

# Sun Tomahawk

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When Easy Racers announced their high bottom bracket Javelin Long Wheelbase, everyone took notice. That includes Sun Bicycles. Sun has had a long-standing design partnership with Easy Racers and they wanted in on the Javelin action. This was a bit of a departure for these two companies. Most of the Easy Racers/Sun bikes are designed especially for the budget import bike company. However, the new Tomahawk is pretty much a straight up copy of the more expensive Javelin with a few concessions made for the sake of cost and ease of production.

Sun didn't choose a very politically-correct name for their new low-priced performance bike but with a price of below \$1000, I doubt that anyone will care very much. The Tomahawk has the same frame design and configuration as the Javelin but is made of less-expensive and heavier tubing and has a mesh seat and lower-end components. Like the Javelin SS, the Tomahawk comes with a 700C rear wheel and a 451 on the front. Both wheels have reliable Kenda Kwest tires. The drivetrain is mostly 24-speed SRAM SX-4. With one glaring exception, most of the Tomahawk's components worked quite well.

If you've seen many of Sun's other offerings you'll immediately recognize some of the Tomahawk's features. The seatback is the same as other Sun models and the idlers and SRAM components all look familiar. However, there are some new tweaks. The seatbase is all new and made of molded plastic covered with a thick and firm foam pad.

The Tomahawk's decal package also follows the general Sun theme. In my opinion, this is not a very good thing. I like black and silver as much as the next guy but the faux carbon fiber bits and blue accents just did not do it for me at all. I thought the overall effect looked a lot cheaper than the bike's \$999 price tag but others have disagreed with me on that one. Some other bits also cheapen the bike. If you're tall, you'll get some noise when riding in the lowest gear because the chain rubs the seat mount. Nothing that can't be fixed with a metal file and about five minutes work but annoying nonetheless. All of the Sun bike's have seats that rattle like mad when you're not sitting on them and this bike carries on that tradition. The Tomahawk also has a loose chain keeper for the cross-over idler that adds to the clattering symphony.

But by far the worst money-saving bit on the Tomahawk is the front brake. For some reason (I assume it was because of crank interference) Sun chose to use a U-Brake on the front of their new LWB. I haven't seen a U-Brake since the late eighties. Not only are they heavy and not terribly easy to adjust, they also don't work very well. Luckily the Tomahawk has a fairly powerful rear stopper and the LWB's get most of their power from the rear brake, but the front U-Brake's weak performance was unacceptable for a modern bike.

But it's not all doom and gloom for the Tomahawk. The actual ride of the bike is pretty darn good. Low speed handling is excellent and nearly as good as anything with a "real" Easy Racers badge on it. It's definitely a bike that beginners will have no issues with.

Most riders should also have no problem with the bike's ergonomics. Yes, the bottom bracket is higher than a Tour Easy or an EZ-Sport but it's not high enough to cause any issues. The seat is fairly upright (but more laid back than a lower bottom bracket bike) and the handlebars are very

adjustable and fall readily to hand.

The new seatbase is very comfortable and I thought it was a big improvement over the “standard” Sun base. Unfortunately, I could still feel the adjustment straps when climbing or pushing hard on the seatback. The Tomahawk rode well on rougher pavement due to the passive suspension of the frame and the larger wheels.

Easy Racers is positioning the Javelin as their performance bike. I think that the Tomahawk will also assume that role in the Sun line. It’s not a terribly light bike at 36 pounds on our scale (a whopping eight pounds heavier than the Javelin) but it does climb pretty well for the weight and rolls along nicely on the flats. I did notice the weight when accelerating but it wasn’t as bad as I was expecting. It should easily be the fastest bike that Sun makes and one of the fastest recumbents available for under a grand.

It definitely has a lot of bang for the buck but it was the Tomahawk’s handling that really impressed me the most. My father used to be a flight instructor. He always swore that the Cessna 152 was the best training aircraft ever made. Piper made a competitor with a tall T-tail that they, like Sun Bicycles, called Tomahawk. My dad always referred to it as the “Traumahawk” in reference to its poor handling. Thankfully, this bike definitely does not share any bad manners with its airborne namesake. This is a sweet handling machine.

I already mentioned that the bike is very user-friendly at low speeds. This means that it also doesn’t wander much on walking-pace steep climbs like some LWB’s do. The Tomahawk’s handling only improves with added speed. Blasting around the neighborhood and carving up the streets was a real blast on Sun’s budget speedster. The new LWB was also very solid and reassuring on the descents. The last LWB I had that handled this well was my Easy Racers Ti-Rush. Which really shouldn’t be a surprise. Gabriel Devault (formerly of Easy Racers) used Gardner Martin’s classic geometry as a base for the Javelin/Tomahawk’s design.

The vast majority of Sun’s aftermarket accessories will fit the Tomahawk so you should have no problem customizing it for whatever job you want. Fenders, seat bags and fairings are available right from any Sun dealer. If you’re really looking to go fast, a Javelin bodysock kit from Easy Racers should mount up with a bit of ingenuity. Previously I would have said that the limited choice in 451 tires would limit the Tomahawk’s versatility. With the addition of Kenda’s robust Kwest tire to the selection of high performance tires already available in this size, that’s no longer true.

So while I found the Tomahawk to be less than perfect, I do admit that it’s a good bike for the money. It definitely has some performance potential despite its weight and it has the potential to be a very versatile machine. I could also see it being a good bike for someone looking at a Javelin but not being sure about the money. Or perhaps for a Javelin owner who wants something to ride in bad weather or for commuting. Let’s just hope that Sun updates the graphics and ditches the U-Brake for 2008.

### **SUN TOMAHAWK**

Highs - Good performance, Excellent handling

Lows - Ancient and poor performing U-Brake, Needs some polishing around the edges

MSRP - \$999

More Info - <http://www.sunbicycles.com>

August 18th, 2007 in [Reviews](#) | tags: [lwb](#), [Sun Bicycles](#)