

Report from the International Cycle Show

Excel Centre, London, 13th to 16th October 2005

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Ever heard the phrase 'Bike Porn'? It is used by some to describe the glossy catalogues, magazines and brochures from manufacturers and shops to show their latest 'must have' bits of kit. They are the bane of bank managers and significant others the world over. Well, if catalogues are Bike Porn, events such as the International Cycle Show are definitely the 'red light district' of the bike world.

My crewmate Mark Jenkins and I were asked if we were interested in attending this year's event at the Excel Centre in an official capacity, showing our bikes on the 'Transport for London' stand alongside the Metropolitan Police and London Ambulance Service cycle teams. We jumped at the chance, and, on the morning of Saturday 15th October we put ourselves and our bikes on a train into West London. When we arrived we were met by an internet forum acquaintance who was also attending the show, who agreed to act as route finder as Mark and I work outside London and aren't too familiar with the area. Forty-five minutes of city cycling later, we arrived at the venue in East London.

It was good to see some familiar faces again, including Tom Lynch from London Ambulance Service and to be introduced to many new ones. It was also nice to see that St. John Ambulance was represented by one of their Cycle Response Paramedics. I'm sorry, buddy, but I've forgotten your name! I hang my head in shame.

Whilst at the Transport for London stand, we were approached by hundreds of members of the public, the vast majority of whom were extremely interested in what we did and how we worked. Most were absolutely gob smacked by the prospect of operating like the paramedics with the weight of their bikes and equipment. For me though, the highlight of the day as far as 'interested individuals' goes has got to be the mad cyclist who cornered Darren Hepple from the Met to argue the case that cyclists should **not** have to comply with red traffic lights! Darren dealt with it admirably. Once he realised that this guy was not open to debate, would not even try to understand the reasons why they should stop, and only wanted to ram his views down the police's throats, he tactically edged away until mad cyclist found another officer to harangue. Outstanding work, Darren!

We were also visited by a large number of police officers for advice and information as they were keen to promote cycle patrols within their forces. As you would expect, IPMBA was recommended to all.

Each day of the show, officers from the Met and paramedics from London Ambulance Service took part in a demonstration in an arena in the middle of the show area. This took the form of Police and Ambulance response to an accident. Unfortunately, I did not get to see this, but from comments I heard from visitors, it was very well received.

Throughout the day, Mark and I took the opportunity to have a wander 'round the show and feast our eyes on the bikes, equipment and clothing on display. I'm really glad I left my credit card at home. I saw a nice carbon road bike frame from Parlee, an American frame builder. This had a really nice custom paint job which comprised an orange flame effect from the head tube, fading out to naked carbon along the top and down tubes and smaller matching detail from the bottom bracket along the chain stays. This was displayed on the Carbon Technologies stand alongside some Carbonsports Lightweight Obermyer wheels. These are hand-built in a little workshop in Germany. The spokes are a carbon and Kevlar compound which are bonded to the carbon rim and carbon hub during manufacture. Apparently, they are almost unbreakable and never go out of true due to their method of construction and materials. One of the T

Mobile pro cycling team riders has been using the same set of wheels for five years now! Trek was on site in force with many nice bikes including Lance Armstrong's Tour de France Time Trial bike. Talk about light!

Clothing wise, one of my favourite producers is Foska. They make an excellent range of jerseys and training jackets. The jerseys come in both 'road' fit, a snug, streamlined cut and 'freeride', which is more relaxed in cut. The designs must be seen to be believed, ranging from national flags to Heinz baked beans! The training jackets are light, warm, windproof and shower-proof. One design that I love is the 'bones' jacket. This is a full upper body skeleton print in reflective ink on black. I've seen the jacket at night – all you can see in car headlights is a skeleton cycling towards you! Their website, www.foska.com, is well worth a visit.

Another nice touch was the Transport for London test track. This was a small track in the arena where you could try out a variety of machines. There were loads of different styles to test, from traditional MTB's, hybrids and road bikes, to recumbents, unicycles and some weird contraptions including a form of folding bike with four casters at the front instead of a single wheel, a stand on 'scooter' with a hinged platform you bounced up and down on to provide drive and a small wheeled bike with handlebars you pushed and pulled like a rowing machine to drive. I loved the KMX off-road recumbent trikes – Go-Karts with attitude. I've really got to get me one of those! It was good to see kids trying to power slide these through the bends. See them at www.kmxkarts.co.uk.

To be perfectly honest, there was too much to really look at in detail but two things that really stood out as having emergency services applications were:

Rainlegs. These are a waterproof legging, similar in appearance to the 'chaps' of Wild West fame. They cover only the part of the leg that riders with mudguards (fenders) get wet – the top of the thigh and front of the knee area. They roll up into a belt around the waist, and, when it starts raining, you just unclip them, roll them down and secure around the leg with Velcro straps. At the moment they are only available in grey, but the manufacturers are keen to establish whether there would be sufficient call for black, to match uniform trousers. Retail price is £25. Check out www.rainlegs.co.uk and then let the manufacturer know what you think.

Magura HS33 hydraulic rim brakes. These are a hydraulic replacement for the standard rim brakes on your MTB. They comprise of a quick-fit system to facilitate ease of fitting the callipers to the forks or seat stays, quick release brake pads for easy changing and an adjuster wheel on each lever housing for rapid adjustment to counteract pad wear. The kit comprises front and rear systems which are pre-assembled and bled. It is just a case of taking off the old brakes and fitting the new ones. They are compatible with all types of shifter and lever systems except the Shimano dual control system (brake and shifter levers in one unit). The kit retails at £120 but the brakes are available as singles, front or rear. The St John Ambulance bike had them fitted. I was amazed at how little effort at the brake lever was required to make the seat stays visibly flex under the brake loading. Visit www.magura.com.

Overall, I had a great time and would recommend participation in this type of event to all. If you can't go as an exhibitor, go as a visitor but, leave your credit card at home or get another mortgage first!

Safe biking!

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