



# CO-MOTION DIVIDE ROHLOFF

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

→ THE ROAD between hither and yon isn't always the glossy black ribbon of computer-generated asphalt as seen in car commercials. Even when it is, you might not want to ride a bicycle on it (Hey, all those cars have to go somewhere once they leave your TV).

Happily, some oddball detour occasionally throws you a wink and nudges you off the bitumen path. Here's some two-track fading over a ridge. There's a riverside lane. And is that a charming stretch of single-track dipping into the woods?

Should you decide to abandon the blacktop for an extended stretch where the only white line is an occasional contrail bisecting the sky, you'll want a bike that, like you, appreciates the road less traveled.

The Co-Motion Divide Rohloff is a horse for that particular course. With its large-diameter Reynolds 725 tubes, stout 36-spoke Velocity Dyad rims, superb mixed-conditions Geax AKA 29 x 2.0 tires, and grippy Avid BB7 cable-actuated discs, there's not much on this planet that it can't handle.

Shucks, you can even ride it on pavement, if you must.

Gravel grinding has become one of the flavors of the month as the bike industry searches for The Next Big Thing, but back in the 1990s it was just another day on the bike when I lived on a rocky hillside in Custer County, Colorado.

Pavement was miles off, and not

## SPECIFICATIONS

CO-MOTION DIVIDE ROHLOFF

**Price:** \$6,103 (as reviewed; upgrades include two-color paint, stainless-steel dropouts, Co-Motion Rohloff shifter and nickel head badge)

**Sizes available:** 52cm, 55cm, 58cm

**Size tested:** 55cm

**Weight:** 28.5 pounds (without pedals)

## TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

**1. Seat tube:** 20 1/4 inches (center to top)

**2. Top tube:** 21 1/2 inches (actual, center to center)

**3. Head tube angle:** 70.5°

**4. Seat tube angle:** 74°

**5. Chainstays:** 18 3/8 in.

**6. Bottom bracket drop:** 2.5 in. (63.5mm)

**7. Crank spindle height above ground:** 30.5cm

**8. Fork offset:** 55mm

**9. Wheelbase:** 109.5cm

**10. Standover height:** 32 in.

**11. Frame:** Large-diameter Reynolds 725 tubes, rack and fender mounts at seat stays and dropouts; pump peg

**12. Fork:** Co-Motion taper-gauge chromoly with CNC steerer; low-rider mounts at mid-fork; fork and fender mounts at dropout and crown



**13. Rims:** Velocity Dyad disc, 36 hole

**14. Hubs:** DT Swiss 540 tandem (front), Rohloff Speedhub (rear)

**15. Tires:** Geax AKA 29x2.0

**16. Bottom bracket:** FSA, plus eccentric

**17. Crankset:** FSA V-Drive, 46T Gates CenterTrack, 175mm

**18. Cog:** 20T Gates CenterTrack

**19. Brake levers:** Cane Creek SCR-5

**20. Shift levers:** Co-Motion Rohloff shifter

**21. Brake calipers:** Avid BB7 road cable-actuated discs, Avid G2CS rotor, 160mm (front), Magura 180mm (rear)

**22. Pedals:** None

**23. Seat post:** Co-Motion

**24. Stem:** FSA Gossamer, 100mm, +/- 6°

**25. Handlebar:** FSA Omega Compact, 44cm

**26. Headset:** Chris King InSet 44mm internal

**27. Saddle:** Selle Italia Nekkar

**28. Gearing in inches:** 18.6, 21.1, 24, 27.3, 30.9, 35.2, 40.0, 45.5, 51.6, 58.8, 66.7, 75.7, 86.2, 97.8

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much fun once you got there, with its chunky chip-seal surface occupied largely — in every sense of the word — by 18-wheelers hauling hay, diesel dual-wheel pickups hauling horse trailers, and SUVs hauling hunters eager to decorate their Tuff Sheds in the aspens with the headgear of an antlered ruminant.

So I rode a lot of sand, gravel, and dirt, mostly on a cyclo-cross bike, because it was more versatile than a mountain bike — not as good on technical single-track or really steep grades, but better on nearly everything else.

That's one of the many reasons I like the Divide Rohloff. It narrows the gap between road and mountain bike, like a 'cross bike with elephantiasis of the frameset and a serious case of the knobs.

My 55 cm review model came well equipped for the kind of riding that's a staple of my daily diet — a hint of pavement here, a dash of pulverized granite there, and a soupçon of single-track for flavor. The two-tone paint job, a stunning apple red up top that darkens to plum purple below, extends the metaphor to a delicious finale.

The fat chromoly tubes and even fatter tires provided all the comfort I could want, on road or off, especially when paired with the long chainstays and wheelbase — 7.5 cm longer than my old Steelman Eurocross, a Reynolds 853 racing bike that was my mainstay in the mountains.

Pedal clearance was never an issue, despite the 175 mm FSA V-Drive cranks and the occasional boulder-studded bit of single-track, courtesy of the generous 29.4 cm between the center of the bottom bracket and the surface of Mother Earth. The sloping top tube, meanwhile, provides plenty of clearance for other important components should you suddenly be forced into straddling the bike on a technical trail.

A sturdy climber and dependable descender, the lanky Divide Rohloff

was less agile than my Steelman in tight spots, but racing bikes don't come equipped with eyelets for racks and fenders, three sets of bottle bosses, and John Deere-size tires. You're going to spend more than an hour a day on this bike and carry more than a slim hope for glory along with you, and if you decide to load it up — and that's what Co-Motion wants you to do — you'll find the geometry just right for dirt touring with panniers or bikepacking.

And your choice of courses can be an eclectic one, thanks in part to the 14-speed, internally geared Rohloff Speedhub and Gates Carbon Drive. I've ridden one other Rohloff-Gates bike, the flat-bar Van Nicholas Amazon (see the October-November 2012 issue of *Adventure Cyclist*), and find the system even more impressive on the Divide, since I mostly ride drop-bar bikes and have a better sense of how they should behave (or at least what to expect of them). Sure, you have to ease off the power a bit to shift, but you'll never find yourself stuck in the wrong gear at a stop light or staring glumly at a broken derailleur hanger in the middle of nowhere.

The 46-tooth Gates CenterTrack sprocket coupled with a 20-tooth cog, provides a maximum of 97.8 gear inches, which is all the top end a timid descender like me will ever need. In the 18.6 inch granny gear, you can climb trees like a squirrel. Frankly, I never found a pitch steep enough to justify its use, but most of my off-road rides were free of racks and bags.

Switching gears is accomplished via Co-Motion's own shifter mounted on the top of the handlebar, near the stem. This was an upgrade from the standard-equipment Rohloff shifter, which is attached via a HubBub bar-end adapter, and I had a bit of trouble getting used to it. For starters, it's big — on a par with the cylinder from a Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum revolver (that's not simple hyperbole, by the way. I checked).

And the mechanic who assembled my bike couldn't get it snugly up against the stem, so I found it irksome when riding with hands atop the bars. Plus the slick surface of the black-anodized, 6061-aluminum twist shifter can defy a damp palm.

But Co-Motion likes the concept,



The Divide's drivetrain with Rohloff Speedplay hub and Gates Carbon drive.

which makes for cleaner cable routing than a bar-end position, and so they've refined it since I got my 2013 review model. Co-owner Dwan Shepard told me that the shifter has been redesigned with a smaller, rounder outer diameter and a machined, cross-hatched knurling for a more secure grip. He showed it to me during the Interbike trade show in Las Vegas in September, and it seems much improved over its predecessor. It will also be standard equipment on the 2014 Divide Rohloff, according to Co-Motion's Brian Cannon, as will TRP's Spyre mechanical disc brakes.

Another personal Co-Motion touch is the stainless-steel rear dropout, which saves you the hassle of de-tensioning the Gates belt before removing the Rohloff cable box and rear wheel to fix a flat.

"The dropout, which we make here, is designed so that the belt tension is relieved while the wheel is pushed out of its slot," said Shepard. "When you replace the wheel, you'll see the belt tension come back as you pull it into

place. Pressing down on the bike firmly before closing the quick release will assure the axle is correctly positioned and the belt properly tensioned."

Removing the Rohloff cable box can be a bit trickier, if you've never done it. Twist the shifter to gear 1 or 14 (I chose 14) and use a coin or your fingers to remove the thumbscrew holding the cable box to the hub. Remove the wheel, fix your flat, and replace wheel and box.

Before rolling off, check your shifting. If you've lost a few gears, as I did, remove the box again, shift into gear 1, remount the box, and shift until you can't anymore.

You should be in gear 14. If you're not, remove the box once more, shift to gear 14, and then reinstall the box. Alternatively, you can use an 8 millimeter wrench to turn the hexagonal peg on the external transfer box counterclockwise until it reaches the end stop, which puts the hub in gear 14. Do try

this at home — that way you'll know what to expect on the road (or off it).

The Gates belt is a good deal less hassle, as in none at all. Gates says you can expect its belt to last more than twice as long as a chain; simply inspect it periodically for broken, misshapen or missing teeth, cracks at the base of the teeth, or fraying cords.

Basic maintenance involves simply hosing off the belt. In extreme conditions, add a thin coat of dry silicone spray. Plan on packing a can in your panniers, because extreme conditions are where the Divide Rohloff excels.

You meet the nicest roads off pavement. Let the Co-Motion Divide Rohloff introduce you to some. **AG**

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