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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION We weren't first with the name. Velo-Vision (note the hyphen) is a progressive HPV-friendly bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, who also make their own recumbents. Velo Vision magazine is working in friendly harmony with Velo-Vision in Germany. Contact them on www.velo-vision.de



Cover photograph: Ken Davison on his Trice, on the way to CycleVision in Holland. Photo: Peter Eland

Opposite: Steve Hall and his son Jordan test the Valleys Viper (see page 30) near the Neath Canal, South Wales. Photo: Steve Hall

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CYCLE SUMMER

The world has changed – in publishing terms at least. Before I'd even finished travelling home after CycleVision in Holland, at least three owners of digital cameras had posted pictures up on the internet. Within a day of my return my own report was up on www.velovision.co.uk. In a similar way, you could read online reports about Cyclefest and Spokesfest within hours, rather than the weeks or months you'd have to wait for a print magazine.

Given this, why do we still cover events in the paper *Velo Vision* magazine?

Partly, of course, for those who have no inclination, or facilities, to root around on the internet for their information. But mainly because the two media have different strengths. The instant gratification of an online picture gallery or report is fine. But there's also something to be said for the discipline of compressing the best information into just a few pages, giving the reader the good stuff in a nutshell – and usually with better picture quality than can be achieved on-screen.

Websites don't last, either. When you want an instant-access reference, paper still rules. Events are a magnet for new ideas and technology, and interesting people – so they deserve reporting in a less ephemeral form than on a website.

So we hope you enjoy reading about some of the things that have been happening around the world this summer. We certainly enjoyed being there.

Looking forwards, Issue 8 will mark the completion of our second year of publication. For next issue we're planning a few changes – so look out for a welcome surprise when it arrives in December, just in time for Christmas. On that subject, perhaps I could issue a seasonal reminder that a gift subscription to *Velo Vision* makes an ideal present for any cycling friend.

Peter Eland

THE BICYCLE BAND

Marco P.J. Borst, chairman of the Marching and Cycling Band HHK, explains how to make music on the move.



HOW IT STARTED

After tulips, cheese and wooden shoes, the Netherlands is most famous for its bicycles. The first thing young kids learn here after they start to walk is cycling.

With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that cycling bands in Holland are by no means a new thing. The Dutch Army had a Cyclists' Corps as early as 1849 – but it was several years later, in 1917, that the first Band of Cyclists was set up, followed in 1927 by the Fanfare Band of the Regiment of Cyclists. This group won some fame before being abolished in 1940. Today, the Dutch Army's Trumpet Corps of the Mounted Regiments upholds the tradition, but they don't perform on bicycles very often any more.

Then, in 1973, two marching bands independently came up with the idea of forming a cycling orchestra. The one we're concerned with is the 'Haarlems Harmonie Kapel (HHK)' in Haarlem. At the time it consisted of two divisions: a brass band and a marching band. When they performed together they formed the biggest marching band in Europe with 200 members. An impressive and magnificent sight and sound! Not all board members of the HHK were happy with performing on bicycles, but the persistence of the music association's secretary resulted in the formation of a cycling platoon.

The first performance was during the annual 'March of Musicians' in Haarlem in September 1973. The show was carried out on the members' own bicycles – some of them even had to borrow a bike. The success of this performance was enough to convince the other board members, and it was decided to purchase 41 bicycles and to officially establish the cycling platoon.

In 1989 the brass band division was disbanded, while the marching band and the cycling platoon continued. In 1987 both divisions merged to become the 'Marching and Cycling Band'. Finally in 1992 the name was officially changed to 'Marching and Cycling Band HHK', in which the abbreviation "HHK" reflects the once-glorious 'Haarlems Harmonie Kapel'.

The band has often performed in France, Belgium and Germany as well as, of course, The Netherlands. But we have also toured in England (1977), Switzerland (1981) and Sweden (1991, 1995 and 1998). Wherever we go the reaction from the crowd is always the same. Many stare at us as if we are magicians instead of musicians and I have to admit: it looks spectacular. Especially when we do a show performance: we cycle around in a square, rotating in two or even four circles of riders, or we form into two rows which cycle 'through' each other in a breathtaking crossing in the middle! But really, it looks more difficult than it actually is.

RIGHT: the sousaphone is the band's largest wind instrument - and quite a handful in a headwind!

LEFT TOP: Cornets are carried in one hand - but with all the weight on the little finger. Try that for four hours!

LEFT: The percussion section have their instruments mounted to the bicycles - but need both hands free, so steer with their wrists.



PLAYING AND CYCLING

Until not long ago new members didn't receive any training in playing an instrument on a bicycle. If you were able to play an instrument and able to ride a bicycle we assumed that the combination of the two was not difficult, so we gave new members a bicycle just a couple of minutes before their first performance. Although we know it can still be done this way, since it led to hardly any accidents, we now make sure that new members experience playing their instrument on a bicycle well before taking part in performances.

Playing while riding a bicycle has its specific problems and solutions for every type of instrument. Members who play the cornet (a short version of a trumpet) have the lightest instrument and they are therefore left to fend for themselves. They have a standard bicycle with no special adaptations and have to carry their instrument in their right hand with the entire weight of the instrument pressing on their little finger... it is not an extremely heavy instrument, but after a parade of four hours it is a relief to put the cornet back in its suitcase.

For the somewhat heavier wind instruments like French horns, baritones and piston trombones, special home-made braces carry the weight. These are carried around the shoulders and have supports extending from the musician's chest, on which the instrument rests. The largest and most impressive wind instrument is the sousaphone. Not too difficult to play on a bicycle as it normally rests on the shoulder – but the guys who play the sousaphones really have a hard time when it is a bit stormy. Imagine coming around the corner right into the wind with that big wind-catching instrument...

While none of the wind instruments require special adaptations on the bicycles (all musicians in this section play with their right hand and steer with their left hand) the story is a bit different for the percussion section. Percussionists need both hands to play, so their bicycles have been specially configured. First of all brackets to carry the drums are mounted in front of the handlebars. The percussionists have their wrists in braces on the bars, so they basically steer with their arms and are able to play the drums with both hands at the same time.

Cymbals are mounted on the handlebar, and can therefore be played with one hand only. Last but not least, the bass drums are held in a large metal carrier in front of the handlebars. I can assure you: riding the bass drum bike really is an adventure, since the bicycle is out of balance with the weight of the bass drum well above and in front of the front wheel. Furthermore, you have hardly any view of where you're going, because of the big drum in front of you.

Playing in a cycling band is one thing, but organising the enterprise is perhaps an even tougher task. First we have a logistics problem: we need the 41 bicycles everywhere we are invited. Between 1973 and 1981 we rented a small lorry for every performance. Members loaded the lorry before we left, and had to take all the bikes off the lorry after we returned. A time-consuming job and not always a pleasure. Especially not when you come back from a performance in France, and just want to go home after the long journey. In 1981 the HHK board decided to buy a second-hand Mercedes lorry. Its interior was converted to carry the 41 bicycles in two levels, and also had space for all of the percussion instruments and the uniforms.

The Mercedes was a welcome addition to the band. It was not only used for the transportation of the bikes but it became the permanent storage facility as well. That really made a big difference.

BIKE TO THE FUTURE

In 1998 we launched 'Bike to the Future', a project meant to assure the band's long-term prospects. Both the lorry and the bicycles needed to be replaced, and an awful lot of money was needed. Contributions from the town of Haarlem, several sponsors and various fund-raising efforts (like selling flower bulbs and candy) eventually brought in enough money for the replacement of our rolling equipment. The lorry was replaced in 1999. A group of members painted the new one in the blue and white band colours, and on completion they officially handed it over to me after almost two weeks of hard work in their evening free time.

The second phase of 'Bike to the Future' comprised the replacement of the original 41 bicycles from 1973. The old bikes looked a bit like folding bikes with their small wheels, although they could not be folded. We looked around at the annual

bicycle fair (the FietsRAI) in Amsterdam to find the right bicycle. This was not easy. We had certain minimum requirements: it should be easy to mount the drums (so needed enough space between the wheel and the handlebar), it should be a one-size-fits-all and easy-to-step-on type of bicycle and (of course) it should be available with back-peddalling brakes – our riders don't have enough hands for any other sort!

After looking at many different types we came back to the one we first saw: the Batavus Personal Bike. This was the only bicycle that met all those requirements. At our request the manufacturer delivered them without lights (these would have been broken after a couple of times loading and unloading), painted in dark blue and with the band's logo printed on the frame. After delivery of the brand new bikes a couple of mechanically-inclined members mounted the supports for drums, bass drums and cymbals on the handlebars. And since the new bikes were a bit larger than the old ones they reconfigured the interior of the lorry as well.

One week later we carried out our first performance on the Personal Bikes. It turned out that it

was a bit easier to keep your balance because of the larger wheels. The old bicycles were given to a childcare project in Poland.

HIRE THE BAND!

We do about 20 performances a year and most of them are on the bicycles. Highlights have included our musical accompaniment of the start of the Tour de France in Lille (1994), several TV shows in France and The Netherlands, our participation in a Swedish music festival and an impressive bicycle event in the centre of Paris (leading 5,000 cyclists) in June 2001.

We are available for parades and show performances wherever we are wanted. Unfortunately we are a little bit more expensive than a regular marching band but the extra costs are all in the transportation of the bicycles.

Do you need a special attraction at your bicycle event, parade or tattoo? Check our website for more information at www.macband.nl, e-mail me at chairman@macband.nl, or write us at P.O. Box 642, 2003 RP Haarlem, The Netherlands

Marco P.J. Borst



Originally all our wind instruments were piston instruments with the cup in front. We did not have any slide trombones. But since we not only perform on bicycles, but do marching performances as well, the slide trombone was introduced into the orchestra. The members who played these instruments were not very happy because 75% of our performances are done on the bikes. But it didn't take long for these guys to come up with creative solutions. Arie in 't Veld (29), one of our slide trombone players, explains:

"After playing the cornet for three years, I thought it would be a challenge to play the slide trombone. A challenge it certainly was! Not only the difference between the valves of the cornet and the slide of the trombone, but riding the bike with this instrument gave me the biggest challenge. First we tried using a tandem but that was not the best solution. The driver was not able to play an instrument because, due to the weight of two people, steering was too difficult with only one hand.

After a lot of thinking our mechanical guy assembled a side car. This was the best solution so far. I could sit in the side car, and because the side car was a lot more stable than the tandem, the cyclist doing the steering could also play an instrument. After a few tests we found out the hard way that the driver should be heavier than the trombone player - otherwise the vehicle kept running into the ditch at the side of the road due to the weight difference!

After a few months new problems came up. Because in the side car I did not have to ride the bike, I sat still during the entire parade. This could easily be for about four hours, so when it was raining or the temperature was low, you can imagine that I would get pretty cold.

And when two years ago the band bought new bikes our goal was to get every player on his own bike. And the sidecar did not fit the new bikes anyway, so we had to look for another solution.

The problem came up in a conversation with our instrument supplier. They said they would also look for a solution, and they did. Because they also adapt instruments for physical handicapped people, they knew in which direction to think. They created what we call the 'Slide Trombone Brace'. With this brace I can carry the trombone on my shoulders so I can steer with one hand and slide with the other. It was something I had to practice for some time, but now I'm used to it and it's the best solution ever. Now I can ride the bike and play the slide trombone at the same time. I think there are not a lot of people in the world who can say that!"

Hannie Habich (42), one of our percussionists, tells about her experiences in the cycling platoon:

"I had been playing the drum for 14 years in another marching band in Haarlem when I decided to take a look at the Marching and Cycling Band HHK. Of course I knew

they performed on bicycles, but I did not know how it worked. When I first saw it I thought I could never do it myself, but I went ahead and after a couple of months there was my first cycling performance: in Amsterdam with lots of tram rails and way too many bridges!

By amazing good fortune it went well, but people had to pull me over the last couple of bridges as I was exhausted. I thought it couldn't be worse than that so I stayed with the Marching and Cycling Band HHK and quit the other marching band after two years. I prefer the cycling performances over the marches because the bike carries the weight of the drum.

Playing in a cycling band is absolutely great and really not more difficult than marching. And how many people can say that they rode on a bike in a cycling band through the centre of Paris on a sunny Sunday afternoon without having to fight with cars? I can!"

