

Bridgestone XO-1

The "Moustache Bike" Misses by a Whisker

BY JOHN KUKODA

Put 2 bikies in the same room and they'll disagree about something, be it chrome-moly vs. aluminum, Campy vs. Shimano, clinchers vs. sewups.... And at BICYCLING, with the treasure trove of cycling

hardware that passes through our offices, the points of contention are limitless.

So when virtually the entire editorial staff, drawing on nearly 2 centuries of cycling expertise, reaches a consensus, you can carve the words in stone. In the

case of Bridgestone's unique XO-1, which combines road geometry, 26-inch wheels and a flat "moustache" handlebar reminiscent of the Gay '90s, our unified editorial voice says: "Great bike, bad bar."



This opinion wasn't formed overnight. Everyone, including family and friends, had plenty of saddle time on an XO-1. Bridgestone designer Grant Petersen feels so strongly about this \$925 model (the company catalog humbly calls it "...the most versatile, most exciting bike we've ever made") that he sent 7 (that's 0.7% of the production run) in 4 sizes. Four came to the Emmaus, Pennsylvania, office while the others went to our space in Soquel, California. Indeed, we *had* felt so strongly about the XO-1's

BRIDGESTONE XO-1

Distributed by: Bridgestone Cycle (USA) Inc.
15021 Wicks Blvd.
San Leandro, CA 94577

Country of Origin: Japan

Suggested Retail Price: \$925

Sizes Available: 42, 48, 52, 55, and 59 cm (all but 59 cm tested; specs are for 52 cm), center to top

Weight: Frame, 4.3 lbs.; fork, 1.6 lbs.; complete bike, 23.7 lbs.

Frame: Mix of Ishiwata 019E, 022E, and 024E, seamless double-butted chrome-moly steel tubing; lugged construction with investment-cast fork crown

Wheelbase — 39.6 in.; 100.5 cm

Seat tube — 20.3 in.; 51.5 cm

Top tube — 21.7 in.; 55 cm

Head angle — 73 degrees

Seat angle — 73.5 degrees

Chainstays — 16.7 in.; 42.5 cm

Bottom bracket height — 10.7 in.; 27.3 cm

Fork rake — 1.57 in.; 4.0 cm

Trail — 2.33 in.; 5.92 cm

Wheels:

Hubs — Shimano RX100, 126-mm rear axle spacing

Spokes — 32, 14-gauge Wheelsmith stainless steel, 3 cross

Rims — Araya RM-17 silver

Tires — Tioga City Slicker, 26x1.25 inch, 30-90 psi

Drivetrain:

Derailleurs — Shimano 105 with Ultegra bar-end shifters

Chain — Shimano Hyperglide HG91

Crankset — Sugino GP, alloy rings, 170-mm crankarms

Bottom bracket — Tange sealed

Freewheel — Shimano Deore DX cassette

Components:

Brakes — Dia-Compe BRS 300 sidepulls and levers

Pedals — MKS Sylvan track, alloy

Headset — Shimano 600

Seatpost — Sakae CLE 100 alloy

Saddle — Avocet racing, leather

Bar/stem — Nitto Moustache, 51 cm/Ritchey Force Comp chrome-moly, 9 cm

Gear Inches

	36	50
13	x	100
15	62	87
17	55	77
19	49	68
21	45	62
24	39	54
28	33	x

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• Shave that moustache bar

innovative features that we named it one of the year's 11 hottest bikes (February issue).

By riding the XO-1 we learned 2 things. First, the handlebar looks cool, but isn't. Second, this bike defies categorization. It reflects the personal preferences of its iconoclastic designer, dubbed a "retro-grouch" by one editor for his approach to component selection. In typical fashion, Petersen promptly printed T-shirts bearing the moniker. You probably know his work: Bridgestone mountain bike ads proclaim the benefits of top-mount thumbshifters and feature not a Tomac or Overend, but Pineapple Bob. He's likely to put track pedals on mountain bikes and build road models with generous tire and fender clearance.

In designing the lugged, Japanese-built XO-1 frame, Petersen typically

sweated the fine points. There's a head-tube pump peg, threaded rack braze-ons on the seatstays, 2 pair of rear dropout eyelets, and slotted brake-cable stops on the top tube for easy lubrication. In addition, the indexed Shimano bar-end shifters have adapters attached to standard frame studs, making it possible to switch to down-tube levers. The fork's steerer tube is extra long and fitted with a centimeter of spacers, allowing use of headsets with more stack height.

We decided that labeling the XO-1 a "hybrid" sells it short.

"This bike is different from hybrids, which seem to do many things poorly, rather than many things well," one editor observed. "As a road bike, it's agile and fast. In traffic and on rough city streets, it offers a head-up position and bulletproof wheels. It's a blast to ride."

The racer-quick front end and road bike-like riding position, plus the lack of a granny chainring (although the Sugino GP crankset is drilled to accept one after installation of a longer axle), combine to make the XO-1 too much bike for the typical hybrid shopper. And at nearly a grand, its price clinches this assessment. Most hybrids sell for less than half as much and attract entry-level riders who

like an upright position but don't need a mountain bike. They don't need the XO-1's refinements, either. No, this bike requires customers with enough foresight to envision the possibilities and enough cash not to balk at the price. In fact, Petersen calls this one of his "High-E bikes," for the energy required to promote and sell them.

Despite its 26-inch-diameter wheels (559-mm bead seat, not the 571 mm of 650C "26x1" road wheels) this is no mountain bike. Its Ishiwata seamless chrome-moly steel tubing includes a 1-inch-diameter top tube and 1½-inch down and seat tubes, like a road bike. The lugged frame sports a classic, long-haul road geometry, with a 73-degree head angle, 73.5-degree seat angle, and 4.0-cm fork rake (in the 52-cm frame size)—a combination that makes the bike much more agile than any mountain bike.

Its profile is also cleaner, thanks to Petersen's preference for normal-reach (47–57 mm) Dia-Compe BRS 300 side-pull brakes instead of the protruding cantilevers you'd expect on a bike capable of accepting 26x1.6-inch knobby tires. This size fits in front thanks to what the catalog calls "the most expensive fork crown in the world," which adds \$30 to the

If the best motorcycle helmets come in nine separate sizes, helmets only come i

The motorcycle helmet industry has known for 20 years how critical a proper fit is to safety. Accurate, fractional sizes are your only assurance of comfortable, shock absorbing head protection. The truth is, a lot of companies compromise fit

for lower production costs.

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forces to narrower contact points, leaving the helmet loose on the head.

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When viewed from the cockpit, you can appreciate the hand gymnastics necessary to captain the XO-1.

bike's retail price. It's a cast, semi-sloping crown originally designed for a Japanese touring bike. Even with suffi-

cient clearance for a knobby, it's still low enough for a sidepull. However, the caliper quick-releases don't open wide

enough for the bulging sidewalls of the stock 26x1.25-inch Tioga City Slicker tires. You need to diddle with the barrel adjusters or give the wheels a sharp whack when removing or installing them.

With the stock tires there's just enough clearance for fenders, a necessary addition for all-weather utility use. When the City Slickers are pumped to their 90-psi maximum, the XO-1 feels almost as quick as a full-on road bike, yet it can be ridden over broken pavement without worry. These small, light wheels seem to accelerate faster than the normal 700C road size, so by mashing the pedals for a couple strokes you can often avoid downshifting for small rises. But we found the 50x13-tooth (100-inch) high gear too small to test the bike's top end. A 12T cog would do the trick.

Quick as it is on stock wheels, the XO-1 was even swifter with the light wheelsets Petersen sent. Equipped with these Matrix Mt. Titan 355-gram rims and Specialized 26x1-inch, 100-psi Turbo tires, the bike could be competitive in criteriums. It's already faster out of corners than a conventional bike, and handling became more agile with the light wheels. Add a drop bar and appro-

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priate stem, and it even *feels* like a race bike.

At the other extreme, we also received sets of off-road wheels: 26x1.5-inch Tioga Hound Dawg knobbies on Ritchey Vantage Expert rims. They extended the XO-1's range to include fire roads and even moderate singletrack, where the relatively small-volume tires still provided sufficient comfort and traction. These knobbies fit fine, although without fender clearance at the brakes.

NOW, ABOUT THAT HANDLEBAR...

Petersen came across this modern adaptation of a century-old design when he saw the bikes used by Japanese students. Many school districts forbid drop bars, saying they encourage fast, reckless riding. For Petersen, the shape is a "blessed alternative to the single-hand placement constraints of regular flat bars" (again quoting from his catalog).

Maybe, although even one editor's spouse, who normally rides a flat-bar hybrid, didn't care for it. Compared with a good ol' drop bar, which offers many more hand positions, the moustache is a poor design, our editors agreed. We couldn't find a perfect place to hold it.

For fast riding, the hands fit nicely just outboard of the brake levers, in what would be the drop position if the levers bent down rather than out. This allows a reasonably aerodynamic posture but requires rotating the hands thumbs-inward, which feels unnatural compared with a drop bar's comfortable hands-on-hoods position.

"After about one hour, my wrists started to hurt," one rider reported.

"I couldn't seem to get comfortable," another said. "The moustache bar forces you to always grip in a compromising hand position."

More damning were these experiences:

—"I wanted to like the handlebar, but after trying several lever positions and bar angles, my hands still went numb."

—"I find the bar is always pressing on a nerve in my palm. Standing to climb, it's really noticeable as the nerves pop side to side from the pressure."

—"I like the bar, with one exception: There's no equivalent to the drop-bar, hands-on-tops position for sustained, seated climbing."

Even Petersen admits to missing this handhold next to the stem. For something to grip on top, he suggests adding a

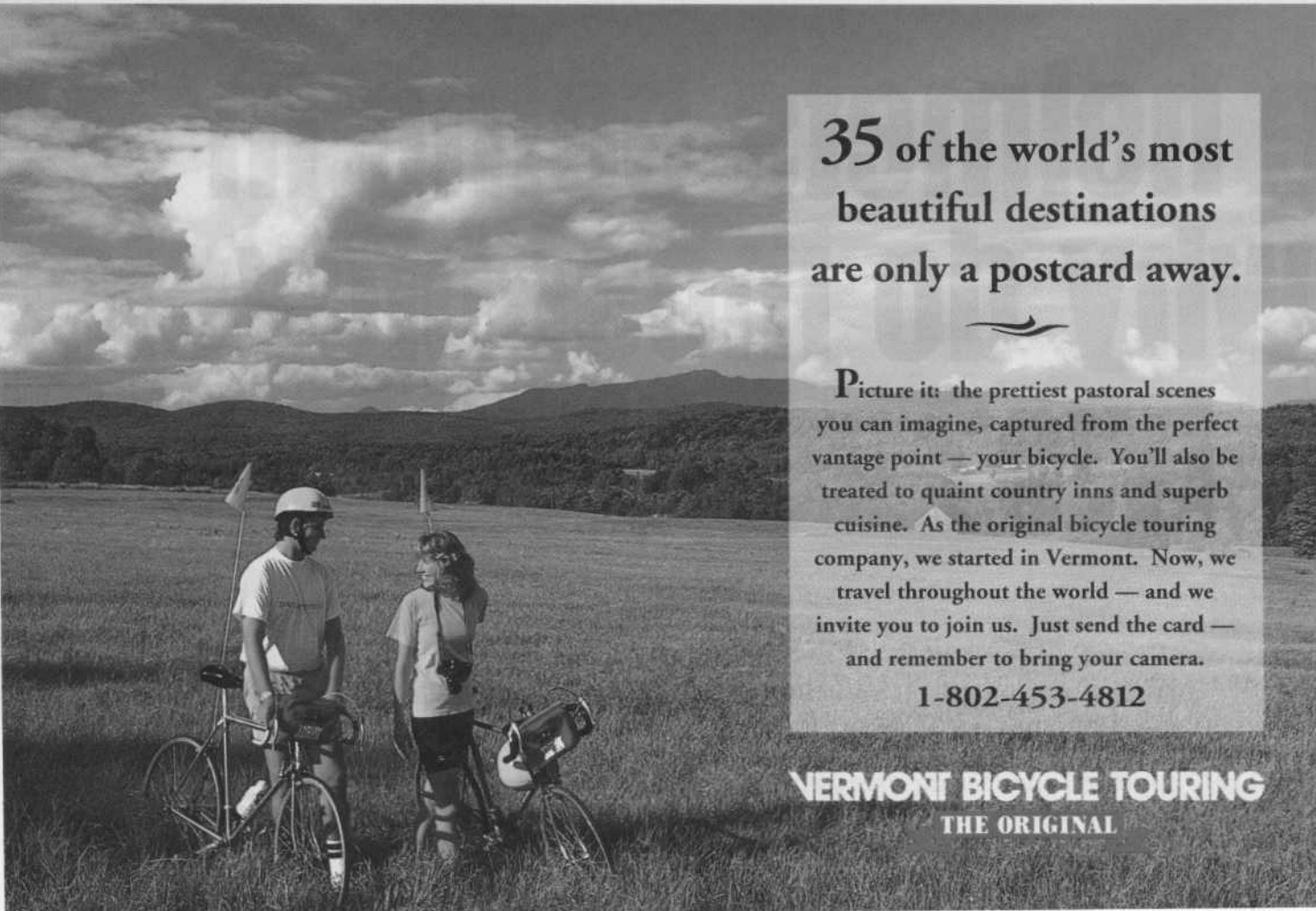
pair of tandem stoker dummy levers or the bodies from an old pair of road levers.

This would help, but the common thread running through the editors' comments is the need for a drop bar. (We hear that even Pineapple Bob traded his bike's moustache for drops.)

Fortunately, switching isn't too costly because you can use the existing brake and shift levers. All you need is the handlebar and, for fast road riding, possibly a longer stem. The XO-1 complements the moustache bar's generous forward reach with a proportionately short (9 cm on the 52-cm bike) Ritchey road stem.

This isn't the first time Petersen's personal taste in handlebars has led him down the path untramped. In '87 he spec'd the prescient MB-1 mountain bike with cantilevers instead of U-brakes; a steep, tight geometry; round chainrings; and a drop bar. While the other innovations are now considered the norm, that model remains the only large-production mountain bike to ever come with drops. The next year's MB-1 returned to the fold with a traditional flat bar.

The irony is, that '87 model's flared-end Nitto drop bar would have been the perfect choice for the XO-1. ■



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