



Clean lines



Suitably neglected.

Genesis iO Alfine

Price: £999

From: www.genesisbikes.co.uk

Tested: Six months and some...

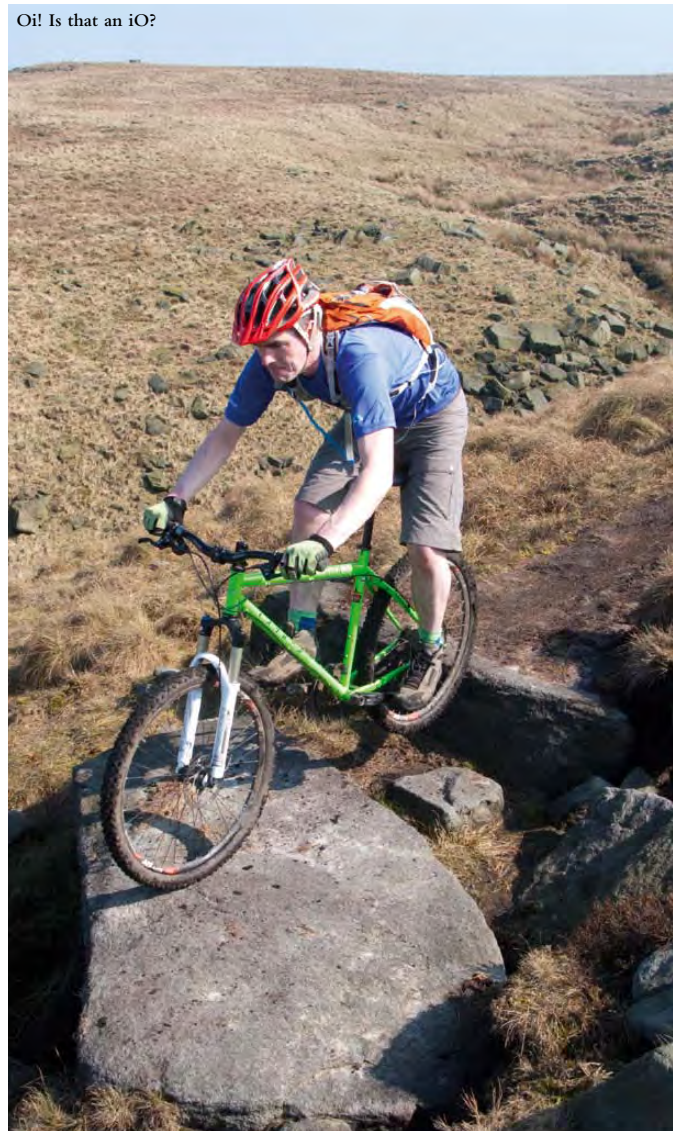
This is Brian. Brian is a jazz man and plays jazz guitar for a living, as well as teaching others of all aptitudes the joy of a sharp ninth chord. Brian also loves mountain biking in the hills above his Yorkshire home. He's pretty handy on a bike and loves both climbing and descending. Brian doesn't own a car and so also relies on his bike to get him around town, running errands and whatever it is the jazz man about town does.

However, Brian doesn't have the first clue about bikes. Brian only knows how to ride them – which is why we thought he'd be the ideal main tester for this Genesis IO. The IO is based on the Genesis singlespeed IO, but with the addition of Shimano's 'approved for off-road' Alfine hub gear, offering eight wide-ish ranging (305%) gears good enough for 98% of most mountain bike terrain you're likely to find. With its single ring up front, taut singlespeed-esque drivetrain, there's a refreshing simplicity to the lines of the bike. And, as if to contrast that, the IO Alfine's Reynolds 520 steel frame is painted in garish neon green.

The simplicity of the bike and shifting extends to the components too. Up front is a pair of 100mm 'they just work well' Rockshox Recon Race forks. Apart from setting them up initially, you only really have to play with the Motion Control threshold to determine its threshold. After that, it's just a simple on/off lever for climbing and road use or not.

There's only one shifter for the eight speeds and the brakes are the boringly dependable Shimano 575 (Deore level) brakes. Chainset is also Deore, as is the front hub, wrapped in an Alex rim. Finishing kit is Genesis own-brand and there are rack, mudguard and Crud Catcher mounts for your pleasure.

Oi! Is that an iO?



Perhaps some day all bikes will be like the IO. It's both a dependable, simple town and commuter bike when ridden with your sensible head on, but take it off the tarmac and point it at some rocks and it wakes up. No longer dull and dependable, it suddenly becomes a lively and fun, scampering hound. The geometry that gives a good heads-up view of traffic, now allows a great fore-aft weight balance whether going up tech-y stuff, or speeding through singletrack.

Benji reviewed the singlespeed version of the IO back in issue 33 and at the time he said of it "The ride is a great combination of agility and stability; able to handle itself on slow-speed steep twisty stuff as well as being unbelievably sure-footed at scary fast descending speeds. The fairly oversize tubing prevents it from becoming a wibbly mess when powering over rough ground. It also has great poise and balance for out-of-the-saddle teeth-grinding climbing."

The IO Alfine also brings with it the advantage of a chain-slap (and drop)-free transmission and the ability to switch gears whether stopped or cranking. The only downsides to the gear system are a slightly fiddly wheel-change (and required 15mm spanner) and the wheel nuts don't like gripping the slippery green paint, something that can soon be solved with some careful sanding – the wheel tension grub screws had bent under load before we discovered this though. And talking of the Kermit paint, it does like to chip, exposing the white primer underneath. Genesis has promised more sensible colours for next year.

Overall: If you want a true 'town and country' bike, or you fancy the steel singlespeed vibe, only with gears, or you're fed up of maintaining delicate drivetrains, then buy an IO Alfine – if you can find one.