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"The best hill-climber we've seen"

The original full text of this review, including illustrations and graphics, is available from the A to B magazine website at www.atob.org.uk



Ezee are determined to break the "pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap" pattern and introduce a decent range of Chinese bikes.

We tested the Ezee Forza [now called the Sprint] back in June 2003 and were suitably impressed. The basic concept - quality alloy frame, nickel-metal hydride battery and fast, efficient motor - proved perfectly sound. The bike has gone on to reach nearly 2,000 miles on long-term test and continues to work well. They have now launched a folding bike called the Quando, and we had a look earlier this month.

Like the Forza, the Quando has a nicely-engineered aluminium frame, NiMH battery behind the seat post and a powerful brushless hub motor. Unlike its big brother, the wheels are 20-inch, the frame

folds, and the motor is in the rear wheel, rather than the front.

The bike has a single 53" gear. If you can picture this, the rider starts pedalling and one second later the characteristically smooth, torque brushless motor cuts in, propelling the bicycle forward at a cracking pace. Within a few seconds, you've passed 12mph, leaving the 53-inch gear behind - further acceleration relying on the motor alone. On full throttle, the power continues to arrive smoothly and cleanly right up to (or a shade over) the 15mph legal limit. At this stage the bicycle stops accelerating and relaxes into a quiet cruise.

Hills of up to 10% are simply ironed out, but steeper gradients will slow the motor to varying degrees. For example, our, ahem, 83kg rider slowed the bike to 11 mph on a 7% (1:14) gradient, 7mph on a 10% gradient, and the bike even managed a restart with reasonable enthusiasm at 12.5% (1:8)... all without turning a pedal.

Anything steeper, and you need to provide some modest assistance, the absolute limit depending on how heavy and how fit the rider is. Our steepest local hill is about 18% (1 in 6), and we cleared that relatively easily, so an enthusiastic rider in the North Yorkshire Dales should do a lot better.

The Quando has suspension in the form of a polymer bungee at the rear. Like the Forza, the Quando is fully equipped with mudguards, a stand, chunky rack and bell.

Range

With one fairly low gear and oodles of power, this machine is more moped than bicycle, so range is less than it might have been, had we been able to test the bike in our normal "flat-out, plus typical pedal-power" mode. That said, 15 miles is a good result in hilly country and with hardly any assistance from the rider. Average speed is around 14½ mph, which really isn't bad when you consider that it's difficult to pedal above 12 mph and the motor only runs to 15 mph...

With the rocket boosters empty, the bike is still quite pleasant to ride. The frame is rigid enough to make pedal effort productive and the 53" gear is a reasonable compromise. The charger is the same light, compact fan-cooled unit supplied with the Forza (see A to B 36).



Folding

Like most 20-inch bikes, the Quando folds into a large package, but the operation is easy enough and the result is very neat. Dimensions are 38 cm wide, 90 cm long by 66 cm high. That comes out at 226 litres or 8 cubic feet. Not minuscule but perfectly acceptable by non-assisted 20-inch standards (the archetypal Dahon Vitesse measures 190 litres, for example).

Conclusion

For some people the Quando is the dream machine they've given up hope of finding. If you're old or infirm and you need a bicycle that can easily haul you



home when you can't manage another pedal stroke, this is one of the best options available.

As a boat tender, the bike would cope with steep, unpaved climbs from remote harbours and carry back provisions on its substantial rear rack. The Quando would also suit a commuter in a hilly city, storming up gradients that leave conventional cyclists puffing and blowing. There are smaller electric folders available, of course, but this machine folds well enough to carry in most car boots by train, or by boat, assuming reasonable stowage space.

The price is likely to be cheaper than the much less effective Bliss or Powabyke folders. If the makers can achieve that, they have a guaranteed winner.

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