



LIZ COLEBROOK
Frame builder and
occupational therapist

Bike test

THOROUGHbred HYBRIDS

Framebuilder **Liz Colebrook** of Beaumont Bicycle reviews two women's hybrids: the Pinnacle Chromium 3 Mixte and the Genesis Skyline 20W

THE TWO BIKES on test are aimed at women looking for a hybrid that cuts the mustard as a utility/commuter bike, with scope to travel further afield with some luggage. Given this brief, the bike needs to be reasonably light, resilient, practical, and comfortable. I took them through town and out into the Shropshire hills where the terrain is hilly. It was also much rougher under tyre than usual after a harsh winter.

FRAME AND FORK

Both frames use a configuration of double-buttressed, heat-treated aluminium tubing paired with an aluminium fork designed for a semi-integrated headset. Genesis opt for a compact frame design and tapered head tube; this keeps the handlebar at a comfortable height whilst affording good standover clearance with the sloping top tube. The Chromium 3 stands out with its French style 'mixte' frame design, where twin lateral stays run from the head tube to the rear triangle. With no top tube, there will be a folding moment at play but the twin 'lats' counter this very effectively,

giving both torsional strength and generous standover clearance. The mixte was originally designed for mixed usage in terms of gender – hence the name. Nowadays it's seen as a variation on the 'step-through' but still requires quite a high stepping action.

The Chromium 3 has a slightly steeper seat angle than the Genesis Skyline – 73.5 degrees versus 73. I liked this climbing hills; being positioned over the pedals gives a palpable sense of power delivery. The 55mm fork offset gives good toe clearance should you want to wear boots. When combined

with the head angle of 72 degrees and 47mm tyre width, the handling is light and nimble. The trail of 53mm allows you to quickly dodge a pothole, yet the bike is nice and stable on descents, as is the Genesis Skyline.

The Skyline's stated trail is 74mm, although I calculated 78mm, and the handling is correspondingly a little less responsive at slower speeds. One could argue this enables the rider to feel more relaxed on longer stretches but then other factors need to be right, such as the rider's relationship with the handlebar.

Both bikes feature a hard-as-nails powder-

coat finish. What this lacks in lustre is made up for in resilience. Similar colour choices from both companies show that turquoise is evidently a current favourite for women's cycling. The matt finish of powder-coating looks good with the current trend for matt black componentry.

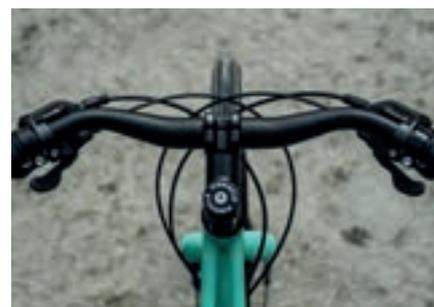
COMPONENTS

Although the industry owes a huge boost in sales from affordable lightweight aluminium bicycles coming onto the market in the 1980s, I'd describe the ride characteristics of aluminium as rather unforgiving and almost 'jarring'. What's noteworthy about the Chromium 3 is its wheel and tyre combination. The 47mm-section herringbone file tread tyre on a 650B wide rim does a great job of dissolving this 'harshness' – particularly important with a straight bladed fork. Recommended tyre pressure is 45-65psi. I ran the tyres at 55psi and was pleasantly surprised by the heady mix of

SITTING COMFORTABLY

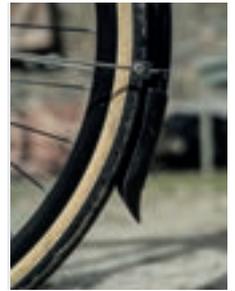
Saddle discomfort tends to be a bigger issue for women than men. For more on this topic, see cyclinguk.org/saddlepain

I RAN THE CHROMIUM 3'S WIDE 650B TYRES AT 55PSI AND WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE MIX OF COMFORT AND SPEED



Above: A more backswept handlebar gives the Pinnacle a relaxed riding position that complements its wide tyres





Clockwise from far left: Similar overall wheel diameters. Wide 650B tyres (Pinnacle). Useful mudflap & kickstand mount (Genesis)



THERE'S ONLY 5MM OF EXTRA SPACE ON EACH BIKE'S STEERER, SO YOU'D NEED TO FIT A NEW STEM TO GET THE BAR HIGHER

comfort and speed.

If the rim and tyre are narrow, more internal pressure is required to counter the force of the rider and road against the rim width. With a wider rim and tyre, less pressure is required to perform the same counter-force action because of the greater total volume of air within the tyre chamber. With a narrow rim and higher tyre pressure, a tyre rolls up and over every road bump, requiring more effort from the rider as the wheel axles describe a line like the ups and downs of a share price. A wider rim with a larger air chamber, requiring less pressure to match the same counter-force, enables a smoother ride as the tyre conforms to

the rough road, effectively shortening the distance from A to B so it's actually faster.

Riding the relatively slimmer 700x35 tyres of the Skyline felt familiar, but I noticed more road shock through the handlebar. This had a cumulative effect the longer I was in the saddle; I wanted to relax and shake out my arms whilst riding. This was also down to the handlebar shape: with only a 15 degree sweep, I felt my shoulders and neck muscles were not as relaxed as they could be.

The Chromium 3 handlebar has more sweep and felt instantly more natural to ride. Both bars feature lock-on ergo grips. The 'fin' or 'wing' facing the rider prevents the wrist from dropping down and putting pressure

on the ulnar nerve (potentially leading to Carpel Tunnel Syndrome). When setting the handlebar angle and grip position, make sure this 'fin' is horizontal or it will not be doing its job.

Saddles are personal but I found both agreeable with their slight central groove. Width was adequate for my sitting bones, given the angle of my spine and pelvis in the riding position. I wore Swrve cycling jeans (stretch Cordura), which feature a gusset, and I was pleased they worked with the saddles. I noted the Skyline had printed gradations on the seat pillar – very useful if you have to remove the seat pillar regularly.

Unfortunately, there's only 5mm of extra space on each bike's steerer, so you'd need to fit a new stem if you wanted to raise the handlebar higher than this. (Both bikes come with 70mm x 7 degree stems.)

As often happens, the handlebar controls are fitted right up to the grip on either side without a thought given to actual hand

OTHER OPTIONS



1 Islabikes Beinn 29 £599.99

Gender neutral 1x10 all-rounder with mechanical disc brakes that's easily accessorised for town or country. 7005 series aluminium frame with lightweight cro-mo fork. Approx 12kg. Islabikes.co.uk



2 Cube Hyde Pro Trapeze Women's Hybrid £849

Aluminium frameset with Gates belt drive and low-maintenance, 8-speed internal hub transmission and hydraulic discs. Potential to accessorise. Approx 13.5kg. cube.eu



Both bikes are good all-rounders, suiting country lanes and urban streets

position and function. A gap of 8-10mm between grip and brake lever allows the index and middle finger to come to rest naturally on the brake lever just where it sweeps in. This matters if you have larger hands as your thumbs can otherwise feel cramped and even rub against the shifter whilst riding.

Nowadays, gearing is referred to by the number of chainrings and cassette sprockets: 'one-by-eleven' etc. The Chromium 3 is two-by-ten, the Skyline two-by-nine. For commuting and recreational days out, you will value low (hill-climbing) gears and enjoy having gravity on your side as you descend. With luggage on board, low-gearing is even more important as it's easier to twiddle uphill than dismount and push.

The Chromium 3 features an off-the-peg compact double chainset with slightly smaller chainrings than the compact double chosen for the Skyline. I hardly used the outer rings on either bike. The lowest gear on the Chromium is 25in and the highest is 117in, whereas on the Skyline it's 27in and the highest is 122in.

A front derailleur must be set up precisely and used with sensitivity; the pedals must turn to change gear but not under pressure. Learning this is quite difficult for someone new to cycling. Then, just when you thought you've understood it, there's the 'trim' facility to take on board. A 'one-by' system is an excellent solution in my opinion, and I hope we see it trickle down to a much greater extent.

The braking is powerful, with very light action, on both bikes, which both use Shimano hydraulic 160mm disc systems. Practise using them at slow speeds if unfamiliar and don't use a spray chain lube, as the mist will alight on the rear rotor.

It's good to see mudguards as standard. The Chromium opts for a traditional look

in keeping with its French influence. These would be even better with mud flaps as sported by the Skyline, as a considerable amount of water sprays off a wide tyre. The Chromium's allen key 'quick-releases' are straightforward and arguably easier to understand and operate compared to the Skyline's traditional 9mm and 10mm QRs.

If I was towing a trailer or loading up a luggage rack, the option to attach a kickstand is nice to have. Rear stay fitting kickstands are particularly good, with more weight around the rear axle. The Skyline has just the fittings all ready and waiting.

Longer rack extensions may be required to get a luggage rack level but some racks have adjustable height settings to make this easier. I fitted a saddlebag and the Bagman quick-release support, which was a doddle. Good to see mounts for a bottle cage on both frames. The Skyline's bottle position is more easily reachable when riding but only the Chromium offers fixing points for a fork-mounted rack.

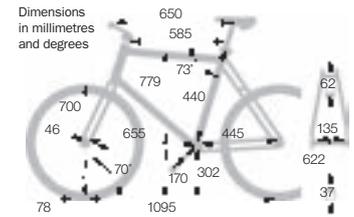
SUMMARY

For me, the Chromium 3 has the edge over the Skyline thanks its wheel system and more relaxed riding position. Changing the handlebar on the Skyline would be inexpensive and would make me happier, but the Chromium's lower bottom gear would still be a deal breaker for hillier terrain. Both hybrids can take a luggage rack for panniers or commuter bags, and the Skyline is even kickstand-ready. 



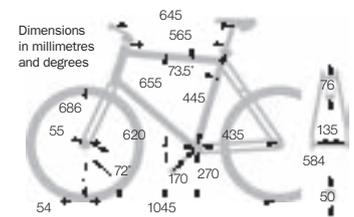
MORE REVIEWS ON THE WEBSITE
We're adding more bike reviews online. Visit cyclingsuk.org/cycling-advice

Tech specs



GENESIS SKYLINE 20W

- PRICE:** £724.99
- SIZES:** (tested in bold): XS, S, M, L.
- WEIGHT:** 11.7kg (no pedals)
- FRAME & FORK:** ALX8 6066/6061-T6 double-butted aluminium frame. Genesis alloy Urban w/ 1-1/8" alloy tapered steerer fork. All cables external.
- WHEELS:** 35-622 CST Sensamo Speed tyres, Jalco XCD21 32h eyeleted rims, 3x pg 14g spokes, KT TC7 32h Centrelock hubs.
- TRANSMISSION:** Shimano FC-R345 170mm cranks, 50-34 chainrings, Shimano Octolink BB-ES300 68-113mm, KMC X9 chain, Shimano CS-HG400-9 11-34T cassette. Shimano Sora SL-R3000 shifters & Shimano Sora RD-R3000 derailleurs (GS rear). 18 ratios, 27-122in.
- BRAKING:** Shimano BR-M315 hydraulic discs, 160mm rotors.
- STEERING & SEATING:** 640mmx31.8mm bar w' 0mm rise & 17° backsweep, 70mmx7° stem. Genesis ergo grips. Prestine PT-23S 1 1/8"-1 1/2" semi integrated headset. Genesis Urban Comfort WS saddle (160mm wide), alloy 31.6x400mm micro-adjust seatpost.
- EQUIPMENT:** 45mm mudguards. genesiskbikes.co.uk



PINNACLE CHROMIUM 3 WMS

- PRICE:** £800
- SIZES:** S, M, T (tall)
- WEIGHT:** 11.73kg (no pedals)
- FRAME & FORK:** 6061-T6 heat treated aluminium frame with double-butted seat and downtube. Aluminium fork with 1 1/8" steerer. All cables internally routed.
- WHEELS:** 47-584 WTB Horizon Comp tyres, Alex MD-21 32H 650B eyeleted rims, 3x pg spokes, Aluminium cup and cone hubs.
- TRANSMISSION:** 170mm FSA Omega Mega Exo 48-32T cranks, FSA Mega ExoBB-4000 BSA threaded. KMC X10 chain, Shimano HG500 10-speed 11-34T cassette. Shimano Tiagra 4700 shifters. Shimano Tiagra 4700 derailleurs. 20 ratios, 25-117in.
- BRAKING:** Shimano M396 hydraulic, RT26 160mm rotors.
- STEERING & SEATING:** 600mmx31.8mm bar w' 20mm rise & 34° sweep, 70mmx7° stem, ergo grips, Prestine semi-integrated 1 1/8" headset. Pinnacle women's saddle (150mm w), 27.2x350mm micro-adjust seat post.
- EQUIPMENT:** 55mm mudguards. evanscycles.com