

The \$500 J & B EZ-1 Super Cruiser

by Tom Beuligmann
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Hello comfort seekers! The 2000 cycling season is about to reach full stride, and the new models are starting to flow into our shop. I just took delivery of my first two Easy Racers EZ-1 Super Cruisers. To tell the truth, I didn't expect to be too impressed with this bike because, well, its predecessor the old EZ didn't exactly sweep the market when it was introduced, and who even raises an eyebrow these days when another compact hits the market? What could anyone expect for a measly \$499 retail anyway? I would expect flexy brakes, bolt-on wheels, sloppy shifting, and worst of all, a too small, poorly designed seat.

This time I was caught off guard. The EZ-1 delivers NONE of those shortcomings! This little scoot felt like home at first sit. Designer Gardner Martin has done his homework on seat foam, and the mesh seat back adjusts for recline and even folds completely forward by pulling the pins from the seat supports! Just by folding the seat and bars down, you can stuff this bike under your pickup camper shell, or keep the seat from catching bugs while on top of the car. If you find that most recumbent seats are built for anorectic butts, the EZ-1 will please you. This seat is full-size. The seat-to-BB height is nearly the same as on the EZ and BikeE CT. The EZ-1 gives the impression of a more open hip position. This could be due to the deeper seat, allowing me to rest in my normal "slouch," which is my natural body position. The BikeE seat feels hard and skimpy by comparison, possibly forcing me to rotate my hips back to get my "bones" on the seat pad.

I had to drop everything else and take one for a test ride. I was impressed. As soon as the wheels were turning, I could tell the bike was under my control. The nice wide grip on the bars and the vertical seating position give confidence.... First timers, have no fear, the Super Cruiser lives up to its name. This 'bent has got to be in a class with BikeE for user-friendliness. Don't worry about cranking up some steam either, 'cause the brakes are stout. The levers and calipers are decent aluminum stuff, and brand name or not, they just flat work. The shifting is Shimano grip-shift and it works just fine. The real sweet spot for me though, was the handling. The EZ-1 carries over some of the traits of the Tour Easy, which is legendary for stability. Of course, due to its size, the One is even more nimble, and straight-line control requires very little attention.

Another category to consider, or course, is looks. Appearance comes in a distant second to function for me, but the Super Cruiser really looks good, despite using square 1" tubing top and bottom. It's painted a nice candy red, and the frame has a certain appeal, again carrying over from its big brother, the Tour Easy.

How much does it weigh? Who cares at this price point? But if you must know, it's around 39 pounds. Don't let that number put you off. You won't even think about the weight once you're aboard, 'cause the bike is just too much fun!

Construction quality is not in the category of BikeE or Rans, but neither is the price. The welds are adequate, and the seat hardware functions well.

Who needs this bike? How about your non-cyclist significant other, your parent, your child or you, for a short tripper. I would put a grandmother on this one with confidence. It's that easy to ride. This bike is what the Rans Tailwind could be in the handling department, had it used a lower crank height. Not that the Tailwind handles badly, but it undeniably takes a more skilled hand to hold a line. If you define performance in terms of speed only, and can't speak about your bikes without brand name dropping, look

elsewhere. If you ride for FUN, look no further than the \$499 Easy Racers designed EZ-1 SC.

■ SUMMARY

PROS

- ▲ Good Seat
- ▲ Great Easy Racers Handling
- ▲ Components that work
- ▲ Ground breaking price
- ▲ More efficient (derailleur) drivetrain

CONS

- ▼ Accessories availability — no fender, rack or mounts (yet).
- ▼ Heavy (about 39 pounds)
- ▼ Can't keep the kids off!
- ▼ Works best riders <6' tall
- ▼ Square hiten steel frame

■ A NEW BIKE!?

We first reviewed the Easy Racer EZ1 back in RCN#31. Back then, frames were welded in the old Chicken Coop shop by Fast Freddy himself and the bike had a 451/349 wheel combo. The licensing to J & B Imports, and move to Taiwan production has made the bike more affordable, more comfortable (new seat) and more user friendly (406/305 wheel combo).

■ HOW TO BUY ONE

These bikes will be getting more rare as the season wears on. Your best bet is to contact an RCN advertising dealer. J & B is a bike parts wholesaler who serves just about every bike shop in North America. Prices will vary between \$499-\$549. □



Gardner Martin and the EZ1

Tom Beuligmann runs a small bike shop in Mt. Carmel, Illinois called Tom's Bike Annex. Tom is a recumbent specialist and can be contacted at 618-262-4088 or through his website www.BikeRoute.com/BikeAnnex. Tom has experience adapting USPro-Drive Electric kits to recumbents.