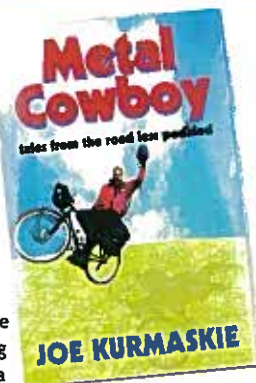


THE METAL COWBOY £18.95

Metal Cowboy was the name given to Joe Kurmaskie by an old blind rancher in Pocatello, Idaho, after tapping his laden touring bike with his cane. It's a fitting handle for both author and book – the latter a hardback collection of 40 essays detailing a life of highs and lows in the saddle. Kurmaskie writes with a richly descriptive but nonetheless fluid style that encourages page turning, bringing characters long gone alive again with obvious affection. And if you don't have what it takes to duplicate such a comprehensive cycling odyssey, at least you can enjoy it vicariously thanks to a writer who lends plenty of weight to the theory that real cyclists are born, rather than made. (ISBN 1-891369-10-5). *Steve Robinson*

VERDICT: 7
A character rich account of Kurmaskie's personal cycling odyssey
Bicycling Books ☎ 01431 340666
www.bikebook.demon.co.uk



ENDURA SUNBEAM JERSEY £34.95

Endura's short sleeve Sunbeam jersey is spot on for warm summer rides – it is packed with features without being too garish or having a bunch of huge logos all over the front and rear something we're sure will give it a broad appeal. It is made from fast wicking Airtex fabric which takes the sweat away from your body keeping you dry, and comfortable at all times. One feature we really like is the long front neck zip which means there's plenty of scope for extra ventilation if you get too hot in the summer sun – though it could perhaps do with some sort of toggle for ease of use on the fly. The lycra collar gives a good fit at the neck and the arms are well fitted too, stopping them from riding up too much. On the back of the Sunbeam you're treated to three pockets, one zipped for keeping keys, and cash safe. All of this makes for a great summer riding jersey and the close fit means you could wear it as an under layer in colder conditions. Apart red, the Sunbeam is also available in black, blue or orange. *Ian Osborne*



VERDICT: 8
Top cycling shirt for those warm summer rides
Endura ☎ 01506 497749
www.endura.co.uk

TRAINAIR £586 approx

A high tech and expensive training aid the Trainair is a computer-aided device claimed by its makers to help athletes develop their breathing techniques in order to increase lung capacity. The Trainair hooks straight into your PC and comes with all the necessary software. Pleasingly, getting to grips with the Trainair is easy and you can view all the exercises on your computer screen – just as well as it comes with no written instructions. With the mouthpiece on you breathe in deeply, the Trainair measures the amount of air your lungs can take in, and then provides exercises designed to increase your lungs' capacity based on this initial reading. As you progress, it automatically moves you up to

different levels based on a slower rest period between repetitions – do well and you'll get a shorter recovery time. All this is done by following screen-led breathing patterns – you have to control the progress of a 'ball' shown on the screen by modulating your breathing. The makers recommend you use the Trainair for half-hour sessions, three times a week for eight weeks to achieve maximum benefit. After eight weeks you reduce this to twice weekly. The aim is to strengthen your intercostal muscles to help you get the most from your lungs – we'll report back later on whether this has been successful. *Paul Vincent*

VERDICT: 7
Useful but expensive tool for cycling clubs and serious athletes
Trainair ☎ 01322 332000
www.trainair.co.uk



SIMONCINI TRACK FRAME+FORK £239 2.2kg



When it comes to track racing, stiffness and stability count above all else in your bike and Simoncini has got the balance right in this sensibly priced frame – as I found out racing at Reading track. Simoncini nickel plates its frames before applying the finishing coat

– useful protection if you press the bike into use as a fixed-wheel winter hack as the fork crown is drilled to accept a calliper. While most steel frames are TIG welded nowadays this Simoncini sports cast lugs and older styled Columbus Cromor tubing profiled to the 4-leaf clover shape – outwardly similar to the Colnago Master from the mid-Nineties. Cromor, though a venerable and pretty basic steel alloy is plenty stiff and strong enough for track use. Frame alignment and braze penetration around the lugs is good and the bike uses an easy to source 27.2mm seatpost. We specced the Simoncini with Royce track hubs and a red anodised Middleburn chainset, though a cheaper option is to use double fixed road hubs (try a cyclejumble) and a road chainset with the inner ring removed. Weighing just over a couple of kilos this is no lightweight, but the Simoncini seems to magically shed that weight on the track where it feels well planted and reassuringly stable when carving a way through the bunch in the sprint, though we'd recommend that you match the frame with an exceptionally strong and stiff stem such as the 3TTT Status shown here. *Paul Vincent*

VERDICT: 7
Not light, but a highly effective track tool
Cycles Clements ☎ 01531 632213

SHIMANO SH-SD60 SANDALS £60

SPD sandals have a cult following amongst cycling travellers in very hot countries and C+ Prod ed Simon recently snapped up a similar product from the now defunct Lake for his forthcoming ride Down Under. You could argue that Britain isn't hot enough to justify a purchase but with temperatures here nudging 30°C in July these sandals could be worth the expense and are a definite contender for riding in hot climes. The soles on these new Shimano sandals are much stiffer than those found on standard sandals – we're not talking flip-flops – and come complete with little 'windows' that you cut away to fit SPD cleats. Wearing them is much the same as wearing any SPD leisure shoes, and though you can just feel the cleat through the sole these are still comfortable. The Velcro straps provide plenty of support when pulling up on the pedals and the inside of the heel back have gel inserts which virtually eliminate rubbing. However, unless you want a grid pattern on your feet don't forget to slap on the sunblock. *Paul Vincent*

VERDICT: 7
The perfect antidote to hot feet – but a tad on the dear side
Madison Cycles ☎ 0845 603 4612



CRAGHOPPERS DRI-PAC 12 BUMBAG £30

The new Craghoppers Dri-Pac bum bags use a concept first seen on the company's waterproof rucksack series – they come complete with a roll-top dry bag that fits inside the main body of the bag. This is sealed by rolling down the top section and securing it in place with three quick release clips. I've been using this 12-litre pack (smaller five and seven litre versions are also available) which has room for a windproof, lightweight waterproof or a microfleece, and other odds and ends. There's also a non-waterproof pocket to store items that you might need in a hurry. With plenty of padding at the rear and on the side sections of the hip belt it's comfortable to use – with cinch straps helping to minimise bounce. *Keith Rickaby*



VERDICT: 9
Another Craghoppers winner for lightweight days in the saddle
Craghoppers ☎ 0161 749 1364
www.craghoppers.com

MINOURA HANDY EXCEL-11 £14.99 142g

Redesigned for 2001, the Handy Excel-11 is a penknife-style multi tool incorporating 11 of the most common functions needed for emergency roadside adjustments and repairs. Unlike many of its type, this design feels solid and secure in the hand, allowing you to exert plenty of pressure without risk of damage to either user or component. A non-slip grip insert helps, and the basic shape is the best for this kind of application. Riders get a choice of seven Allen keys, 2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6 and an 8mm for crank bolts. In addition, there's slot and cross-headed drivers and two sizes of socket, 8mm and 10mm. These are all made from heat-treated and hardened steel, satin plated to best resist rust. Internal alloy liners add to the strength without adding much to the overall weight, which at 142g is perfectly acceptable for seat pack or pocket. *Steve Robinson*



VERDICT: 9
Solid, dependable multi tool with the added bonus of an 8mm Allen key
Zyro ☎ 01423 325325
www.zyro.eu.com

BIKIE CHARLIE WOODS £9.99

Bikie is the tale of a lifelong love affair – one between Charlie Woods and the bicycle. True, the arduous cooled for a few years after the tempestuous heights and initial romance of the 1950s – when he'd go misty-eyed over a double chainset or a continental frame – but it returned again in the Nineties when Woods became TV critic for *Cycle News* magazine. No ordinary critic either. He's set up his second-hand turbo trainer in front of the screen to follow the pro peloton pedal stroke for pedal stroke, gear change for gear change on Eurosport. There are some great moments in the book ISBN (1 84018 422 1), misty-eyed recollections of club runs and weekend races; of growing up with bikes before being seduced by the lure of the motorised two wheeler; and the later rekindling of his early love for cycling. Besides this, Woods makes amusing diversions into cycling as art, concentrating on the British artist Anthony Green, and cycling literature – with the fascinating nugget that the Russian novelist Tolstoy learned to ride at the age of 67, subscribing to *La France Cycliste* magazine and watching track meetings in Moscow. *Simon Withers*



VERDICT: 8
An amusing, passionate and original insight into biking
Mainstream Publishing ☎ 0131 557 2939
www.mainstreampublishing.com

CYCLE PEDAL SPANNER £16.99

Alongside a track pump and a good workstand the pedal spanner rates as one of those essentials that no good cycling toolbox should be without. You could of course use a 15mm cone spanner but standard tools will not last long under such circumstances – though Look pedals have a hexagon on the axle which is easily secured using a traditional 15mm open ended spanner. However, with pedals like Time's Equipe range you require a pedal spanner due to the close proximity of the body of the pedal to the face of the crank arm. Though not quite as nice to use as Park's benchmark pedal spanner, this is still a high quality piece of kit aimed at the keen home mechanic – though there's no reason why the cash-strapped pro mechanic shouldn't use it. The Cycle pedal spanner's narrow jaws also make it better suited to use on the Time pedals than the Park tool. *Steve Robinson*



VERDICT: 8
Good quality and the best value pedal spanner around
Weldrite ☎ 01657 660000
www.weldrite.co.uk

VANGO ULTRALITE WHISPER SLEEPING BAG £55.00

Vango's new Ultralite Whisper bag may be just the thing for those who like travelling light to warmer climes or for those who just want a lightweight sleeping bag that doesn't take up too much room in your panniers. The sizing's pretty generous and there's enough filling to keep you warm on nights when there's not a chill in the air. There's a good baffle behind the zip plus a draw corded hood and extended zip pullers too. Also included is an internal pocket to store your watch or your wallet and a compression stuff bag that allows you to further reduce the bag's already small stuffed size. The outer fabric's of your standard shiny sleeping bag outer kind whilst the inner surface is Tactel body contact fabric. It's comfortable to sleep in and when the temperatures rise a bit, it's easy to get out and unzip the bag before using it as a blanket/duvet, handy if you are using it when sleeping on a floor, settee or camp bed or whilst using tent or dormitory accommodation. I have used it for camping and sleeping on a mate's settee and can vouch for the bag's ability to cope with most eventualities – it's also a sensible price. *Keith Rickaby*



VERDICT: 8
A well-specced and versatile lightweight bag
Vango ☎ 01475 744122
www.ame-outdoor.co.uk