance. Options for tweaking include the amount of assistance, when it kicks in and cuts off.

Proprietary 1.75 tires made by Vredestein for Gocycle are plush, light and grippy. Comfort is heightened by a 25mm travel rear Lockshock. The bike's weight distribution is kept low and centre of gravity of spot on. This provides for easy handling, though the lack of a stem and relatively upright steering column makes the handlebars twitchy. Also, the lack of adjustability of the handlebar height may not be for everyone.

Commuting to and fro the office for a few days, hardly a sweat was broken. With the Gocycle, we experienced the most effortless commute ever. Speeds were easily maintained on flats and the motor assisted just enough on hills.

Depending on the amount of assistance, the range

goes up to 64km – a pretty fair distance. Should the battery be insufficient enough to power the motor, it will still power the shifting so you can ride it as an 'analogue' bike.

A full charge takes about 5.5 hours, though it is recommended to be charged after every use, shortening each charge's duration.

For easy visual reference, an integrated dashboard indicates information like mode and gear selection with red LEDs, ala Kit from Knight Rider. Hydraulic disc brakes are sported for stopping duties and they do a magnificent job being smooth and effortless.

Overall, this is a machine that brings together motorsports and bicycle commuting and in an unconventional way; and does it very well. Retailing at just above \$6,000, it doesn't come cheap. But they say you get what you pay for; and you may get more than just the ride of your life with the Gocycle.

