



Volt Pulse

We try the £1299 Pulse, an electric-assist hybrid from London-based Volt Bikes. With a mid-range price and striking looks, how does it perform?

Just a stone's throw from London Bridge, the Electric Bike Store is well placed to capitalise on both the proximity of bonus-laden bankers and on the boom in London commuter cyclists on all sorts of budgets. Alongside shop sales, customers can also hire electric bikes, or purchase by mail order. The cycles on sale all come from Volt Bikes, the related distribution company, who supply a network of (currently) seven dealers across the UK selling the Volt range.

Alongside the Pulse hybrid-type bike tested here there's a folding bike, a step-through frame version, a mountain bike and a 'classic style' model which looks rather like the Pulse but with straight tubes and no suspension forks. Prices currently run from £999 to £1299 depending on model, with the Pulse at the top

of that range. All have two year warranties, including the battery which they say "should last for 1000 full charge/discharge cycles". The bikes are certified to conform to the EN 15194 standard by an independent testing group, SGS. Purchasers may also be reassured to note that spare batteries (36V, 10 Ah) cost an unusually reasonable £180, and spare chargers are affordable too at £35.

Volt Bikes kindly dropped off a Pulse for us to review as part of a road trip to visit their northern dealers, then collected it again a few weeks later.

First impressions are of a smartly turned out bike: the red highlights against the mainly black colour scheme work well, and the curves of the frame give it a dynamic appearance. The battery pack slides neatly down behind the seat tube



ABOVE: Frame detailing and strong graphics give the Pulse a striking appearance.

LEFT: Neatly bundled cables.

BELOW: The LCD display gives a clear view of parameters including speed, distance, battery status and assist level.





onto a box containing the control electronics, and the motor is in the rear wheel. This is a 250W Bafang geared, brushless model, a popular choice and with a reliable reputation. Also fitted to the rear wheel is the 8-speed derailleur gearing system, a mid-range Shimano model.

On the handlebars is an LCD display unit which displays speed, trip and overall distance as well as providing the controls for power level including, commendably, a setting for 'off', so that you don't have to switch the whole system off if you want to cut the power temporarily. There's a backlight for night use. A thumb throttle is also fitted, alongside a separate push-button control for the LED lights front and rear.

On the road, the Volt pulls away well with the characteristic low Bafang buzz, audible but not objectionable. You have the choice of letting the electric assist kick in automatically half a pedal stroke or so after you start pedalling, or at any time you can over-ride that with the throttle, or cut the power by

squeezing either brake lever. It coped well with most hills, and only the steepest required some modest pedal assistance to keep the speed up.

Overall, the Volt was an easy bike to use. As electric bikes go it's not heavy (around 20 kg) and this helps make it feel lively in stop-go traffic. With the power off it's still very much usable.

As a 'throttle/rotation' mode bike it's biased perhaps towards those who want the option at least of the bike doing all the work, although the gearing is fine for those who prefer to pedal as well for fitness and winter warmth.

At £1299 the Pulse is at the mid range of UK prices, and up against some strong competitors. But it's fairly light, has a good level of components, affordable spares, and a two year warranty. Well worth adding to any shortlist, especially if you're in striking distance of one of the Volt dealers.

Peter Eland

Volt Bikes: see www.voltbikes.co.uk
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