

Different Strokes

REID URBAN X2

Thinking of ditching the car for a commuter bike? You'll want something cheap, reliable and reasonably light. Here's one that ticks the boxes

WITH MORE PEOPLE riding to work by bike and major city infrastructure now finally embracing cycling as a real way to reduce congestion, commuting is a great option ... but only with the right equipment. We can't talk to every scenario, but expect your ride to work to include some or all of the following: gravel, potholes, kids, lumpy footpaths, smartphone-lobotomised pedestrians, puddles, dogs, kerbs and grass, occasionally interspersed with smooth blacktop. And at your destination, a paintwork-chipping metal bike stand (without security cameras) to which you'll tether your frame and wheels with what you hope is a tamper-proof bike lock.

Unlikely then, that your precious carbon road bike will see commuter duty, even on its more compliant 25c tyres. Your mountain bike? It'll cruise over the rough stuff, but the added weight and rolling resistance of that wider rubber will make a relaxing ride a chore. No, what you want is a cheap and cheerful commuter.

We're trialling the new Urban X2 from Reid Cycles, a local company specialising in sharply priced bikes with quality componentry. We tested their Falco Elite road bike a couple of years back and were impressed by its sharp price, which included a full Shimano 105 groupset. Other aspects impressed less, in particular its rather ugly frame welds.

Which made the arrival of their new commuter bike a revelation, the semi-matt black frame featuring welds so perfect that it had us tapping the material to see if it was carbon. It's actually hydroformed alloy, with the welds ground smooth in the production process. More conventional welding can be found on the less-visible bottom

bracket and fork crowns, but the bike's clean lines, tasteful red detailing and understated branding had several in our office coming over for a look. These aesthetics are matched by the peace-of-mind of Reid's lifetime frame warranty. Other notable features are internal cabling through the top and down tubes, Tektro Novela 160mm mechanical disc brakes and light, accurate shifting via Shimano's Altus M370 groupset with a nine-speed 12-32t cassette up back and a hill-friendly triple on the front. Rounding things off is a highly durable, if slow rolling, Alex DC19 wheelset, shod with Kenda's bulletproof Kwick-Trax 32c commuting rubber.

Though the Urban X2 tips the scale at a respectable 11kg, initially it's a little sluggish to get up to speed. From there though, the compact frame is a swift, nimble companion. Part of that is down to its steep head tube angle and straight-blade fork, which give the bike very direct steering. That's ideal for the sharp manoeuvres required on a daily commute, but the trade-off is that it lacks a little stability if you're planning on riding hands-free into the sunset on a Friday afternoon.

The wheel-and-tyre combo is about strength and durability, more than a compliant ride and if you want to lean over in fast corners, you might want to consider more grippy rubber than the Kendas but for all other conditions, it's a good package.

In fact, those last two words nicely sum up the Reid Urban X2, especially when you consider it costs just \$549. A word of warning though: this is a bike which looks like it costs a lot more. That will attract plenty of attention, both good and bad. Be sure to invest in a strong cable lock. – *Bruce Ritchie*



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The Finer Points

<p>GROUPSET Shimano Altus M370</p> <p>WHEELS Alex DC19 double alloy</p> <p>WEIGHT 11kg</p> <p>PRICE \$549</p> <p>CONTACT reidcycles.com.au</p>	<p>Stop! Wet or muddy rims can spell trouble for rim brakes. Discs provide secure all-weather stopping. After bedding in, the Tektro 160mm brakes gave reliable, quiet braking.</p>	<p>Grab and Carry Aside from nice clean lines, the Urban X2's internal top-tube cabling means you can lift the bike up stairs without worrying about external cables scratching the paintwork.</p>	<p>Cargo, Anyone? Transporting a laptop or more documents than your backpack can handle? The X2 has mounting points both front and rear to affix racks and panniers.</p>	<p>Seamless Style Smooth welds that put some much more expensive alloy road bikes to shame means that Reid's new commuter imparts a genuine impression of quality.</p>	<p>Rough Roads Ahead The Kenda Kwick-Trax tyres feature an "Iron Cap" puncture-proof layer across the entire casing. The deep tread pattern gives good grip in very wet conditions.</p>
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