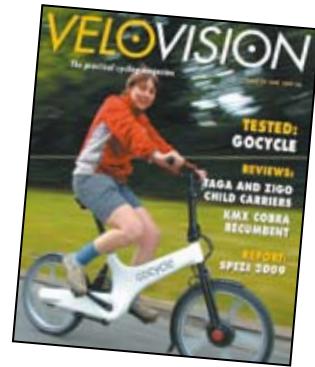


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If you have any problems or suggestions about the magazine in general, or this PDF article in particular, please email me at

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I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher,
Velo Vision

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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION
We weren't first with the name. *Velo-Vision* is a bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany. *Velo Vision* magazine exists in friendly harmony with *Velo-Vision* in Germany.

Velo Vision is printed on paper produced from sustainable forests to Nordic Swan standards.



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OPPOSITE: A swarm of bees on parked bikes in Bishopthorpe Road, York, provided an unusual sight for shoppers. Photos: Arthur Clune

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On the move

As you'll read in the News section, and see in the masthead details above, we moved premises in late May, and we're now happily settled into our much larger office at the Eco Business Centre on the north edge of York. Please do use the new address if you need to contact us or send anything.

We've also been on the move to the SPEZI, with another convivial coach trip to a packed weekend of cycling and innovations, as you'll see in our full report.

Finally, we've been moving ourselves around on a fascinating range of review bikes this issue, all in their own ways innovative and interesting. The Gocycle and Taga in particular are rare instances of 'designer' concepts embodied as practical, useful products – but do their looks get in the way? Is the simplicity and affordability of more traditional cycle engineering, as on the Zigo or KMX, a better bet?

There's an easy way to find out – read the reviews and decide for yourself!

Peter Eland

CHILD CARRIERS: TAGA AND ZIGO

This year has seen the UK launch of two child-carrying upright trikes, the Taga and the Zigo. Both offer clever folding or converting features – but do they make sense for practical family cycling? We tried both to find out.

BACKGROUND

The Taga is an Israeli-designed machine distributed from the Netherlands, and it's aiming for sales via mainstream childcare retailers as well as through the cycle trade. We got to try out two of their demo trikes when Taga's UK sales director visited York for a day, and we took them on a ride around the city before a short child-testride session. The Taga sells in the UK at £1695.

The Zigo is an American machine, and it is now imported via CycleCentric, who also supply to dealers. The bike arrived only just in time for this issue, so we had it for only a few days to ride and try. Retail price in the UK is to be £1350.

Being child-free myself, I roped in my friends Arthur, Kath and their young son James for a parents' second opinion, and to toddler-test the two machines!

The Taga

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Taga is a very finished design, with the 'product design' look of a high-end consumer item, rather than the functionality of a typical bicycle. As the chain is fully enclosed by a chaincase, and with the small wheels, it's not instantly 'cycle' related at first glance.

The machine's frame is made of massively oversized aluminium, very smoothly welded and finished. The rear section detaches from the front, with a spring pin for location and a quick-release to lock it in place. The

two handlebar uprights also detach in the same way, leaving manageable parts to be stowed away. Two separated Tagas fitted in the back of the estate car which brought them over to us.

The childseat also detaches at the push of a button, and it then stands securely on the ground (even with a child on board) while you assemble the machine or convert it between modes.

All wheels are 16" (the smaller 305 size). The front wheels have mechanical disk brakes, balanced to work off a single lever. The other lever works the roller brake on the back wheel. The back wheel employs a Shimano three-speed hub gear, operated by a twist grip on the bars.

To swap over from trike to pushchair, you remove the seat (press buttons each side), drop the saddle (two QRs) then unlock the big latch on the frame. Then, grip the handle over the mudguard, and swivel the whole rear end over. The mudguard flips over as you do so, so it's still on top, and it's retained in either



ABOVE: Disk brakes on the front wheels provide good stopping in the 16" (305) wheels.

ABOVE LEFT: A full chaincase protects the transmission, and there's a flip-over mudguard.

LEFT: The main frame clamp.

CENTRE LEFT: With the child seat removed, the frame can be separated just behind the main clamp. With the handlebar extensions also removed it's relatively compact for transport.

position by a magnet. Note that this system does mean that a rear carrier rack can't be added.

With the frame now flipped over, you can simply put the seat back on the bike, and away you go in stroller mode. The trike steering is locked straight ahead in this configuration, so you steer just by lifting the front wheel and moving it sideways.

In both modes the seat can be tilted back for sleeping children, and it has an adjustable harness system. The red and green fabrics shown here are the only two colour options. A sunshade is built into the seat, and a raincover will also be available. Also coming up will be a two-seat version (for one smaller, one larger child), a quick-release luggage basket to fit in place of the childseat, a car seat adaptor for very small children, and other options.

Note that in both modes there's a luggage tray underneath the child seat. On these demo bikes a 5 kg weight had been placed here, to

help with stability for novice riders, especially with no child on board. It is easily removed.

Overall, the Taga is an impressive bit of kit. It did attract masses of positive attention even during our brief ride, and the versatility on offer, and smart appearance, do seem to be very attractive even for non-cyclists.

THE RIDE

As an upright trike, the Taga is easy for non-cyclists to jump on and go. Practiced cyclists may find it a bit more of a learning curve, as you have to shift mental gears from 'lean to turn' to 'steer to turn'.

But after just a few minutes it's very manageable. Yes, you can easily lift a wheel if you want to, and apparently this is the first thing bike shop staff, mostly young men, tend to do, and the last thing most mums and dads want to try with a child on board!

Anyway, it's easy to ride within the trike's limits if you want, and the stability is easily sufficient in everyday riding to cause no concerns. It coped fine – even with the small wheels – with some fairly heavy potholes and speed bumps. I did unintentionally lift a wheel occasionally on off-camber surfaces, but easily recovered.

The gearing is fairly low anyway – you won't want to go fast with a child on board, and high speeds shouldn't be necessary for the relatively short-distance urban transport tasks for which it was designed. The hub shifts smoothly under load or not: a good choice for ease of use and reliability. Brakes were also very good, even on these new 'just out of the box' trikes which hadn't had a chance for the disks to wear in. The front brakes did seem well balanced, with even hard braking not producing any discernable drift to one side.

There were a few teething problems on the trikes we tried, with bolts needing tightening, etc., but those will all be sorted out for current production. Overall, it felt solid and competent.

It's hard to tell how the Taga worked out from the passenger's point of view – at just over 12 months, James couldn't really give a detailed verdict. But he seemed to enjoy the ride and the view!



arm which acts as a roll cage in trike mode. It also holds the parking brake lever. This operates drum brakes on both main 20"



(406) wheels.

There's masses of space in the child compartment: it comes set up with a harness for one child, but a second can be added. The harness was well padded and easily adjusted. There are also plenty of pouches and zipped pockets on the back for essential supplies. I also liked the foam-padded front 'bumper' – this helps avoid damage to walls etc. as you manoeuvre it around indoors! Another nice touch is the top mesh panel, which gives the rider a good view of the child passenger

for heavier rain is also available. The sun shade is built in.

The bike part of the Zigo is a compact, unisex design which will fit a wide range of riders. The 20" wheels match those on the ChildPod. It's a straightforward bike, with 3-speed Sturmey hub gears and a drum brake on the back wheel, too. A chainguard covers the chainring and top run of chain, and a wide twin-leg stand is useful both when parking and when changing modes. It's easy to fit a rear rack for extra luggage capacity, or you could order Zigo's own rear rack which has a socket to hold the spare front wheel when in trike mode.

The attachment mechanism is simpler than this description will probably make out. To attach the two halves, the bike's front wheel is removed and its front cantilever brake unhooked. The bike is then offered up to the back of the stroller. You need to slide the brake rod up into the headset, lower the forks down and engage the dropouts with the steering linkage, and finally get that big beam located in the main clamp on the bike's frame – then just do up the big clamp knob, and also twiddle the knob at the top of the stem to do up the brake linkage.

The braking system is somewhat complex: at the handlebars a cable 'doubler' lets the same lever operate either the bike's front cantilever brake or the ChildPod's twin drums, depending on which is connected. On the ChildPod, a further 'doubler' splits the braking between the two drums – which are also connected via separate cables to the parking brake.

while in trike mode.

As delivered, the ChildPod is open to the elements at the front, so I'd recommend the 'Environment Control System' option, which provides a mesh screen and/or 'drizzle cover'. A separate rain cover

The Childpod front end is impressively substantial. Like a pram it folds down fairly flat for storage, and the wheels also quick-release. For stroller mode it has fold-down caster wheels each side, and a wide, height-adjustable push



The Zigo

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Zigo is a two-part machine, with a complete bicycle back end which links, with front wheel removed, to a front 'ChildPod' which is rather like a two-seater child trailer. In trike mode, the spare bicycle front wheel tucks under between the front wheels. When the two parts are separated, you get both a fully functional bicycle and a stroller. To add to the versatility, you can get a trailer hitch for the Childpod so that it can be towed behind pretty much any other bike, or a large front wheel to turn it into a jogger.

Overall, the Zigo is quite a striking machine, with a large area of bright fabric (print reproduction won't do it justice) to catch the eye. It has a more traditional look than the Taga, particularly the bike rear end.



ABOVE: Limited steering lock is available.

LEFT: The attachment system connects the bike's fork to the Childpod's steering linkage.

BELOW: A Sturmey three-speed with drum brake in the back wheel.

BOTTOM: The clamp welded into the main frame is seriously sturdy.



It's all rather a lot of cable and connections, and in the short time I had the trike I don't think I quite set it up right: front braking was mediocre in trike mode, and the back drum brake was rather more effective than the two front ones.

When you're using the ChildPod in stroller mode, the steering needs to be locked – this is done via a small two-position knob near the right wheel.

Overall, the conversion process is easy enough with some practice. The parking brake is very useful to keep things still while you connect or disconnect the bike – which can of course be done with the child passenger still safely strapped in.

THE RIDE

The two trikes were remarkably similar to ride, and most of the comments already made about the Taga also apply to the Zigo. You do need to limit the speed – the low gearing does that for you here, too – and take corners with considerable caution, especially unloaded. But if you take your time, it should handle most urban journeys easily enough.

With its noticeably larger 20" wheels, the Zigo rolls rather more easily over obstacles than the Taga, but against that it has a rather wider turning radius: the front wheels can't swivel through much angle to steer. Most urban roads required a three-point turn or more to do a full U-turn, although just riding round normally I found it rarely caused inconvenience.

As a solo bike the ride was actually quite nippy, and with the front cantilever brake engaged stopping was good, too. It does feel very under-g geared in solo mode, however, so after that nippy acceleration you do end up twiddling the pedals as fast as you can without going particularly fast. Again, if you take your time it's a perfectly good performer.

CONCLUSIONS

Both machines are impressive feats of engineering, with professionally-

designed and well build child carrying facilities. Given their differing design concepts, both are well implemented, with a few minor niggles only. The Taga is perhaps more consumer-friendly and 'product designed'; the Zigo is more obviously familiar cycle technology.

If you have or plan two children, the Zigo is the only option, at least until Taga develop their two-child attachment. The Zigo is also the more usable stroller; lighter and with caster-wheel steering, and with much more capacity in the child seating area – and it looks more 'normal' too.

But the Taga is more compact, and gains points for being relatively easily fitted into a car boot for transport. I think the Taga also has a somewhat easier conversion between modes, especially if you're less mechanically minded, and it's slightly ahead in braking performance – at least initially. The Zigo's drums should be maintenance free for years, not necessarily the case with the Taga's disks.

Both are rather limited in speed terms when it comes to actually riding them, especially when cornering, but that's probably not an issue for most parents. They certainly make distances practical which would be tiresome to walk.

So the question really comes down to whether the whole idea of either an all-in-one cycling/pram conversion like the Taga, or a versatile bike/stroller/trailer like the Zigo, actually makes sense for your family.

They compete primarily, I think, against the combination of a normal bike plus either trailer or child seats, and most families would also have a separate pram/buggy. Workbikes like the Bakfiets, where the child can sit in the front load area, are also a possibility. And don't forget the other existing family trikes which convert or transform, including the Feetz from the Netherlands and the Triobike from Denmark.

One issue is the sheer space required for these machines: a

garage would be ideal, or a large yard with a wide door. In stroller mode both are larger than most prams, so some parents might want something smaller and lighter as well, especially for taking indoors for shopping, hospital visits or the like. I also wonder how often harassed parents will want to fiddle around for several minutes swapping these machines between modes – simple, separate solutions do have much to recommend them.

Then there's the cost; buying even good quality separate bikes, seats, strollers and the like would hardly come to the total required to buy one of these machines new. Then again, like most specialist child-carrying cycles, they should hold value well and be relatively easy to pass on once outgrown.

If none of that is a deal-breaker, then a trike like the Taga or Zigo could be a first-class way to transport your child, to school or nursery perhaps, and then their carrying capacity can come in handy for shopping on the way back. Unlike any bicycle-based solution, either machine will promise three-wheeled stability even in icy weather, and their width and unusual layout give them great road presence too, both big benefits for less than confident cycling parents.

That said, I suspect that the most likely customers for these machines are parents who, before the children arrived, were cyclists already, and miss the freedom and dynamics of riding a bike compared to walking slowly along pushing a buggy.

The versatility of these trikes could be one way to integrate cycling back into parenthood, and if they can do that for your family, they'll be well worth the cost.

Peter Eland

CONTACTS

Taga: See www.taga.nl. A list of stockists is on the website, and you can contact Taga UK for details of your closest: Tel 01422 844 414 or email simon@taga.nl
Zigo: US manufacturer's website is www.myzigo.com. UK distributor is Cyclecentric: Tel 01954 789284 or see www.cyclecentric.co.uk