

by JILL SELL

On a bicycle built for you

Customized is the way serious riders opt to go



The wheel as art. Bicycle fanatic Brian Jenks reverently raised a bike wheel, holding it so that the light played on its spokes, and shadows gave

it depth. At Hubbub Custom Bicycles in Chester Township, a wheel isn't just a wheel. It's a hand-crafted sculpture and almost as important performance-wise to Jenks as legs.

Jenks, a bike technician, owns the 10-year-old custom bicycle shop with Diane Lees. Hubbub personalizes bike wheels and frames (think mainly titanium and titanium/carbon) built by several manufacturers.

"Our bikes reflect the personality of the rider, not the personality of the bike shop," says Lees, who was with City Bike in downtown Cleveland from 1989 to 1996. "We want to know what your goals are. When you ride, how you ride, where you work. If you have problems with your knees or back or have any health restrictions. But we also try to look into the future. Once they have a bike that really fits, some people start riding farther distances and more often."

Considering the average Hubbub bike costs \$5,000, Lees says cyclists who opt

The iXi bike is compact, low-maintenance and fully equipped. The lightweight aluminum frame comes apart in seconds. Survival gear is stashed right inside the frame — tire pump, repair kit and rain gear. Cost ranges from \$799 to \$1,290.

for custom are taking a "leap of faith."

Toss modesty out the door if you choose custom. Leg and hip pivoting-point measurements are taken while the customer wears unforgiving bicycle shorts. Height, inseam, arms, lower legs and shoulder measurements are all vital.

One-color paint choice is included in the price of the custom frame. But a zillion PPG colors are available, including prismatic colors that "change" and shimmy from different viewing angles. Pin striping? Flames? Etchings? No problem. Once a bike is designed, putting it together takes about six to 10 weeks. Specialized paint can add another four to six weeks.

Lees and Jenks hope to design about 60 bikes this year. The average age of their customers is between 50 and 55, but they have also designed a bike for a rider who was 84 years old. A customer may not be involved with as many sports at this point in his or her life but still wish to remain active, according to Lees.

A custom-built bike will fit perfectly, allowing for "comfort, efficiency and response-when-asked," says Lees. But she understands that some people would rather



Do you commute to work by bicycle, but need to carry important papers, files and maybe even a laptop? This bicycle accouterment, called the Briefcase by Arkel, is a soft-sided attache case with internal and external pockets to help organize a work life. The laptop sits in a padded pocket, suspended in the bag, designed to protect your computer even in a fall. Price is \$189.

buy a production bike "just like the one Lance Armstrong is riding."

Other high-quality bike shops sell some custom bikes and will fit the rider to the

bike: Century Cycles, Medina — Santana Team Scandium tandem, \$7,249; Eddy's Bike Shop, Stow — Specialized S-Works Tarmac SL, \$6,000; and Brecksville Velo Sport — LOOK 595, \$7,500.

The small but smart iXi Bike has a lightweight aluminum frame, folding pedals, detachable handlebars and stem. Instead of a greasy chain, it uses a quiet rubber belt. You carry it up the winding staircase to your loft condo and park it in a closet. Cost: \$1,290. For more information and to order: www.ixibike.com.

The MNO1-Extravaganza by Danish bike maker Biomega has a sophisticated Scandinavian design with a nod to ergonomics. The bike has a Rohloff 14-speed internal gear hub, a Pace RC31 carbon fork and twin Hope hydraulic disc brakes. Clearly First is the North American exclusive retailer, but the bikes can be ordered online. Cost: \$9,950. Information: www.clearlyfirst.com.

Hip little kids can ride the Jeep Jerry Can Tricycle, which has built-in electronic sounds and a Jeep "grille." The tough little trike also has a handlebar pad, extra-traction tires and rubberized pedals for more grip. Cost: \$69.99 for riders ages 2 to 5. ■

*** A rider is probably safer, more comfortable and more efficient if he or she has the proper clothing and gear. Besides, how often can you buy some really colorful, hip clothing and instantly look cool? And you have to admit — owning top-of-the-line accessories that make other bikers turn their heads when you pedal by is an ego trip.**

Bike gear that puts you at the hub of attention

* The Brooks B17 Champion Sprinter saddle starts life hard as a rock but softens to your body like a baseball mitt to a hand. The saddle commemorates the original 1925 model and features a leather shell, titanium frame and hand-hammered copper rivets. Only 1,925 limited-edition saddles were made, and each comes in a collector's box with certificate. Cost: \$370; www.brooksengland.com.

* Pearl Izumi's Women's Full Finger Gel-Lite Race Gloves absorb shock and are ventilated to keep you cool. Available in a fit and size designed for women's hands, these gloves make you feel as though you're one with the handlebars. You want to wear them all around town, not just while riding. Cost: \$35; www.pearlizumi.com.

* It's tough enough trying to hold onto a bag of groceries while riding. Most of us

wouldn't dream of taking a laptop computer to the park or office on our bikes. But the Briefcase by Arkel OverDesigns makes it possible. A laptop sits in a padded pocket in the attache case, protected even if the rider meets the sidewalk. The bag mounts like a touring bag and can be easily removed to carry into work. Cost: \$189; www.arkel-od.com.

* Hitch up The Lady Bug trailer by Burley Design to your bike and take your youngest for a ride while you exercise. The red and black trailer seats up to 100 pounds (two kids) and has tinted side windows and inside storage. Cost: \$475; www.burley.com.

* Nutty Butter Crisp. Wild Cherry Cheesecake. Black Forest Cake. Promax high-protein, low-carb bars are available in eight flavors and do not taste like compressed



The Burley Lady Bug Bike Child trailer allows the parent (or rider) to bring a child along in comfort, sitting in this aerodynamic and lightweight trailer. Suggested retail price is \$475.

straw. Buy them individually at 7-Eleven and health food stores or by the dozen at \$22.68; www.promaxbars.com.