

Reviews

Gear up

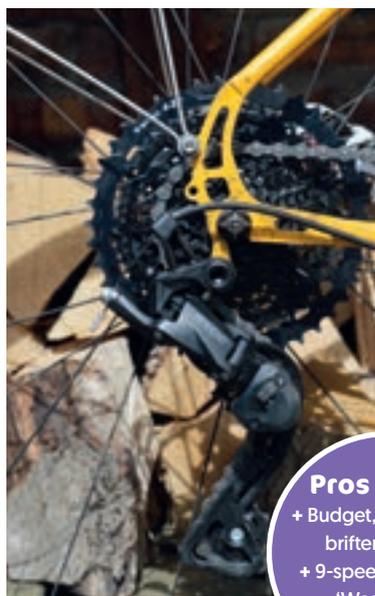
COMPONENTS, KIT, AND MEDIA SELECTED
AND REVIEWED BY BIKE JOURNALISTS AND CYCLING UK STAFF

Put to the test

Is there a product that you think needs reviewing?

Write to: *Cycle*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

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media.co.uk



Pros & cons

- + Budget, wide-range
brifter gearing
- + 9-speed durability
- 'Washing line'
gear cable

Microshift Advent

£244 (as tested)
microshift.com

Until now, drivetrain developments such as clutch derailleurs and dinnerplate cassettes have only been available in 10-, 11- and 12-speed. Advent offers them in 9-speed and, for flat-bar bikes only, also in 8-speed.

I tried the 1x9 drop-bar version: SB-M090 levers (£125/pair); RD-M6195M clutch derailleurs (£70); and CS-H093A 11-42 cassette (£49). This setup will work with any 9-speed chain, any chain-retaining chainring, and any 8/9/10-speed Shimano-spline Freehub.

A wide-range 2x9 setup is possible – though you'll need

to supply the front shifter and derailleurs – as there's a longer-arm Advent rear mech with a capacity of 47t (versus 41t for the shorter-arm 1x mech tested). So you could run a 50-34 road double or 40-24 Alpine double.

I first tried Advent on a road bike but the derailleurs fouled the 42 sprocket; it wanted a longer hanger or a longer B-screw. But on my Genesis Vagabond it's been working well.

The upshift lever (to move to a smaller cog) is located above the downshift lever. It's accessible from both hoods and drops, unlike Shimano's old 'mouse ear' button. Advent's main concession to its budget is the external gear cable that's likely to rub on a bar bag.

While it isn't compatible with



Other options



SHIMANO GRX RX400 £558*

Tiagra-level 2x10 groupset with hydraulic discs, 46-30 chainset, and a clutch mech that works with an 11-36 cassette. [*Levers, mechs, chainset, callipers.]

shimano.com



MICROSHIFT BS-M10 £90

Bar-end levers for 10-speed Shimano MTB derailleurs. I previously used just the RH lever, an SLX derailleurs, and an 11-42 cassette on my Vagabond.

microshift.com

Campagnolo (or Shimano or Sram), the Advent shifter uses a Campag gear cable, which has a smaller nipple. The nipple of a standard gear cable will snag internally, delaying or preventing shifts (unless you butcher the shifter casing).

The sprockets are: 11, 13, 15, 18, 21, 24, 28, 34, and 42, the last being aluminium. Those are big steps to the 34 and 42. The derailleurs handles them well enough, however, and I don't mind larger jumps in or out of bailout gears; the step between 15 and 18 is more noticeable. Total range is ~380% for 1x9-speed Advent, giving gears of 24-91in on my Vagabond.

Weights: brifters 391g/pair; derailleurs 388g; cassette 454g. ●

Dan Joyce

Verdict

Recommended.
Advent puts wide-range 1x or 2x gearing in reach of those with shallower pockets and longer drivetrain-life expectations.



Cycle's test promise

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Pros & cons

- + Great for camera carriage
- + Useful accessories
- US import, thus expensive



Outershell Adventure

Drawcord Bar Bag

£89.99 outershelladventure.com, bausworldwide.com

I'm no Cartier-Bresson but I like to document my journeys using a camera rather than my phone. Easy accessibility is important, and that's easy to achieve with a conventional bar bag for on-road touring. When bikepacking, or just riding around off-road, I've found traditional bar bags impractical due to the mount.

I wanted a bag that could carry my compact camera, some filters, a small tripod, a spare battery, a lens cleaner, and perhaps a snack. This would have to fit on my handlebars, but also fit around my stuff-sack on overnight adventures. I despaired of finding anything suitable until I discovered Californian company Outershell Adventure's Drawcord Bar Bag.

Whoever designed this bag

might have had me in mind: it fits all my requirements. It will also carry a D-SLR and spare lens. It's a well-made and well-designed bag: secure yet easy to access on the go. Pretty much everything can be done one handed except fitting it. To open and close the lid you simply flip the drawcord off or onto your stem, and tightening it is literally a cinch. That might not sound secure but over 80-plus miles of rugged bumpy tracks in the Tuscan hills I didn't have a single issue.

There are three exposed outer pockets, on the front and sides, which can hold flat things like phones, compasses, and snacks. D-ring attachments mean that you can then attach a strap for easy portage off the bike.



To get the most out of this bag, you might want to invest in the stuff-sack harness (only available from the US unfortunately) and the padded camera insert (available from Baus Worldwide).

The bag is fastened to the bike by straps and elasticcord, so it's not as simple to remove as a KLICKfix system, but it's only a faff when using the harness. While it's not fully waterproof, mine went through a night of snow, sleet and rain, and kept the contents dry.

It's not cheap and importing extras is a pain, but if you want to combine photography with your bikepacking it's worth considering. It comes in a variety of colours. ●

Sam Jones

Other options

APIDURA BACKCOUNTRY ACCESSORY POCKET (4.5L) £40
Watertight, small-camera storage. It attaches to an Apidura handlebar pack. apidura.com



REVELATE DESIGNS EGRESS POCKET £66

A waterproof roll-top bag with a padded liner, this should fit a point-and-shoot camera. reveleatedesigns.com



Verdict

Outershell's Drawcord Bar Bag is a simple and practical design that works really well. Its deluxe quality is reflected in the high price.

Pros & cons

- + Lightweight
- + Small packed size
- Thick valve stem
- Air loss



Tubolito Turbo Road

£27.99 extrauk.co.uk, tubolito.com/en

Roughly a third the weight of an equivalent-size butyl road tube, the vivid orange Turbo Road is, Tubolito claim, twice as puncture resistant. It's made from a plastic film developed for use as a mobile phone speaker membrane.

The material offers an appealing balance of toughness, flexibility and rigidity. It has a further characteristic that affects its performance: its elasticity is limited and it can easily be permanently stretched. For this reason, the tube must not be over-inflated outside a tyre. Furthermore, the tube stretches to fit the inside of its tyre during initial inflation and, once it has been used in, say, a 25mm tyre, should not thereafter be used in a narrower tyre as it is now too fat and will crinkle up, leaving

weakened folds.

Otherwise, initial fitting is no harder than with a regular butyl tube – and possibly easier, since the material's low-friction surface eases movement against the tyre. Subsequent inflation may prove tricky, however, since the hard plastic valve stem is perhaps 0.2mm fatter than standard and the threaded section slightly shorter. An effective seal with my Lezyne pump's threaded chuck was impossible. It's worth checking the valve will work with your regular on-bike pump too. A special patch kit is required too.

Run at the same pressures used with standard butyl tubes, there's no discernible change in ride quality or rolling resistance, but a distinct change to the sound of the tyre, with a 'crisper' timbre suggestive of greater inflation

pressure. Acceleration is bound to be quicker thanks to the lower weight, and there's some benefit when climbing. More significantly, both tubes lost a lot of pressure overnight thanks, in each case, to an 'aneurysm' next to the joint where the membrane had stretched and thinned enough to lose some air retention capacity. Rather like the last latex tubes I tried, then...

Sizes: 700×18-28mm, in three valve lengths. Weight: from 38g. There's an even lighter, more compact S-Turbo Road (23g) that's only suitable for road bikes with disc brakes, as well as versions for city/trekking bikes, gravel bikes, mountain bikes, and (where the lower weight will be more obvious) plus-tyred MTBs. ●

Richard Hallett

Verdict

A useful spare due to the low weight and small packed size. Cost, fitting issues, and apparent fragility undermine the marginal performance benefits.

Other options



MICHELIN AIR COMP LATEX £10.99
Low rolling resistance and tough – for latex. Sizes: 700×18-20C (70g) or 700×22-23C (79g). MTB versions available. bike.michelin.com/en



CONTINENTAL RACE28 SUPERSONIC £13.99
The lightest (50g) butyl tube, this has good air retention but requires careful installation. Size: 700×18-25C. conti-tyres.co.uk

Previews Casuals

RIDING YOUR BIKE IS RARELY A RACE – AND NEEDN'T LOOK LIKE ONE

1 Rodford Built Big Billy 20/20 £1,100+

Winner of a Cycling UK award at Bespoked, the Big Billy is a compact cargo-and-child carrier you can store it in a hallway as its platform racks can be turned vertically. It's designed to be easily retro-fittable with a Bafang e-bike motor. rodfordbuilt.co.uk



2 Willex Trench Coat £42.91

It's August, so... rainwear? This trench coat, in navy or black, takes a different sartorial tack from most polyester waterproofs. hollandbikeshop.com



3 Optilabs Rapide £120.95+

Prescription cycling glasses can be expensive, as well as looking very bikey. Optilabs Rapides aren't and will do double duty as everyday glasses. optilabs.com



4 Vaude Women's Turifo Shirt £60

A lightweight, breathable, quick-drying cycling blouse with some stretchiness in the polyamide/polyester fabric thanks to a little elastane. vaude.com/en-GB



5 CatEye BM45 Bar End Mirror £12.99

A small, sturdy, adjustable-angle mirror with a good field of view, it'll give you advance warning of drivers and overtaking pizza delivery riders. Fits both flat and drop bars. cateye.com

6 Chrome Vale Sling Bag £110

A messenger bag that will pass muster as a shoulder bag, the 14-litre Vale has compression straps so lies flat with just a 13in laptop or expands to accommodate your lunch, jacket, etc. chromeindustries.com



7 Exustar SS503 sandals £73.44

Fashionistas decry them, cycling cognoscenti know that [stiffer-soled] sandals are both comfortable and practical. These take SPD or other two-bolt cleats, or can be used with flat pedals. rsicycles.co.uk



Practical pedalling

For more information about commuting and transport cycling, visit cyclinguk.org/commuting

Reviews Books

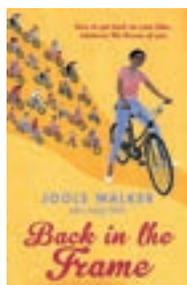
A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS

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Back in the Frame



Details

By: Jools Walker aka Lady Velo
Publisher: Little Brown Books
Price: £14.99
ISBN: 978-0751570786

THE BOOKS CHARTS Jools's journey back to riding a bike after stopping when she was a teenager. Almost a decade ago, she bought a Pashley Princess and started the Velo City Girl blog. It's a truthful, vibrant advert for ditching public transport and cycling to work.

Yet it's not rose-tinted. Jools is a straight talker too: she openly discusses her depression, her mini-stroke, and being a black woman in the cycling industry. She also challenges how more recently the cycling world and brands like to show they are 'ticking a box' but how that isn't the same as true diversity and inclusion.

Jools enthuses about her love for her family (especially her mum Gemma, who shines through the book), her partner Ian, and her cycling family, who encourage her when the road gets bumpy.

It's a page turner that is part autobiography, with chapters devoted to her childhood and falling in love with her older sister's BMX bike. Then it's part an exploration of women in the world of cycling, and of why self-care matters.

Victoria Hazael



More online

There's an interview with Jools, talking about cycling and depression, on the website.

cyclinguk.org/article/jools-walker-talks-cycling-and-depression



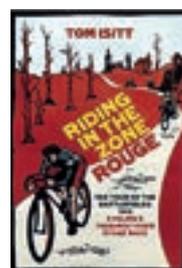
Details

By: Gary Fuller
Publisher: Melville House UK
Price: £12.99
ISBN: 978-1911545194

The Invisible Killer

IT NOW SEEMS incredible that, in the 17th century, breathing smoke was regarded as healthy, something to stave off disease. Air pollution science has come a long way since then but we still have a lot of catching up to do to clean up our air. Gary Fuller delves into a murky world in which industry has kept us in the dark to put profit over people – adding lead to petrol, cheating diesel emissions tests, and so on. A harrowing call to arms for an often invisible problem, this book highlights the urgency of making cities places for bikes not cars.

Sophie Gordon



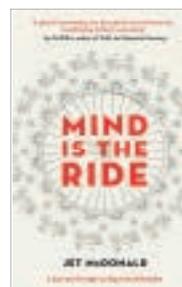
Details

By: Tom Isitt
Publisher: Orion Publishing Co
Price: £20
ISBN: 978-1409171140

Riding in the Zone Rouge

THE STORY OF the Circuit des Champs de Bataille is a tale of human endurance, suffering, and triumph over adversity. Author Tom Isitt takes you stage by stage through the forgotten race of 1919, which took place in a country that had been torn apart by the First World War. It's an entertaining story that shows the effect the war still had on life and landscape after the ceasefire, as well as a keen reminder to yourself that conditions on the bike are never as tough as they might be!

Nik Hart



Details

By: Jet McDonald
Publisher: Unbound
Price: £16.99
ISBN: 978-1783526901

Mind is the Ride

JET MCDONALD AND his partner Jen ride 4,000 miles from Bristol in England to India and then ride back again. Rather than just describing the journey, Jet sets out to take the reader on a "physical and intellectual adventure". He uses the components of a bike as a "metaphor for philosophy". It's an interesting idea but I fear that it may leave the average reader like me a bit lost, as it assumes some knowledge of philosophical theories and writers. A great book for a cycling philosophy student.

Roland Seber