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# NCM Venice: Initial Thoughts & Review

Going car-free is fine and dandy but if you depend on your 'fun bike' to do the domestic stuff you are likely to be unlucky when you have broken it or flattened the battery having fun. Well, I've done it. I said I was looking to buy a second ebike for shopping and I have so here is a short review of it.

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## The Search

*A seller's market*

After a lot of thought and eBay searches, I have found a very low mileage one-year-old NCM Venice (146 miles to be precise) which was living in a heated and carpeted (I jest not) garage in Lancashire. I have named him Alphonzo, and he is in for a somewhat tougher life than he has become accustomed to.

Second-hand eBikes are like gold dust at the moment. Although there were a couple of other candidates for a similar price (£900), the Venice has a battery which can also be used as a spare on my main bike (an NCM Moscow Plus) for longer trips and that really is a huge bonus. The suspension forks and seat post were also a bonus compared to the other available bikes as they did not have them.

## Overview

The NCM Venice is a relatively low spec ebike with several components being cheaper than those on my main bike (or on the Venice Plus) but, for shopping purposes, all should hopefully be good. It is unlikely that it will ever go further than the next town in any direction so that equates to less than 35 miles.

Early days but I thought I'd document my initial views having done a few short test rides over the weekend (about 30 miles in total) using my Moscow Plus as a comparison.

I'm not planning on spending a lot to get it into shape for shopping, I've got some old panniers lying around and will add a cheap basket and saddlebag (already ordered from eBay), that should give me plenty of carrying capacity for my shopping as I have the trailer for my Moscow for the occasional bulky shopping trip (cereal and toilet rolls seem to be the hardest everyday things to transport by bike).

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### *A good-looking bike*

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### **A Review**

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#### *Good to ride?*

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The build quality appears to be very good (well, once I'd tightened by cranks which were not as tight as they should be) and it is a good-looking bike in a Dutch-style with a very leisurely frame geometry, this is not a racing bike and has clearly been designed for city use with a comfortable upright riding position. The stem and handlebars are easily adjusted to personal fit without any tools (clever) and should be fine for anyone other than a giant. There is not a lot of straight bar, so mounting points for phones etc are very limited but this does not worry me as I will be fitting a cheap top-tube bag like the one on my Moscow Plus.

The Suntour NEX forks are very much entry-level, they are effective at damping the road surface but are not the toughest so don't go doing jumps or they will fail very quickly (probably the first time), for a town or city bike they should be adequate so this is not a criticism.

The bike comes with an alloy rear rack which is absolutely rock solid and forms an ideal base for whatever your bag or pannier preferences may be. It also has an integrated LED rear light / reflector which is powered by 2 AAA batteries and is plenty bright enough for urban use. On the subject of lights, there is a front light which runs off the main battery, it is quite a good light and more than adequate for spotting potholes etc in time but if you are going through very dark areas (my local cycle-path goes through dense woods) you may want to add something with a wider beam. I will be using my existing lightbar which attaches via Klickfix (I have a spare adapter) and is easily transferred between bikes in seconds. It can melt a motorist's eyeballs at 100m if they anger me.

I was pleasantly surprised by the tyres, Schwalbe ebike-ready Marathons, a very good tyre for an entry-level bike. Not the grippiest but sturdy and extremely hard-wearing, these should manage town roads and cycle paths with no problem and at 1.5" wide there is good comfort too.

The bike has metal mudguards on both front and rear, these are very sturdy and effective but do rattle a bit.

The Venice comes with leather-clad ergo grips (they look like Velo to me), some people swear by their comfort but I swear at their lack of grip in the wet. I hate these so much that I removed them with a Stanley knife to destroy them forever and put some grippy BMX ones on instead. To me, this is safety over comfort but that is my personal choice. The saddle is of a similar type, wide and squishy. Personally, I don't find them comfortable on a long ride but that is of little relevance on a shopping bike so it can stay for the time being until I come across a cheap used Brooks leather one (that may be a while). The saddle sits on a Promax suspension seat post which seems to do a good job of cushioning the larger bumps.

Only seven gears on this bike so I was concerned about hills (I live at the top of a 300ft climb). My concerns were totally unfounded, I can get up it in 3rd gear on assist level 4 of 6 or in 2nd gear at assist level 3 of 6 so there is still plenty of leeway. The derailleur is entry-level Shimano and is one of the components which is upgraded on the 'Plus' model but the changes are crisp and accurate. The gears are actually quite evenly spaced, top gear is not that quick but again it is a town bike and not a racer.

What goes up must come down, so what about the brakes on my 300ft steep descent? Unlike the Plus model, this bike only has cable disc brakes rather than hydraulic. They lack that instant bite as a consequence but they do the job and stop the bike effectively (from my test ride peak of 35mph) after what feels like a short lag and are adequate.

Range obviously depends on too many factors to state a precise number but my one charge to date suggests 60 miles per Kw/h (exactly in line with the Moscow Plus) so 40 miles should not be a problem on a moderate assist level (we don't have throttles in the UK). The LCD display shows distance, speed and battery level but not voltage (that is one of the upgrades on the Plus), personally I miss that as it is a far more accurate indicator of what you have left assuming that you understand how it works.

The charger is a mere 2A (compared to 3A on the Plus models), it has no fan so is nice and quiet but it will take quite some time to fully charge the battery (allow 4 hours). This really is a quick (15-minute project) and looks smart when complete.

## Conclusion

I would say that I can't comment on reliability yet, but electronically this bike is the same as my Moscow Plus which I've covered over 3,000 miles on. I'm pretty confident in this area.

So in summary, is this bike any good? Yes, I believe I have made a good purchase, it will be a great town and shopping bike. I can also use it for my occasional commute too (technically about 9 miles each way to my nearest office but in reality I usually work from home or do a longer train trip). If I were buying new, I'd probably pay the extra for the Plus and gain the additional range and better brakes, forks etc but overall I am confident that Alphonzo and I will become good friends for the long haul.