

FIRST LOOK Genesis iOiD

£1,099.99

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The idea of a singlespeed has always been alluring — an uncomplicated bike you can ride all winter, chuck in the shed without maintenance worries, and so avoid wear and tear on your best bike, which you can save for high days and holidays. For a midwinter night-riding hack, the concept seems to make sense.

However, the reality of living with a singlespeed has always been a letdown: over-geared on all but the easiest climbs and under-geared on the flat, you end up pushing up anything steep and trundling slowly down descents (often because you've spent so long getting the bike set-up for climbing, it's a dog on the downs).

This is where the Genesis iOiD comes in. We actually tested Genesis' hub-geared hardtail back in February 2008, but we didn't have it for long, so when the opportunity came to get the 2010 version in to ride over the winter, we jumped at the chance.

Hub gears have never really caught on in the world of mainstream mountain biking, but it makes sense, especially on hardtails — which we feel should stop trying to compete with full-sussers on performance and be more utilitarian instead. The iOiD is one of two bikes we've found that use Shimano's Alfine geared hub (the other's a Charge Duster 8), an eight-speed planetary gear system tucked away from the grit and grime inside an oversized rear hub.

We rode the iOiD for two months on regular winter day and night rides, and apart from the odd drop of chain lube, we didn't do any maintenance.

Frame

Genesis has built the iOiD frame from double-butted Reynolds 520 steel. The stays are shaped to create massive mud clearance and the dropouts are standard slotted rear-facing track ends, with an integrated tensioning bolt. Unfortunately, that bolt requires a 2mm Allen key, is awkward to reach and doesn't really do a great job.

Cable routing follows the down tube, but thanks to a full-length outer, any unpleasantness is



excluded. There are bosses in place for two water bottles (handy for bottle-mounted light batteries), a crud catcher and panniers at the rear. The headset is a standard external type (no bad thing) and the seatpost clamp is non-quick release.

Genesis quotes its angles with a sagged fork, which we think can be slightly confusing, so we measured the unsagged iOiD ourselves, finding the head angle is 68.7°, the seat angle 71.2°, the BB height 315mm and the front centre 660mm. In perspective, that puts the iOiD almost slap-bang between the geometries of the Specialized Stumpjumper and the Whyte 905 we tested back in March.

Components

With Genesis' parent company being Madison, UK importers of all things Shimano, it's no surprise to find practically every groupset component on the iOiD coming from the Japanese giant. The only deviation is a Race Face Ride XC crank, which comes with a 32t chainring and bash guard.

The Alfine hub provides eight gears, which, when paired with an 18t sprocket, creates a spread of gears equivalent to an 11-38t cassette. The shifter works the opposite way to a standard Shimano shifter, so pushing the thumb paddle knocks the hub into a bigger (harder) gear and using the forefinger trigger puts you in a lower (easier) gear (this is being changed around for 2011 when Alfine will also go 11-speed).



No trouble at all: the iOiD makes the perfect partner to a best bike

Bars are an acceptable 660mm wide (we'd prefer 680mm — what we ride most often on trail bikes) and the stem is 80mm. Both are Genesis branded but due to the shaping we've a sneaking suspicion they're made by Shimano sister company Pro. The front fork is a Rockshox Recon Race with lockout and 100mm of travel; uncomplicated with only a positive air chamber and a rebound adjuster to tamper with.

Brakes are Shimano M575 discs, which took a while to bed in but did a decent job from about the third ride. And it's always a nice surprise when a bike is supplied with pedals and cleats; this one comes with Shimano's excellent budget M520 SPDs.

Ride

The iOiD feels like a modern hardtail should. You get off a full-suspension bike and immediately feel at home, thanks to the roomy front centre, slackish angles and wide bar/short

stem combo. We reckon the prime market is people who already have a 'best' bike, but want a do-it-all, maintenance-free hardtail for riding local trails in the week when time is at a premium. That you can get off a full-sus trail bike and start ragging straight away, with minimal adaptation time, is a real bonus.

Shifting with the Alfine hub takes some getting used to. There's the reverse action and you can shift without pedalling — handy when descending, so you can concentrate on the trail without worrying about the right gear for the dead turn at the bottom. Keep pedals level, shift a couple of gears and within 30° of pedal stroke you're in the gear you want.

As something of a utility bike, we used the iOiD for the odd commute. Here one of the Alfine's quirks came to light: when you come to a halt, there is an initial 10° of rotation before the gear engages, even when stopping and starting again in the

same gear. Not really a problem, but it does make track standing difficult.

Despite two months of abuse in wet, muddy conditions, with zero maintenance, beyond occasional chain lubing, the iOiD and Alfine hub never missed a beat. It's in the shed, ready to roll, whatever the weather or state we left it in after the previous ride. What's more, it's genuinely fun to ride. We used it for local nocturnal trail explorations, where covering large distances can be necessary to get from one patch of woodland to the next, and for this it excelled. Fast and efficient from A to B, it's still fun to chuck around on singletrack.

When we first tested the iOiD it was £899.99; the only negative now is the price. If Genesis could just get it below that magical £1,000 barrier, all of a sudden it would seem the perfect Ride to Work scheme bike. Other than that, it's hard to fault and would be a welcome addition to any fleet.

www.genesisbikes.co.uk



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