

Better Off Red

Ride with no regrets on the Spot Acme Open



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

■ Aluminum frame with a carbon fork, made in Taiwan ■ RED! Gates Carbon Drive belt + Shimano Alfine 11-speed internally geared hub = no chainmarks and less maintenance ■ Reflective sidewalls on the tires for extra visibility ■ House-brand saddle is comfortable, even for longer missions

PRICE \$2,300
WEIGHT 24.9 lb. (S)

“I don’t ride anymore because of you.”

My boyfriend at the time, Steve, aired this grievance in response to my offhand comment that he hadn’t touched his bike in a while. I was stunned. How could I have ruined the thing I loved most, for the person I loved most?

“You and your friends just want to go fast all the time,” he said, shrugging. “You took the fun out of it.”

In the four years we were together,

Steve and I had grown into different people, and in no other way did this show more than how different we had become as bike riders. Light-hearted and uncomplicated, Steve usually just wanted to cruise and get some fresh air. “Let’s take the townies and go ride the creek path,” he’d suggest on a Saturday afternoon.

I’d frown and wrinkle my nose, and say, “I want to get a workout in.” I’d usually win that tug-of-war, and an hour later we’d be heading up Flagstaff Mountain or Lee Hill

Road on our road bikes, my Garmin ticking off numbers while the two of us ground our way uphill in silence.

Purportedly, we broke up because I moved across the country for work, and not because we were incompatible on bikes. We both said we were at peace with our split; a mutual decision based on grown-up considerations. Still, when I saw the Spot Acme Open for the first time this winter, with its flat handlebar, glittery silver step-through frame, and bright-red belt drive, it cracked my ►

Spot Acme

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► heart wide open even as it made me smile. It made me think of him.

The bike would have suited us both. With its lightweight aluminum frame, hydraulic disc brakes, and stout carbon fork with a tapered steerer tube, the Acme was built for cruising the town—but it was built to do it fast. It put me in a surprisingly aggressive riding position that made riding it feel more similar to being on an endurance road bike than on any cruiser I've ridden.

Its speedy nature makes the Acme Open a delight to ride—fast is fun, after all. One Sunday morning, I decided to forgo my usual weekend ride, donned jeans and a ski jacket, and went on a 10-mile bagel-and-coffee mission on the Acme instead. At 24.9 pounds, this relatively light townie took the chore out of punchy rollers, and the lowest gear within its 11-speed range was easy enough to allow me to sit, spin, and let the bike do the work. On the fast descents, it was stable, so I could sit up, take a hand off the bar, and rip alongside traffic.

I cursed the snow gods when the roads were too icy to ride to work, because I'd been having so much fun on the Acme that I'd started looking forward to my commute when I went to bed at night. When I did get to ride again, I loved pulling up to a stoplight and being able to stand casually over the low top tube, feet flat on the ground, waiting patiently for the light to turn. The clean, grease-free Gates Carbon Drive belt and Shimano internally geared hub—no chain, no derailleur—meant I could pedal in my favorite knee-high boots without having to watch out for my drivetrain. *Who, me, worry about grease marks?* (It also requires less maintenance than a chain and cassette.) And when I pulled up to the office or the bar on the Acme, the bike and its eye-catching red accents lent a feeling akin to wearing bright-red lipstick: Look at me.

Then there's this, which probably no one else will appreciate but I'm going to say anyway because I can't extricate it from my feelings about this bike: When I am out on some errand I invented just to ride the Acme, I often think, *Steve would have liked this ride*—a roll just to pick up orange juice, or to get a bagel and read magazines. Sometimes I want to call him and tell him that I get it now, but maybe it's not even the bike at all, maybe it's me who is different these days. Whichever it is, I want to reach out and say, "Hey. How about that creek-path ride?"—*Gloria Liu*