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Heard On The Street

Eurobike: Final Cut

Zurich's airport played host to dozens of industry notables and quotables as they fled the frantic pace at Eurobike for that blessed flight home. Most looked as if they had just finished the Leadville 100 without the mud. Glazed eyes. Slumping shoulders. Trade show overload with more to come. Let Mark Pippen, Electra's newly named product manager for bicycles, speak for most in the industry when he says it was impossible to see it all at Eurobike. Impossible...There's a bubble inflating within the industry and two highly respected, well-plugged-in individuals are warning quietly that there will be a shake-out—sooner rather than later—in the electric bike biz. Too many options; too much stuff; too little standardization. And the frantic pace of sales in Europe is unlikely to last. So picking the winners and weeding out the losers is moving higher on the agenda...In America suppliers are hedging their bets on electric. Everyone will have an electric in their line. But no one thinks consumers, en masse, are going to peel off 1,500 bucks or more for quality e-bikes anytime soon. Particularly in this economy. And hoping for six-dollar gas isn't a strategy. Dealers, they acknowledge, may have it right in going slow. Sales training. Mechanic training. Computer diagnostics. Model depth. More SKUs. Warranty issues. Parts. And then there's the batteries...Who said print is dead? Lots of space peddlers from a host of new consumer print pubs were stalking the show like hungry hunters with a passel of squalling kids back in the cave. Call it digital overload, perhaps. —Marc Sani

Eurobike Takes on Early Spec Role for Some Brands



"I think if you take into consideration the first official meetings in Taiwan begin in December at Taichung Bike Week, I could imagine people meeting here to talk first"

—Stefan Reisinger,
Eurobike's project manager

For Chris Speyer, Raleigh's vice president of sales and marketing, Eurobike used to be the time to cruise the show floor to check out trendsetting ideas or scope competitors' product. But, as the product cycle continues to creep earlier in the calendar, the industry's largest trade show has taken on a new importance.

"It's a launching pad for 2012. It's really the first step in our 2012 process," said Speyer during a break from meetings with Shimano and SRAM to discuss Raleigh's line plan for the upcoming model year.

More are taking advantage of Eurobike's global reach—the show attracts trade visitors from 75 countries—to start early talks with OEMs.

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Kore Components Adds Cranksets to Its OE Product Line

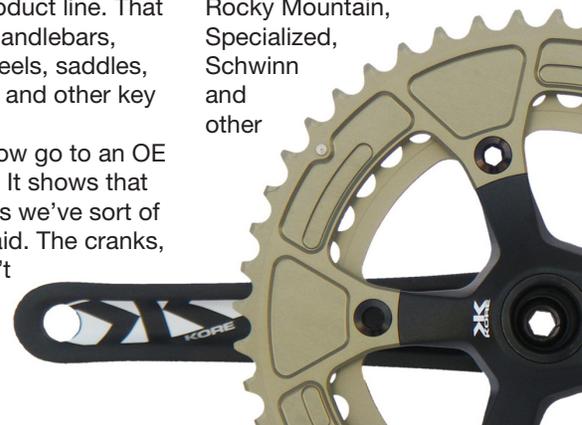
Lance Bohlen has his eyes on the market's future. And if he's reading the financial signals correctly, Kore's new line of 7075 cranks could mesh neatly with OEMs seeking to add value to their bikes without digging deep into their pockets.

Bohlen, Kore's general manager, said the cranks unveiled at Eurobike—both road, mountain, cyclocross

and single-speed—reflect a growing maturity in the company's product line. That line includes handlebars, seatposts, wheels, saddles, stems, brakes and other key items.

"We can now go to an OE with a full line. It shows that with the cranks we've sort of arrived," he said. The cranks, however, aren't another

"me too" item, said Bohlen who cut his product teeth at Rocky Mountain, Specialized, Schwinn and other



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Kore Addition

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companies during his more than 20 years in the industry.

Kore added the cranks to its

list of OE-available products as companies worldwide, reacting to a volatile economy,

look at ways to maintain key price points and keep consumers buying. That often requires spec'ing lower cost parts that deliver the performance—if not the brand name.

In the road bike category, for example, most companies are offering retailers carbon fiber bikes priced at retail in the \$1,700 to \$1,800 category.

To hit that price point, OEs are turning to suppliers like Kore with a recognizable

brand name but

which can offer lower prices on some parts like cranks.

As for shifting, Bohlen said Kore's chainrings shift smoothly with Shimano and SRAM drivetrains. Using 7075 aluminum in the crank arms also adds strength and slightly lowers weight while delivering the same

stiffness found in cranks made from 6061 aluminum.

The design firm Praxis Works, owned by Ardy Chen and David Earle, helped develop the cranks with Kore. And Bohlen has sent out samples to a number of manufacturers and predicts that they will get spec'd on a variety of bikes.

In general, a standard 3x9 mountain bike crank will come with 22-32-44-tooth chainrings. The company also has cranks for the fast-growing 2x9 category as well as for single speeders. The Kore group includes a setup for cyclocross with a 48-36-tooth combo, plus Kore road cranks for both compact (50/34) and traditional (53/39) drives.

Kore also plans to sell the cranksets in the aftermarket, Bohlen said. Retail prices for all model cranks will run about \$199. —Marc Sani

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Eurobike

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"I think if you take into consideration the first official meetings in Taiwan begin in December at Taichung Bike Week, I could imagine people meeting here to talk first," said Stefan Reisinger, Eurobike's project manager.

Other brands use the four-day trade event as a communications tool or to write orders, he added.

The 19th Eurobike trade fair Sept. 1-4 was as busy as ever, according to Reisinger. Although 200 fewer retailers turned up at the Demo Day this year due to heavy rain the night before, attendance at the first two-and-a-half days of the indoor show at the Messe Friedrichshafen was up over last year, he said.

E-bikes took center stage as many brands used the venue to make their debut into the category. Bosch, the German electrical engineering giant, introduced its new e-bike drive system, with the group spec'd on about 10 bikes including Cannondale, Scott, Merida and Centurion. Several brands also showed electric mountain bikes for the first time.

Another trend taking hold in Europe is 29ers. While big-wheeled bikes have seen significant growth in the U.S. market over the past several years, brands have not seen similar success thus far in Europe. But,

some say, European resistance is beginning to loosen.

"It's such a change from last year," said Carla Hukee, brand manager for Niner as she perused the bikes at the Ghost booth looking for 29ers. "From booth to booth you can see it. At Demo Day, people's 26-inch bikes were languishing but all the 29ers were out."

Trek, which pulled its Gary Fisher brand out of Europe last year, returned to the show with three 29ers under the new Gary Fisher Collection by Trek banner. Most European brands have not yet embraced 29ers, but a few like Corratec, KTM, Bergamont and Merida showed at least one model during Eurobike.

Aside from the product, much of the buzz on the show floor focused on Interbike as speculation swirled about a po-

tential date change to early August and a move out of Las Vegas to either Anaheim, California, or Salt Lake City, Utah, next year. Show director Andy Tompkins said Interbike officials have yet to shut the door on Las Vegas.

Eurobike's Reisinger said the Friedrichshafen show had no plans to follow with a date change of its own.

"Our customers are confident and we are confident that we have a good time for the industry. They are used to the time-frame. There is nothing to think about for next year," he said.

Eurobike 2011 dates have been set for Aug. 31 to Sept. 3. Organizers are considering whether to add a fifth day to the show in the future, Reisinger said.

—Nicole Formosa

