



ENOUGH OF A GOOD THING

Unicycles have come a very long way from being circus props. The clowns who ride them today, especially off-road, are highly skilled athletes, but they still like to have a laugh. We chat to Donna Kisogloo, arguably South Africa's top female muncyclist, about her ride.

Words and photographs by Jazz Kuschke

THE FIRST impression of a unicycle is that it's fairly simple: one wheel, pedals and a saddle. For their smiley, happy, easy-going nature, you could be forgiven for thinking the same of the folk who ride them. Until you get up close, to the bike, not the rider (they'll come up to you and introduce themselves) you realise just how much technology and fine design has gone into it. Oh and to try ride it first time, good luck.

We're still just talking unicycling. Now take the whole deal

onto the rooty, switchbacked singletracks we call mountain-biking terrain and you have muncycling, a complete other level. Like mountain biking, it requires very specialised products, like Donna Kisogloo's QU-AX 26 inch.

EVERYTHING BUT A PRIMA DONNA

Donna, like many of the early adopters, started riding unicycles in her juggling days. "We are the carnies!" she laughs. "You know, it was just

another toy to buy. Every juggler has a very big bag of toys and a uni was kind of the next thing," she says. That was about eight years ago. Somewhere along the line she spent a year in New Zealand, which is where she was first introduced to muncycling and bought her first bike. "But I really started riding seriously when we moved to Cape Town about three years ago," she says.

Today, in-between film and advertising productions, she runs Oddwheel.co.za, an online unicycle shop and portal for like-

minded riders through which she and partner Alan Read are trying to grow the sport in South Africa.

"The uptake has been pretty slow, but it's growing. We're always riding Tokai, so we're kind of known there and do get some respect, but we're usually the ones moving out the way slower," says Donna.

By "riding Tokai" she doesn't mean cruising the jeep tracks; she tackles the singletrack, up and down. Donna runs us through what she rides. >



TYRE
Today I'm on a Kenda Blue Groove 26x2.5, but I do sometimes run the WTB Stout. Like the wheel, it's all big all-mountain tread. We always run tubes on the mountain. Some people do go tubeless but, because of the burping when you bounce so much, it's much less risky running tubes. Also we like to put a lot of slime in the tubes. We run quite low pressures to take the shock absorption.

WHEEL
This is a double-walled rim with an Isis hub. It has an all-mountain, DH look to it and is pretty bulletproof because it takes a lot of the pressure. It has a (fixed) QX-Series disc hub with alloy axle and 48 spokes.

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GLOVES

They're muni-specific, with the strap on the top, rather than the bottom. These are designed by a Canadian for a European climate, so they're too hot but they are still very useful. Apart from gloves, I definitely recommend shin pads because of the pedals; they're scars you just don't want to have.

FRAME

This is the QU-AX 26 inch. It's QU-AX's competitor to the better known Kris Holm range. It's made from 6061 aluminium and weighs 6,2 kilograms. It's taken the company a good many years of development to get their weight down to this.

I prefer the 26-inch because I find it more nimble than the 29-inch that some people run. The bigger the wheel, the more sluggish it becomes. The rolling of a 29er is obviously faster, but a 26er is better for technical trails.

SADDLE

I'm running a standard QU-AX Muni. It has a handle in the front for gripping when you're doing jumps and drops plus front and back bumpers to protect the fabric from wearing out too quickly when it drops on the ground. New riders often hang on to the handle from a mental point of view, but it's counterproductive. If you stick out your arms you're much more balanced. "Just act like a tree," I always say.

This is a scooped saddle. I actually prefer a flatter model because of my female bits. Unfortunately there aren't women-specific products because the sport's not big enough to cater for male/female dynamics.



DONNA KISOGLLO
 DATE OF BIRTH: 17 September 1977
 HEIGHT: 158 cm
 WEIGHT: 54 kg
 EDUCATION: Diploma in fashion design
 HOMETOWN: Born in Jozi, home is Cape Town
 WEBSITE: www.unicycle.co.za and www.oddwheel.co.za
 TWITTER: @OddwheelUni & @GirleeRyder (personal)

PEDALS

QX-Series lucent pedals with metal pins. They're made from plastic resin and do the job, but if I'm honest, the pins are a bit short.

CRANKS

These are standard QU-AX 6061 alloy cranks. I'm on 145 millimetres. Some people do run longer ones, like 155 and up to 170, but then the geometry starts to get interesting.



BRAKE

A Shimano Deore SM-BH59 hydraulic disc brake with a 160 rotor provides the stopping power. The brakes we use are obviously designed for bicycles, but because of where the brake is positioned (under the saddle), the grip is different so the end of the brake is tailored. This one is called a Starfighter, from the Chris Holm range. It's compatible with any brake and is very versatile and strong. 

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