

Supernova E3 Pro Dynamo Light

by Eric McKeegan

My only previous experience with dynamo lighting involved a not-so-well-designed, weak incandescent light, after which I went back to using mountain bike lights on my commute. Supernova's E3 Pro is an entirely different story. Made in Germany from lots of metal, it is obvious this light is meant to last for a long time.

Industrial design student Marcus Wallmeyer started Supernova in 1997. Wallmeyer needed better lights to train for mountain bike racing and created one of the first dual-beam HID lights for bicycle use. In 2004, LED dynamo lighting entered the line-up, and Supernova continues to offer both dynamo and battery-powered lights for both road and off-road use.

My test unit shipped with the Terraflux lens, which is designed to keep most of the light on the road and out of oncoming drivers' eyes (as required by German law). The beam pattern is perfect: the odd-looking lens directs light far down the road for a very even, wide beam pattern. No concentric circles, no weird dim spot, just a nice neutral light that made the most of its claimed 305 lumens. Another lens is available, the Iris, that gives a more standard beam pattern and 70 more lumens.

The taillight is a simple three LED affair. The LEDs are very bright when viewed straight on, but are less bright from an angle or from the side. This is my only complaint. I always supplemented the taillight with a battery-operated light in blinking mode.

Installation takes some time and a wire strip-

per, crimper, and something to heat the shrink-wrap, but the finished product is custom-fit to each bike, looks great, and should last for years of all-weather use. The headlight is available in an O-ring style bar mount or various bolt-on style mounts. The taillight is available for seatpost or rack mounting. I managed to bolt the seatpost mount light to a rack mount braze-on.

A single button on the back of the headlight turns the light on and off, and a capacitor stores enough energy to run the lights at reduced brightness for a few minutes when stopped. And that's it. No charging or changing batteries, no chance getting caught in the dark running out of juice, just steady bright light at any speed over a few miles an hour.

This isn't a cheap investment at around \$200 for the headlight and another \$60-\$80 for the taillight, especially if you don't already have a dynamo hub. I used a Shimano Alfine hub (\$120); other options are available from \$40 to \$300 (plus a wheel build). But for a serious commuter that wants the grab-and-go convenience of a self-contained system, this is a very attractive package. And it is a one-time investment—no need to replace batteries or bulbs in the future. As someone who has spent more time than I'd like to admit riding home with fingers crossed because I forgot to charge my lights, I'm sold on this system. www.supernova-lights.com



PHOTOS: JUSTIN STEINER