



The Cambie Recumboni: Canadian Adventure Bike

By Bob Bryant

Cambie Cycles is small and personable recumbent specialty shop located in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Cambie is run by Brock Davis and Bob McPhie, both of whom have been interested in recumbents since the mid-1980 when Brock built an Easy Racer and soon after Expo '86 and the world's HPV's and racers gathered in Vancouver.

In the upstairs machine shop, Vancouver born Don Peters runs the Cambie machine shop. He builds LWB singles, tandems, SWB and Trail-a-Bents — each as custom bike to suit the customer.

Over the years, the Recumboni becomes more and more refined. It is now a beautiful example of what a long wheelbase road limo recumbent can be.

Systems

Frame — The frame is built in the Cambie Cycles shop in Vancouver, Canada. The craftsmanship is excellent. The CroMo frame is TIG welded. The custom fittings have a high-end production look to them. The frame design is similar to that of an Easy Racer Tour Easy, though the Recumboni lacks the mid-frame cross brace. This frame is not as tall as the Tour Easy and seat height is lower. Another difference is that the Recumboni utilizes a 26-inch rear wheel which is arguably better for touring, while the Tour Easy still uses the taller 700c.

Fork — The Recumboni fork is a unicrown CroMo fork that is made especially for the bike in Taiwan for Cambi. The fork is painted to match the bike.

Steering — Cambie makes their own stem that is a cross between that of a Rotator and the Calhoun Evolution. A threadless headset adapts to the stem/riser to allow positioning of your favorite handlebar. The vertical adjustment is limited to about two inches.

The handlebar feel is more like that of a BikeE or RANS Stratus than an Easy Racer. The bars are a flaired slightly back. The stem will allow custom bars to be outfitted on the bike. The stock bars are wider than the fairing.

S & S Couplers are an available option for about \$450 USD.

Drivetrain

Chain management — The Recumboni has a modified skate wheel type chain idler. The lower chain rides over the idler. The upper chain rides through a chain tube that runs from the rear wheel nearly to the crankset up front. The drivetrain runs smooth and quiet, though there is some chain tube vibration.

The Recumboni does not offer as wide of a gearing range because it doesn't have the spring-loaded idler. Our test bike had optional chain tubes, which kept my legs clean of grease. The chain rode smoothly over the idler and through the tubes with the predictable low

hum of the chain in the tubes. The chain management of the Recumboni is excellent.

The drivetrain is a mix of Shimano Tiagra and Deore. The exceptions are an STX headset, a Shimano Tiagra crank and a Deore DX front derailleur. This is a model from several years back, but an excellent front derailleur.

Braking — The rear brakes is Shimano Deore V-brake. The front is a Deore disk (no extra charge). For 2003, Cambie will be spec'ing the Avid disc, which we consider an improvement. Cambie went to disc front brakes due to premature rim wear on the 20-inch rims from the V-brakes (we've also experienced this, and think the discs are a great idea).

Wheels and Tires — The wheels are built by Cambie. The Sun CR18 rims are laced to Deore hubs. The tires are the durable Schwalbe Kevlar Marathon 1.5. While not the fastest rolling tire, they seem very durable. While our wheels remained true during the review, we developed a spoke creak on our first 20 mile ride.

Comfort

The seat is a very simple fiberglass shell or bucket design. It looks similar to one used on S & B recumbents, but is taller and has a very thick foam pad at the base, which is very cushy. The mounts were easy to adjust (RANS style seat back braces and an allen bolt tightener underneath (seat attaches like an old style RANS seat channel; the seat did not slip). The seat braces 1/2" dia. solid aluminum round stock.

Though not breathable at all, the seat worked well on the bike. Being that Cambie is a custom shop, other seats could certainly be mounted. The RANS seat upgrade is available for about \$200 USD.

Ergonomics

The Recumboni has a very user-friendly upright riding position with above-seat steering. The riding position should be easy for most riders to get accustomed too. One item of note is that this is a very long bicycle. Even the small size frame is 7" longer than the comparable Easy Racer Tour Easy small size. This is really a bike best suited to a taller rider.

Ride and handling

Stability — The Recumboni has user-friendly and steady road manners to suit every type of rider. While the handling is not as refined as the Easy Racer series of bikes, it is very good. There is more tiller feel. The Recumboni actually feels a bit like a RANS LWB.

Maneuverability — This is a huge LWB, it is actually the longest LWB we've ever reviewed (large size frame: 76" wb; also comes

in 70" and 73"). Despite the super sized wheelbase, low bottom bracket LWB recumbents are not that difficult to manage. You must just plan ahead and in some tight spots, lift the bike and pivot it around.

Performance — The Recumboni with optional Mueller Windwrap fairing made this one of fastest recumbents we've tested in recent years. The Recumboni has a lower frame profile and a hard shell seat. The 1.5" road tires and wide Mueller fairing helped performance significantly. The Mueller is definitely the best choice for the Recumboni as it fits the wider bars. It will also work especially well for large or tall riders. The fairing mounts were cleanly designed and robust. The fairing fit like it was designed for the bike. Mueller's craftsmanship is excellent. The fairing had no glue splotches or edging delaminations or problems.

Owning

The Recumboni can be anything you want it to be. It would be at home on a daily commute, cross country tour or fast club ride. It's a long bike, which makes it difficult to turn around in tight quarters, but the low LWB design is easy to master. The size becomes an issue again when we consider lifting, hauling or storing the bike. It is a large package.

Options & accessories

Being that Cambie is a recumbent bike shop as well as a builder, they will have a good idea of what works (and what doesn't) as far as after-market options, custom drivetrains, hubs, brakes, etc.

Our test bike came outfitted with the following included options: an expertly fit rear rack, fenders, a kickstand and a chain tube, Mirrcycle rear view mirror and a Mueller fairing (and mounts).

This is the first time we've experienced the Mueller Windwrap fairing. The fairing on our Recumboni has an excellent integral mounting system in an aluminum cross brace that stiffens the fairing as it mounts. The edging is better than we have seen on other fairings. The upper shape is wider and flatter. Though this fairing worked very well, our advice on fairings is to use what best fits your bike.

Market competition

The Recumboni is direct competition for the RANS Stratus and especially the Easy Racer Tour Easy. One must also consider the new Sun EZ Sport Limited, and low priced V2 (now under \$1,300). While the Recumboni is a custom bike, and not a production bike—built in relatively small numbers

Verdict

The Recumboni is an excellent LWB OSS recumbent. You'll get a near custom build experience and you'll save some cash over the competition (a similarly equipped Tour Easy is

nearly \$2,400 shipped with similar equipment). The Recumboni is under \$1900 shipped into the U.S.A.

I still think that Easy Racers has a more refined steering geometry, and I prefer the Easy Racer handlebars (which could be adapted to this bike). Despite this, Cambie has a lot to offer. They are friendly folks building custom bikes to suit the rider. This is a level of service not found with any of the stock brands these days — and as we said, this bike, as equipped, is a bargain.

This Recumboni is a sweet bike. It's built to tour and is nearly ready to head off on a world tour adventure right out of the box. ♦



The Cambie accessories all worked wonderfully. Note the fenders, fairing and front disc brake



Note the wide Cambie bars tucked behind the Mueller fairing. Note the excellent custom Mueller fairing mounts.



Note the custom rack adapter, and rear fender

INFO AT A GLANCE

Specifications

Model—Cambie Recumboni
Type—LWB
Steering—OSS
Wheelbase—70"(sml.)/73"(med.)/76"(lg.)
Wheel sizes—26/20
Seat height—20"
Bottom bracket height—13"
Frame sizes—Small, medium and large
Weight—35 lbs. (ours was over #40 with options)

Frame—4130 .035 CroMo
Fork—CroMo
Seat frame—Fiberglass shell/alum. track
Seat material—Nylon
Seat cushion—Foam base and seat back pad

Components

Crank—Shimano Tiagra 30/42/52
Bottom bracket—Shimano sealed
Headset—Shimano STX
Derailleurs (f/r)—Deore DX/Deore
Shifters—Shimano Deore
Cassette—Shimano 11-32 HG 50 9-spd.
Chain—SRAM
Gear inch range—23.5-118
Pedals—Platform
Wheels (f/r)—406 mm 20"/559 mm 26"
Rims—Sun CR18
Tires (f/r)—Schwalbe Marathon Kevlar 20" and 26" x 1.5
Hubs (f/r)—Shimano Deore
Brakes (f/r)—Avid disc (f)/V-brake (r)

Incidentals

Price—\$1695 USD + approx. \$150 S/H
RANS seat upgrade approx. \$200 USD;
S & S couplers approx. \$600 USD.
Warranty (frame)—Lifetime (frame)
Colors—Black or custom
Accessory mounts—Waterbottle cages
Comes with: Fenders, racks, kickstand and rearview mirror, Mueller fairing, chain tube (guard)

Pros

Custom built bike
Excellent craftsmanship (Canadian built)
Smooth riding tourer
Very adjustable seat
Lots of options and custom possibilities
Comfy foam covered shell seat (perhaps the most comfy of its type)

Cons

Very long
Not light
Seat base is very cushy, perhaps overly
Not enough vertical adjustment in the handlebar stem

Contact

Cambie Cycles
Tel. 877-414-8999
Web: www.cambiecycle.com

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