



CINELLI BOOTLEG HOBO

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

→ AND LO, I DID WANDER the trackless desert for 40 days and nights in search of sensible transportation until, miraculously, a winged steed appeared before me, ready for the riding. And it was good.

Okay, so it was only three days. And although Las Vegas is surely in the desert, I spent those three days indoors at the 2013 Interbike trade show, and my wandering was mostly from the Luxor to Mandalay Bay and back again.

But a winged steed really did appear before me. And while it's not exactly miraculous, it's certainly ready for the riding.

The etymology of the word "hobo" is unclear, although Merriam-Webster says it was first used in 1889. However, the origins of the Bootleg Hobo are certain. This Hobo comes to us from Taiwan via Cinelli — hence the winged-C logo — and it's a sturdy steel adventure bike that fits the word's primary definition: a "migratory worker" ready to go places and do things. And right off the boxcar, too, as the Hobo arrives ready to ride, complete with a set of Wellgo pedals.

"When springtime it comes, oh, won't we have fun? We'll throw off our jobs, and go on the bum! Hallelujah, I'm a bum, hallelujah, bum again..."

It was a nice bit of imagery on a cold winter's day when I began writing this review. We all like to think we're

SPECIFICATIONS

CINELLI BOOTLEG HOBO

Price: \$1,849.99

Sizes available: XS (26-inch wheels), S, M, L, XL, XXL. A limited run of Italian-made framesets will be available for \$2,700

Size tested: M (53cm)

Weight: 31.5 pounds (ready to ride with pedals, racks, and fenders)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

- 1. Seat tube:** 53cm (center to top of seat clamp)
- 2. Top tube:** 52.5cm (actual, center to center)
- 3. Head tube angle:** 71°
- 4. Seat tube angle:** 73.5°

5. Chainstays: 430mm

6. Bottom bracket drop: 75mm

7. Crank spindle height above ground: 285mm

8. Fork offset: 50mm

9. Wheelbase: 1015cm

10. Standover height: 795mm

11. Frame: Columbus Cromor, triple butted, treated to resist corrosion, reflective accents, ergo steering stop. Bosses for three water bottle cages. Eyelets for fender, rear rack. Cantilever posts; cable stops and routes; spoke holder (drive side); chain holder

12. Fork: Columbus chromoly unicrown, triple butted, 1 1/8-inch steerer, low-rider mounts, fender eyelets

13. Rims: Bootleg-branded Alex DA16, 32 hole

14. Spokes: 14g, black

15. Hubs: Shimano Sora FH-3500 (rear), HB-3500 (front)

16. Tires: Vittoria Randonneur Trail, wire bead, 700x38

17. Bottom bracket: FSA

18. Crankset: FSA Alpha Drive, 170mm, 48/36/26 chainrings

19. Cassette: Shimano Nexave HG-50 9-speed 11,13,15,17,20,23,26,30,34

20. Chain: KMC (my replacement for the original Shimano)

21. Brake levers: Tektro RL-340

22. Shift levers: Microshift bar-cons, 9-speed

23. Cable housing: Jagwire LEX-SL (derailleurs), Jagwire CEX (brakes)

24. Front derailleur: Shimano Sora triple



- 25. Rear derailer:** Shimano Deore
- 26. Brakes:** Tektro Oryx
- 27. Pedals:** Wellgo WPD-95B
- 28. Seat post:** Cinelli Hobo, 27.2mm
- 29. Stem:** Cinelli Hobo, 100mm, 7° rise, 31.8mm two-bolt clamp, black
- 30. Handlebar:** Cinelli Hobo Compact, 31.8mm four-bolt clamp, 44.5cm wide at flared ends
- 31. Bar tape:** Cinelli Hobo Alphabet Volée Ribbon
- 32. Headset:** Tange-Seiki Terious
- 33. Saddle:** Bootleg-branded San Marco Bioaktive
- 34. Racks:** Tubus Tara (front); Tubus Logo (rear)
- 35. Fenders:** Yung Fang

GEARING IN INCHES:

	48	36	26
11	119.2	89.4	64.6
13	100.9	75.7	54.6
15	87.4	65.6	47.4
17	77.1	57.9	41.8
20	65.6	49.2	35.5
23	57.0	42.8	30.9
26	50.4	37.8	27.3
30	43.7	32.8	23.7
34	38.6	28.9	20.9

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too smart for marketing until suddenly we aren't, and I've always been a sucker for a rousing song of the open road, especially after too many rides to nowhere on the indoor trainer.

If I'm not actually on the bum in January, you can be sure that I'm at least thinking about it. So when this tough-looking working stiff of a bike from the Italian side of the tracks gives me the high sign, well, sure, I'm going along for the ride.

Cinelli casts its \$1,850 Bootleg Hobo as a mulligan stew of cyclocross and touring bicycle with a sloping top tube, clearance for 700C x 40 tires, and lots of must-have bits for a bike that's been to see the elephant — the Hobo took part in last year's Tour d'Afrique, a 12,000-kilometer bit of whimsy from Cairo, Egypt, to Capetown, South Africa, that took competitors five months to finish.

The sturdy Columbus Cromor frameset has three sets of bottle bosses, cantilever posts, a spare-spokes holder on the drive-side chainstay, a chain hanger, and a wealth of attachment points for its tricolored cable housing (the shift cables are completely enclosed and the brake cables nearly so). The frame is coated inside and out to resist corrosion, and in addition to the usual rack-and-fender eyelets, it has actual racks and fenders, the former from Tubus. I wasn't kidding when I said you could put this 'bo straight to work.

I didn't take my 53 centimeter review model on any transcontinental expeditions, but I did cover quite a bit of ground, on pavement and off, and found much to admire about the easy-riding Hobo and its marketing people whose campaign makes mention of three of my favorite traveling companions — Jack Kerouac, John Steinbeck, and Tom Waits.

The look of the Hobo is one of a kind — its color, dubbed Railway, is a shade of green that's basically desert camo meets sinus infection. I like it because I'm a sloppy fellow, and the Hobo is a

bike that looks fine, maybe even better, when splattered with mud. The handlebar tape bears symbols from the graffiti-like code hobos use to communicate with one another (tips like “kind lady,” “work available,” “good water/campsite”). The fork blades are emblazoned with the mark for “Hit the road quick!” And there’s a tiny cartoon of a bindlestiff on the down tube. You’ll always know which bike in the rack outside Starbucks is yours, is what I’m saying.

As befits a workhorse that could find itself hobbled far from civilization, the Hobo uses some decidedly old-school technology, including a traditional Tange-Seiki headset, cantilever brakes, and bar-end shifters, all of which are easily and cheaply adjusted, repaired, or replaced — although, surprisingly, the derailleur hanger is not one of the replaceable variety.

The chunky Tektro RL-340 brake levers and Oryx cantis served me well; I had no trouble slowing or stopping the Hobo, whether I was slaloming around on some rocky singletrack or lumbering home from the grocery with 33 pounds of grub in panniers front and rear, a trip that included a heavy wind and a couple of loose stretches of dug-up bike path punctuated with blind downhill corners and chunks of the original asphalt surface.

The Microshift nine-speed bar-end shifters proved less reliable as operators of the Shimano Sora-Deore derailleur combo, especially when using the 30-tooth cog and the 36-tooth middle ring. Chain skip and/or drop to the granny ring were not uncommon when climbing out of the saddle on short, steep hills, although I found that

if I shifted into the 30-tooth long before I actually needed it, I was less likely to have issues.

This being my first experience with Microshift, I’m reluctant to assign all the blame to the shifters. My Hobo was a demo model that had seen some use, and it needed a new chain, some realignment of the derailleur hanger, and a little fiddling with the bottom bracket that shifted the spindle slightly to the left for an improved chain line. Then there’s that fully enclosed, top-tube-routed shift cable to consider, perhaps a bit of overkill for those of us who aren’t cycling across Africa. All this being said, I prefer the definitive snap of a Shimano bar-con changing gears, and I really appreciate its friction option for when shifting goes sideways (Microshift is index only).

The slightly flared Cinelli Hobo Compact handlebar is great, especially with both brake and shift cables wrapped underneath the cushy Hobo Alphabet Volée tape. Rest your hands on the wide, flat tops and you half expect to see a tap and a friendly face on the other side, drawing you a frosty pint. If it were sold separately, I might buy a couple for my own bikes.

The Bootleg-branded Selle San Marco Bioaktive saddle is less comfy, though I eventually grew accustomed to it.

Nor did I much care for the Vittoria Randonneur Trail 700C x 38 tires, though I’ve long been a fan of Vittoria rubber. The company describes the 760-gram wire-bead clincher as a “rigid tire for poor surfaces,” and they certainly got the rigid part dialed in. The Randonneur Trail doesn’t make

much noise on pavement, and it hooks up reasonably well on everything else save a really loose surface, but it’s about as supple as a cardboard box, even at the recommended low pressure of 60 psi. The front tire lost pressure during one ride, and I didn’t notice until it tried to fold on me in a corner.

Other minor complaints: It’s swell that the Hobo is equipped with fenders, but these Yung Fang models are shorties that won’t keep all the goo off you or your drivetrain. You can always tack on some mud flaps, but a few more inches of fender would help too. Also, an inline barrel adjuster close to the cockpit would go a long way toward remedying the lack of a friction option in shifting. And, finally, why doesn’t an adventure bike with an African pedigree come with a replaceable derailleur hanger, as does the Salsa Vaya at a comparable price?

There are no deal breakers on this short list, especially for a bike that — to me, anyway — has so much personality. A fella on the road likes to have a lively traveling companion, especially one whose few shortcomings are so easily remedied or overlooked.

If you think a bike should have equal measures of flair and function, you’ll find the Bootleg Hobo right up your alley. And if you’d rather dress one up in glad rags from a nattier wardrobe, well, Cinelli is offering a limited run of custom Italian-made Columbus Life framesets for \$2,700 a pop. **AC**

Patrick O’Grady has written and cartooned about cycling since 1989 for VeloNews, Bicycle Retailer and Industry News, and a variety of other publications. To read more from Patrick, visit maddogmedia.wordpress.com.

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