

Homebuilders Corner



Well, here it is... a kinda Vision... kinda Rans...

by Tony Licuanan

I've been cycling ever since I can remember. Growing up in the Philippines, my first bike was a BMX type cheapee though for me, it spelled *freedom*. Not only could I get from point A to B... but man, I went all over town with it. By the time I turned 12, I knew every part and everything about my bike.

But it didn't stop there. At age 14, I butchered the frame and fabricated a rear swing arm (of course with a lot of help from a local welder), and VIOLA!, I had just a hell of a time with it until I finally cracked the head tube, took a nasty spill and the frame had to go bye-bye.

Years went by and I had just about every kind of bike you could name but, it still kinda got boring. And about the comfort of a road bike, well you all know about that...

Then it happened! Seattle Bike Expo 1993, I made the mistake of trying out this funny looking bike called the BikeE. I thought it was just a toy but, the thing zipped me around the Seattle Center pretty good. I was impressed. I went to the Portland Bike Expo a month later to try it out again and possibly to buy it, when I came across the ATP Vision. Enough said, I placed two orders, one for me, the other one for my wife.

The Vision performed well for us on the '93 and '95 STP (Seattle to Portland). My recumbent bug is just getting started. I wanted to butcher one of our Visions but, I'm just too civilized for that. I figured, I'll just butcher some little kids' bike instead.

After months of careful thinking, planning, designing and redesigning, I finally settled on this design. A SWB ASS Vision-inspired-bike with suspension. Kind of like my old cheapee BMX—though this time with suspension—and not as cheap. Rick Gnehm, a frame builder for the Davidson bikes put the main frame together. Matt Houle, a frame builder/painter for the Rodriguez bikes did the boom and the paint.

The bike was completely assembled and was functional last February. I named it C.A.T., for "Clean Air Transportation." The first ride was on the Burke/Gilman trail in Seattle. The bike performed flawlessly and handled great. It is plenty fast even with the 3x7 Sachs and the supposed friction losses (from internal gearing). I used a Rans seat and to be honest, it is the most comfortable recumbent seat I've tried yet. The Marzochi



suspension is connected to a rear swing arm that holds the Rans seat and is adjustable via Schraeder air valve that is set up with the geometry of the bike to work only on big bumps. It's a suspended seat design and the frame stays in one piece. I'm not an engineer and I chose this design to make sure that there wouldn't be any pogo effect from the suspension. I used two 20" x 1-1/8" IRC Roadlite EX 100 psi tires just so I wouldn't have to carry different sized spare inner tubes. The caliper brakes from Dia Compe are somewhat weak, but they pull on the right side and do not interfere with the chain. (necessary on a SWB).

After a few hundred miles of getting soaked in cold NW rain, I purchased a front fairing from ATP, (I decided on ATP's fairing mainly because it hooks up really clean on the bike and that it doesn't taper too much on top like the Presto Zzipper). Not only did the fairing keep me warm and half dry, I felt that it helped increase my average speed up to an extra 2 mph. That's a lot of help for me. I'm not a strong rider and every bit of help counts. I was so impressed about this whole fairing deal that I purchased the new ATP Rain Poncho that attaches to it. This combo really keeps the rider warm and dry. Bravo Zulu to the ATP crew.

The last phase of testing that I would like to do with the bike is the STP. This 200 mile ride would prove to me that the bike is truly road worthy. I'm not judging this only by speed, but also with the overall comfort, ride and feel of the bike. Besides, I've always wanted to do the STP on my own homebuilt. And as far as the speed, the bike compares faster than my Vision R-40. My wife, a veteran Vision rider of 3 years, concurs.

Basically, I'm really happy with my C.A.T. But then again, I've already got another set of plans in my head for a CLWB or maybe a LWB, slightly lower than the Tour Easy though similar to the Rotator. Lately, I'm obsessed with all this fairing stuff—but that's a story for another time....

SACHS 3X7 TECH UPDATE

It was quite an accomplishment to finish the STP on my homebuilt. Mostly, the bike performed well. While it rained, the front fairing & poncho kept me warm and dry. The only thing I didn't like about the bike was the Sach's 3x7. I found the it to be great on bike trails or on quick commutes, however, the 3x7 does not replace the smoothness of the front derailleur. The Sachs just doesn't shift too well under load or while you're pedaling hard.

On bike trails the 3x7 seems to work out fine. The advantage of being able to shift coasting or while stopped is unmatched. Having without the front derailleur with the extra chainrings makes a cleaner bike and besides there's always something cool about internal hub gearing.

Q: So, is the 3x7 better than the conventional front derailleur set-up?

A: Almost, and it's a good try... however, this set-up still isn't as smooth as the norm. Sorry 3x7 users, but let's not be in denial. Try hammering up a short 1-mile Northwest hill. It gets clunky, stuck, and you would have to ease up on the pedals or back pedal a bit to make it shift. By this time, (now that you've lost your momentum with a few magi-

cal words thrown in the winds) all the cool things about the hub dissipates.

Other than the advantages of the 3x7 mentioned above, it still lacks the free-flowing changing of the gears, (uphills) and smoothness of the hub. It definitely has more friction. You may not feel this on short 15-mile quick bursts, but on 80-plus touring miles you'll definitely Notice the difference.

To conquer rolling hills on a recumbent, what I normally do is I go as fast as I can on the downhills to make the uphills as short as I can make them. This means you hammer on the downs until you run out of gears while counting on your hubs to propel you forward as smooth as possible, making the hills up ahead smaller and easier to climb!!! And, without friction to slow you down.

YEAH or NAY... just try spinning a 3x7 wheel beside a regular hub wheel. You'll notice the difference. □



C.A.T. SPECS

DESIGNER: Tony Licuanan
 WEIGHT: 30.5 pounds
 WHEELBASE: 36.5"
 SEAT HEIGHT: 22.5"

BB HEIGHT: 24"
 FRAME: CroMo
 FORK: CroMo
 SEAT: Rans

ASS: Vision
 WHEEL SIZE: 20" x 1-1/8"
 TIRES: IRC Roadlite EX
 BRAKES: Dia Compe



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