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Left: Mike Flanigan demonstrates how to TIG weld a chainstay bridge during a weeklong framebuilding course. Read more on page 48. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

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URBAN VELO

Issue #29 January 2012



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On the cover: The 2011 L'Eroica, a classic bike race in Tuscany. Read more about the event on page 22. Photo by Antonio Bigarini

Co-conspirators: Takuya Sakamoto, Hugo Yoshikawa, Colin O'Brien, Krista Carlson and Roger Lootine

Urban Velo, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224

Urban Velo is a reflection of the cycling culture in current day cities. Our readers are encouraged to contribute their words and art.

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Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio




Where we call home in the northern hemisphere, we are more or less in the midst of the cycling off-season. Even the most die-hard commuter inevitably puts in fewer miles come the colder, darker months. Now is a good time as ever to start making plans for the next year. Let your bicycle take you places you've never been.

Nearly every city has less populated roads within a long day's ride, some more than others. We're blessed to have seemingly endless rolling hills through progressively less populated suburbs—choose the right roads, and you can find farmland within an hour. If you're looking to sleep under the stars we have direct access to the longest continuous trail system in the country connecting some 325 miles between Pittsburgh and Wash-

ington DC. Serious woodland and miles upon miles of crisscrossing forest roads are but a day trip in a car away.

I spent my teenage years on my mountain bike, getting lost progressively further and further from home until I moved into the city and found an abundance of new-to-me neighborhoods to explore. A decade later and I feel like I've barely started, and not really for lack of riding.

Get out and explore, I encourage you to make plans to get lost. Diverge from your everyday route, round up a gullible friend and find out what it's like to bonk far from home. If it's the neighborhood over the hill you've not been through or the far off tour you've always wanted to tackle, now is the time to let your imagination go wild, and have enough time to make it happen. 

We want your words. Send your editorial contributions to brad@urbanvelo.org



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Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero




Money. It changes everything. It can't buy you love. It's the root of all evil. It doesn't grow on trees. And a fool and his money... Well, we all know how that goes.

When it comes to bikes, unless you're a sponsored pro or a member of the vilified 1%, money is seldom no object. It determines not only how many bikes you can own, but in many ways it factors in to how well they perform, how good they look and how long they're likely to last.

Now of course you and I both know that a great cyclist can throw a leg over a \$25 thrift store find and ride the wheels off the damn thing. Unfortunately, not all of us are so athletically gifted, and so we often turn our attention to equipment, hoping it will give us a slight advantage. After

all, lightweight wheels really do help you climb, quality drivetrain components do help you ride faster, and comfortable saddles help you ride longer. But at the end of the day, most of us are still middle of the pack riders.

I believe that it takes a wise person to recognize this inherent truth and to spend their money accordingly. Though it's not to say that there's anything wrong with appreciating the finer things in life. If you've saved your pennies and think that a custom frame is going to make your cycling experience that much better, I say, "Go for it!"

Because if you consider all the useless, harmful and outright ridiculous things you could be spending your money on, investing in something that brings you health and happiness really is money well spent. 

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photo: Carson Eklund



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Stoned Tone!

LOCATION: New York City, NY

OCCUPATION: Bike Messenger, Alleycat Organizer

Photo by Takuya Sakamoto, www.newyorkbikedreams.com

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in Brooklyn, but I spend 85% of my time riding in Manhattan, from Wall Street to Dyckman. There's so much energy breathing off these evil NYC streets that you have to stay on point with everything... even dodging cops trying to get you for red lights.

What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

My favorite city to ride in is the Bronx. It's filled with history, culture, parks, museums, and I can't forget hip hop.

Why do you love riding in the city?

There's no other place to ride with so much going on all at the same time. Manhattan is crazy. The Bronx is wild. Queens is the "Boulevards Of Death." Brooklyn is "hip." Staten Island is just hilly!

Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city...

Listen to the Fake Money track, "Movin" by Stoned Tone, Sunny D, and Fake Money.

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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Bogdan Neagu (aka Soze)

LOCATION: Bucharest, Romania

OCCUPATION: Designer

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in Bucharest, Romania. Cycling here is kind of dangerous, especially if you want to go fast, as motorists are not used to driving alongside us. Cycling infrastructure is almost nonexistent, there are lots of stray dogs on the streets but there is also a positive aspect—the asphalt quality on the main roads is very good.

What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

I've cycled in Bucharest, Chicago (USA), Newcastle (UK) and Paris (France). Apart from having to use the wrong side of the road, cycling in Newcastle upon Tyne was the best ever. Enough infrastructure, cycling lanes not at all busy, drivers extremely careful, lots of parks and lots of flowers along the roads. Not to mention the weather, which was ten times better than I expected—not too rainy, not too dry, not too cold, not too hot. Plus, it is only an hour away from the seaside.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love riding in the city because it makes me some kind of superhero. Average speed for motorists in Bucharest is probably below 15 km/h. Going twice as fast, on a vehicle worth 100 times less than a car, while sculpting my body is really something.

Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city... Poetry anyone?

I wish I will live to see 2000 people on a critical mass ride in Bucharest.



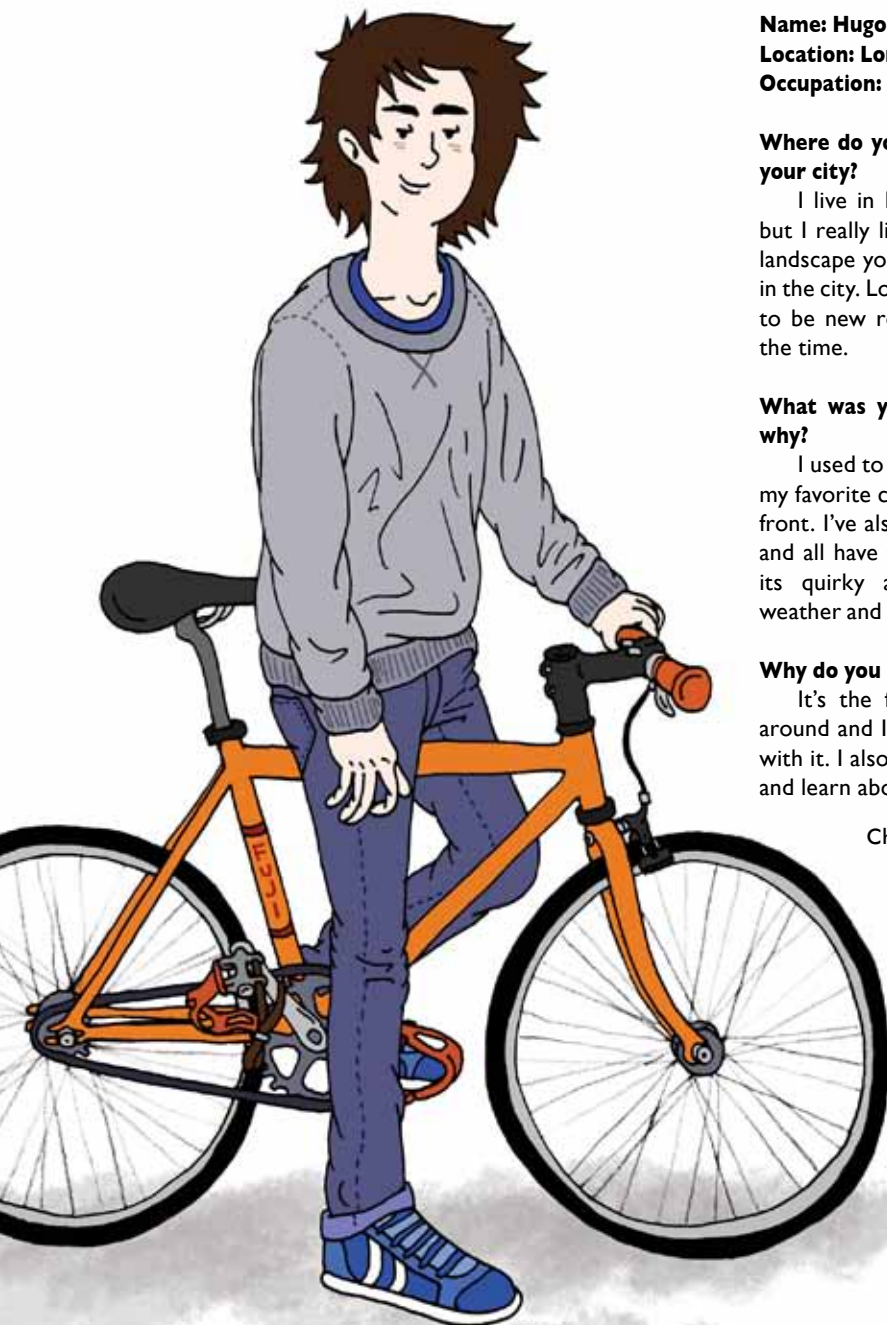
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I ♥ riding in the city



Name: Hugo Yoshikawa

Location: London, UK

Occupation: Illustrator

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in London, it tends to rain a fair bit but I really like the mix of the urban and leafy landscape you get depending on where you are in the city. London is such a big city, there seems to be new routes to discover pretty much all the time.

What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

I used to work as a courier in London so it's my favorite city to ride from knowing it back to front. I've also lived in Tokyo, Paris and Madrid and all have their own advantages; Tokyo with its quirky alleyways, Madrid has awesome weather and Paris for its pretty urban sceneries.

Why do you love riding in the city?

It's the fastest and most fun way to get around and I just love the freedom that comes with it. I also think it's the best way to discover and learn about cities.

Check out www.luckyriverstudio.com

Illustration by Hugo Yoshikawa

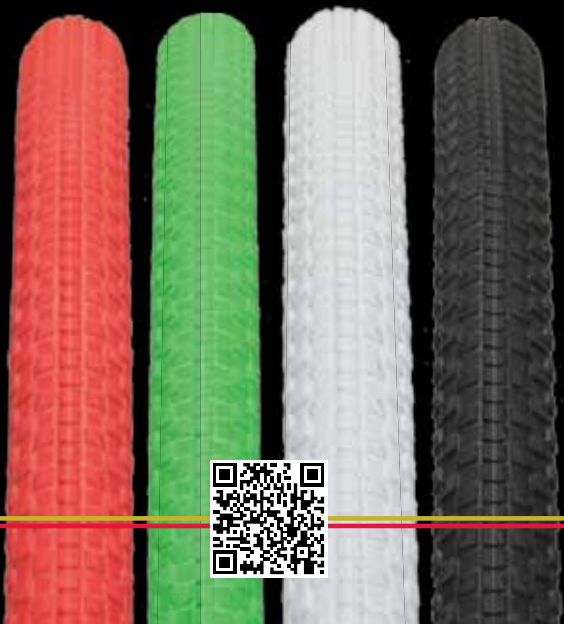
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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Andy Noor Isnaini

LOCATION: Jakarta, Indonesia

OCCUPATION: Government Officer

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in Jakarta, Indonesia where the traffic is terrifying. Traffic jams are everywhere and all the time, especially during rush hour. There are no bike lanes here, so the cyclists are in the same lane with the motorcycle, the car, and even the bus. By riding my bike, I frequently need less time to go to my office than by motorcycle or bus. Because the weather is hot here, you must always be prepared for the sweat.

Why do you love riding in the city?

It's still the healthiest, the cheapest, and the most effective transport for me.

Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city... Poetry anyone?

Riding in the city is more than just transport for me. It's a passion. When I get bored, or depressed, I just speed away with my bike and everything will get better.

Check out andy727.wordpress.com



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Do you love riding in the city?

Can you answer a few simple questions and find someone to take your photo?

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OCCUPATION:

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?

What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Why do you love riding in the city?

Or just say whatever you want about riding in the city. Poetry anyone?

Email your responses to jeff@urbanvelo.org

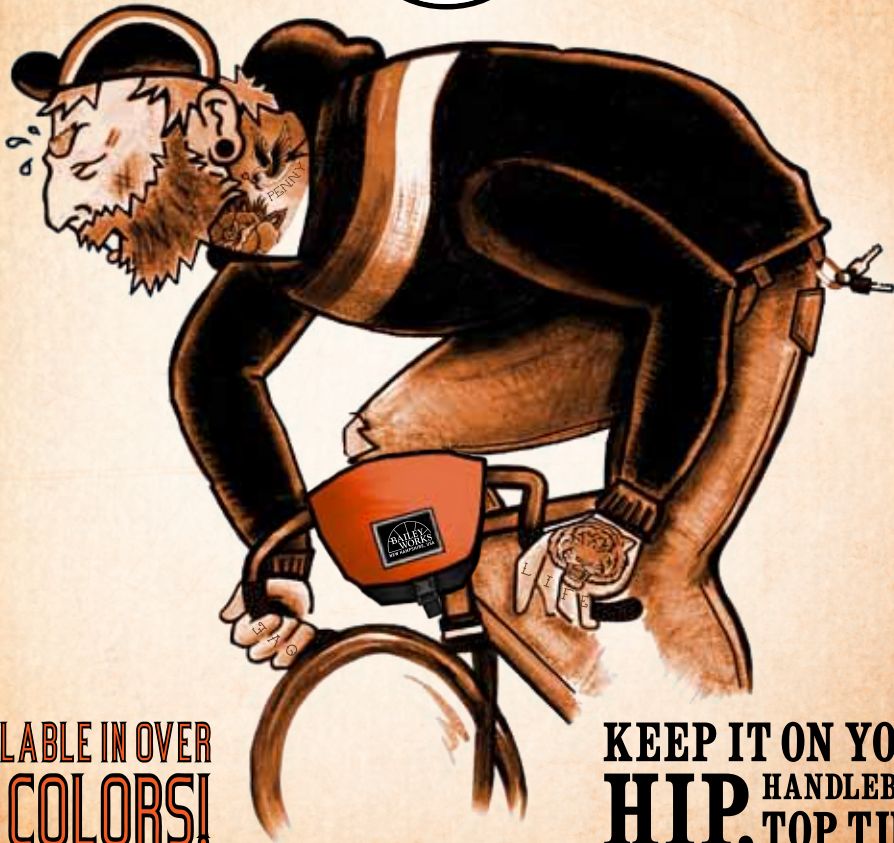
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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Lauren Prestwood
LOCATION: St. Petersburg, FL
OCCUPATION: Student

Where do you live, and what's it like riding in your city?

I live in St. Petersburg, FL. It's pretty fun to ride around the area because of having the beach, the city area, trails, and other local fun spots. My boyfriend and I have a map we put up in his room, and we mark all our destinations we've been to. It's sick to see how covered the map is with the little thumbtacks, and definitely encourages us to branch out and go further and further.

What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

I actually love riding downtown St. Pete. At night downtown is all lit up; the Dali Museum, the Pier, etc. The cityscape and the view across the water with the moon shining down are amazing to see. However, we are also planning a trip within the next few months to bike down to the Keys and have ourselves a new route, some new sights, and a hell of a good ride!

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love riding in the city because of the constant buzz of everything around. It's fun to be a little speck in a big area, and to be able to maneuver through everyone and really get to soak up the "free-ness" of cycling. I just started racing, and this year I participated in Fixed Fight 5 and 12 Hours of St. Pete. Can't wait to do more!



L'Eroica 2011

TRUE GRIT



By Colin O'Brien

Photography by Antonio Bigarini

Italy's now legendary L'Eroica draws riders from all over the world eager to test themselves—and their vintage steeds—on the rough, gravel-shod roads of the Tuscan countryside.





I was just outside Gaiole in Chianti when the bolt holding the seatpost came loose. I wouldn't be able to use the saddle anymore, but it didn't matter. It was dark, and with nothing but a short-sleeve wool jersey, October's bitter cold was biting. Keep the legs moving, I thought, and focus on that finish line.

Only 133 kilometers to go.

It's funny how eager anticipation can blind you to the troubles ahead, and how hindsight rose-tints even the excruciating rides. Before leaving Rome with friends on the two-hour drive to Chianti, I was more than excited. L'Eroica is perhaps the world's greatest classic bike race, and I was going to ride it. My thoughts were of rolling Tuscan hills, the thousands of like-minded people and all of the gorgeous vintage steel that such a gathering promises. And wine; plenty of wine. Back in the Eternal City, my memories are of much the same, with some fond recollections of friends met thrown into the bargain. But in between expectation and reflection, lay pain and suffering.

The riders tackling the 135 km and 205 km routes (there are 38 km and 75 km options too) can leave anytime between 5 am and 7 am, just before sunrise. Few make it back before dusk.

Setting off in that pure darkness preceding dawn, I was eager to start strong. With no lights and only the odd rider for company, those first few magical kilometers of L'Eroica were dark and almost silent; a magical blur, like the rushing pavement under wheel when you're going full tilt. I'd been looking forward to this all year, and now that it was upon me, I was ecstatic. Maybe a little too ecstatic.

If you passed or were passed by me on those prefatory stretches, no doubt you'll remember a young man on an old Bianchi, more resem-



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bling a crazed loon than a cyclist. I laughed and talked to myself, rode with my tongue out, beamed a smile at once delighted and deranged.

Shrouded in darkness, there was no gorgeous landscape to distract on those opening roads; no panoramas or idyllic farmhouses. Only the whirling clicks of the free-wheel and the sound of rubber meeting road. With the very tips of the highest trees beginning to glow a golden hue, hinting at the warm sun about to rise, faint glimpses of the countryside's beauty began to manifest themselves in the darkness, offering riders a chance to reflect on Tuscany's unique appeal as they calmly and speedily ate up the tarmac. I hope everyone enjoyed it, because for me at least, it would be the last such moment of meditation.

Just before sunrise, myself and the small group of riders I'd joined reached a gate in the walls of the Castello di Brolio, an archaic estate that is now home to one of the world's finest vineyards.

The crumbling stonework of the gate framed perfectly the tree-lined, torch-lit ascent away from the familiar comfort of tarmac and up towards the dusty, uneven,

ragged hell of the gravel. Slowly and somewhat sheepishly working our way up the winding rise, it seemed as if some sort of magic was transporting us back in time, to the early and cruel days of cycling when the competition was more than macho, it was masochistic.

You need to pick your lines very carefully on the gravel. You need every bit of traction you can get, and on such a loose surface it ain't going to be much. Perhaps this is the most brutal torture of the *strade*. On a normal ride, the suffering of the climb is soothed by the simple, unbridled joy of speed on the way down. But there, on Tuscany's ancient byways, it can take less time to get up than it will to come back down. There simply isn't the grip to speed down the slopes, and the way that the bikes wheels constantly shift and slip under the slightest effort serves as a constant reminder of the danger.

But even as blood and sweat turns to dark crusts, and every fiber in your muscles starts to give up, the spirit of L'Eroica drives you on. If you're into cycling, there's simply no way that such a strangely beautiful struggle—surrounded by all of the sport's history and a myriad of other

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photo by Nicholas Camarillo



riders all suffering the same—can't inspire you. And every time the effort gets too much, and the green and blue and brown blur that constitutes your rattling eyes' best efforts at vision gets dizzying, respite appears. It could be a simple patch of paved road but if you're really lucky, it'll be a rest stop, brimming with all off the sugary, salty, hot, cold, alcoholic goodies you can imagine.

It goes without saying: nothing takes a riders mind off the pain quicker than the rapid consumption of calories. And if they come in the guise of fine Chianti wine and delicious home made stews, well then, so much the better. Everyone knows that energy gels and sports drinks are over-rated anyway.

It would be just outside the first stop—two hours after the bolt had slipped—until I found another rider who had a set of *brugole*, allen keys, to fit the bolt on my broken seat. Of course I could have used my own, if I hadn't left them on the breakfast table during the inventory check I'd done to avoid precisely this kind of situation.

Cyclists don't need this sort of mishap explained to them—it hurt, plain and simple. Saddles can dish out the pain at the best of times, so a loose, suede-covered seat bobbing around underneath you as you race over rough roads is always going to be a problem. The famous *strade bianche*—the white gravel roads that have become so iconic and so intrinsically linked to the event—take no prisoners.

But it could have been worse. Along the gruelling route that day lay every type of cycling calamity. Countless pristine vintage bikes, fallen victim to tubular blow-outs in the middle of 15% climbs, broken spokes, jammed derailleurs, crashes of every description. Harsher still were the human casualties. Not the cuts and the grazes; these heal quickly after all. No, the worst sight along the route are the riders who've given up—filthy faces telling tales of woe, of shattered dreams and utter exhaustion. With all of the prep and anticipation that you'd put into an event like this, these wounds leave deep scars.

Even if nothing goes wrong with your bike and you're the type of rider who eats up rough roads like Roger De Vlaeminck, L'Eroica takes its toll. The strong sun bakes sweat and the Tuscan dirt into a foul crust that covers every inch of your body. Riders pushing bikes up steep inclines in the distance makes the task seem impossible before you've even started, killing your confidence. Keeping control on the dusty descents requires every ounce of concentration you have, every Newton of force in your brakes and a gladiatorial grip on the levers. No matter who you are, your hands will hurt. Your back too. And if you doze off on a loose patch, you can be certain that you'll wind up face-first in the dirt.

So why the hell would anyone want to do it? Well, because it's a blast, obviously. For every memory I have of gritty and grimy pot-holed hell, I have dozens of foodie and bike-nerd heaven. After all, this is a weekend in Tuscany, where the locals know their way around the kitchen and the vineyard. Even the race time-checks are unreal buffets rather than joyless pitstops. Stews, cakes, cured meats, local wine—and at the last stop there was even Vin Santo, a desert wine,

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and *cantucci*, a Tuscan specialty that's basically a twice-baked biscuit made from almonds that goes a little too well with sweet liquor. If you like your food, you will not like your overall time. But then, L'Eroica's not about racing, it's about experiencing what it means to be a cyclist. And if you're like most of the riders I met along the way, it's about guzzling as much of the local vino as possible.

Each October now sees this picture-postcard town of Gaiole turn into a cyclist's Mecca. The cobbled streets, coffee bars and trattorias are all swarmed with gear-heads and every square inch of the town seems to be covered in something bike-related.

This year, more than 4000 bike nuts from all over came and the result was an event like nothing else. It would have been far more, too, had the registrations not been so tightly controlled. Such restraints are necessary though, because the town is only home to around 2500 people, so when you add riders, companions and the odd curious tourist that L'Eroica week attracts, the population quadruples.

Everywhere one looks, there's a classic bike or an almost-forgotten cycling curiosity to be seen. And ludicrously over-priced though the stalls may be, even the market draws you in. Time-trial frames from the great Francesco Moser sit easily beside classic Colnagos, immaculate Gios and Ciöcc and Bianchi racers all sparkle and bear perfectly-preserved Campagnolo groupsets. Sellers dig through boxes of spotless components that would start a major bidding war online. As I said, an event like nothing else. Anywhere.

Of course, it wasn't always like this. When the first riders took to the road in 1997, they were few and their motives were simple: celebrate the golden age of cycling and protect what's left of the region's iconic *strade bianche* by raising awareness.

The roads were fast succumbing to modern asphalt, and while for the most part this kind of surface is better for everyone, it lacks the history and charm of its dusty predecessor. Fifteen years on, and the white roads that so epitomise the old, rustic charm of Tuscany are protected by local government and preserved to torture cyclists for decades to come.

As for celebrating the golden age of cycling, the whole thing speaks for itself. The brainchild of local doctor Giancarlo Brocci, L'Eroica has become a byword for classic cycling, and evokes almost childish excitement and envy in riders everywhere.

Brocci is still at the heart of the event, though along the way he's had to enlist the help of countless volunteers and fellow *appassionati*. The Tuscan has called Gaiole in

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Chianti his home since he was born there in 1954, and claims to have become a cycling fan as a young child when as one of the few people in the village at that time who could read, he'd be called upon by the elders to recite the cycling action from *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, Italy's most popular sports daily and the newspaper that shares its famous pink color with the leader's *maglia rosa* in the Giro d'Italia.

Driven by this life-long passion for two wheels, Brocci and L'Eroica have inspired countless cyclists to try and recapture some of the sport's old luster. Indeed, the good doctor has even been recognized by the UCI who have asked him to organize junior events. He'll be involved in the 2013 World Cycling Championships when they come to Florence and must be afforded at least some of the plaudits for the recent success of the Montepaschi Strade Bianche, a professional race that happens each spring on the strade bianche between Gaiole and Siena. In its first five years, it has attracted a lot of high-profile riders including Fabian Cancellara and Philippe Gilbert, both winners, who seem to realize and appreciate the attraction of such rugged racing.

This is a day in the saddle like no other. It has its ups and its downs, but few experiences will compare with the elation and the relief that washes over you crossing the

finishing line back in Gaiole. We'd finished the day strong, encouraged by the return to tarmac outside of the town and the pleasingly fast downhill closing leg. There are things I'll do differently next year. "Bring a gear set-up more suited to climbing" will be top of that list, followed closely by "stop feeling so sorry for yourself." Of all the challenges the rider faces along the route of L'Eroica, none are as daunting or potentially damaging as the battle of belief that goes on in the head.

The event is full of moments that connect old friends to new ones, and modern cycling to its glorious but oft-forgotten past. The beauty of the landscape, the warmth of the people, and the uniqueness of the race itself all make this the trip of a lifetime for any cyclist, not just the retro-heads.

I ride for a bunch of reasons. It's quick, it's cheap, it's good exercise, I never need to find a parking spot or deal with city traffic. On the road and in the saddle is always better than being caged up in a gym, and my bikes don't have opening hours or membership fees. But most of all, I ride because I love it. The kind of love that can't be explained; just a simple, unadulterated affection for the act of riding and the machines I do it on. L'Eroica is a celebration of that love, and proof that it's universal. Long may it last.





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MOTIVATION AND A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

Climbing up grueling mountain passes in China to reach the edge of Tibet. Communicating with smiles and sign language for food and shelter. Picking up strangers on the back of a tandem bike and touring new terrain in the company of newfound friends. For eight years, this was Jamie Bianchini's life.

Touring the world on a bike is a dream for many, but few ever really get to hit more than a few countries in their lifetime. Jamie is one of those few, having pedaled his way through more than eighty. Perhaps his success is because he wasn't doing it just for himself. From the very beginning—now more than a decade ago—Jamie wanted to send the world a message.

"The original intention was to go around the world and demonstrate that we're not all that different," he explains. "You can cross language, cultural and religious barriers, a lot easier than people thought, with the spirit of play."

He had his personal motivations too. "We had a mission, but our self-interests were first: To ride and play and travel and experience." This meant indulging in local music and catching waves anywhere he could along the way. While the focus wasn't 100% humanitarian, helping people to lower their fear of one another was an important objective.

"We both knew the world was not in as bad of a state and people were not as bad as so many people judged them to be," Jaime recalls.

Last year Jamie spent his 39th birthday in Uganda, as the guest of honor at the Good Hope School's second graduation ever. Four years earlier Bianchini had met a young Ugandan man, Innocent. Innocent had been one of the several hundred guest riders who would travel with Jamie; his dream was to create a school for AIDS orphans.

"We had the most grueling ride ever," he says of their 50 km trek. "Mud, falling, blood. A lot of rain—brutal. But we made it, which is a bit ironic because that's what the path was to start the school. We had to go through a lot."

PANAMA Farewell to Esperanza and the family before Mathius and I roll on to the ocean.

Photos courtesy of Peace Pedalers, www.peacepedalers.com



SWAZILAND Marta's first bike ride took some prodding, but she had a blast.



SLOVAKIA Family found. A distant relative we found on an all day search.

BICYCLE DREAMS

When Jamie was in grad school at USC, he and his best buddy, Garryck Hampton, drafted up their own dream. In order to make their dream a reality, they needed a dream bike. Hampton drew up a concept for a tandem-single in MS Paint. The design was meant to be able to tear up the world's roughest trails as a single person suspension mountain bike and also have the capability to be converted into a tandem with a few couplers and DaVinci cable splitters. Titanium tubing would make the frame and the four pieces of breakaway tubing extremely strong and light.

"I went to Interbike with this drawing and our logo, and our map of where we wanted to go," Jamie recalls. Every bike manufacturer turned them down. "The last person we talked to was this guy named James Bleakly who, at the time, did not have Black Sheep Bikes, but was thinking of launching his own company."

Peace Pedalers found a helicopter manufacturer that would donate the materials needed. "It was just scrap for them—but for us it was critical materials."

Along with Black Sheep, Peace Pedalers managed to pull in various sponsors to provide top-of-the-line components, clothing and touring gear.

"The whole thing was quite effortless," Jamie recalls. "We got exactly what we wanted to get and we were able to save all the money we needed to save working really hard for two and a half years."

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CAMBODIA Putting a smile on the faces of orphans near Siem Rip.



ENGLAND Reunited with Emma from Zimbabwe and new friend Paul heading to Bath.

THE LONG WAY HOME

The first country they hit was Japan. Between its courteous drivers and numerous bikeways, Japan proved to be ideal starting point.

“We had free flyer tickets, so we wanted to use them to get as far away as possible and start there and ride home. It was a long way to go, lots of zigs and zags,” Jamie says with a laugh.

They spent longer than they planned touring Japan, and that set the pace for the rest of trip; sharing experiences with locals and fellow travelers was more important than packing on the miles.

Soon they had pedaled across much of Asia, biking incredible summits in China, Tibet, Korea and Nepal—now one of Jamie’s favorite places. Tackling all of Asia and Oceania, the first stage of their epic route, would take more than a year. Before they finished Garryck would leave the tour as a result of a devastating mountain biking crash in Malaysia.

Without his best friend at his side, Jamie had a lot of time think and let his experiences on the road sink in. Sitting on a plane headed back to the U.S., he came to see that the moments he’d been able to help others were his most fulfilling experiences.

“As we went through Asia, everywhere we went people took care of us,” he tells. “If we got lost, if we needed food. Little by little that compassion and generosity and being cared for by our human family, regardless of their language, regardless of everything—it impacted me a lot and I began to feel part of a global community.”

Out of this realization, the philosophy of both Peace Pedalers and Jamie’s way of life were established: Live big, give big.

This moment would lead Jamie to work on more than a dozen philanthropic projects throughout his travels, many in impoverished parts of Africa. One such project, an alliance with the Bicycle Empowerment Network, brought 100 bikes to students in a South African township. Jamie was living big too, going on to spend the next several weeks surfing, mountain biking and taking life at an easy pace along the South African coast.

For each country visited they would write a journal (available at PeacePedalers.com). “We just wanted to go and do it and document it, originally for ourselves,” he tells. Eventually film emerged as invaluable medium. He bought a camera that could shoot higher-quality footage and audio equipment; and eventually secured a sponsorship from Panasonic, who provided HD equipment. At its peak weight, Jamie’s bike and equipment tipped the scales at nearly 300 lbs.

By the end of the tour, including Africa, Europe, South and Latin America, Jamie had amassed nearly 1000 hours of footage. With cameras mounted to the front and rear of his bike, and shots set up on the roadside, Jamie’s footage lets us take a ride with him, through miles of unspoiled terrain and as he perseveres through pneumonia, robbery, and bad weather. But what really stands out are guest riders crossing political boundaries in Ireland and Bosnia; orphans riding three at a time upon front and rear racks; language lessons conducted on steep grades; and watching Jamie commune with total strangers, at times with no more common understanding than his bike and a smile.

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PARAGUAY Feel the love!



INDIA Joe's first bike experience in 24 years.



INDIA Rajesh escorts me to the yoga ashram.

Jamie finished his tour in late 2010, coming home with a new partner, Cristina, who became his guest rider when another person cancelled in Argentina. Cristina, from Barcelona, was traveling through South America, and agreed to take a 16 km ride with Jamie. At the end of the day, she decided to stay on and cross into Paraguay with him.

“We just kept wanting to stay together,” Jamie says. A Chilean bike company, Oxford, donated a bike to Cristina so that she could continue while Jamie picked up new passengers. Several months later, Cristina became pregnant.

Jamie finished his tour with a ride down the California coast. Cristina and baby Luca came along, with Jamie’s mother—an everlasting support throughout his expedition—driving the camper along the route.

Settling into family life in Santa Cruz meant doing things differently. “For the first time in ten years I had to go get a job,” he tells. Jamie started working for a nutrition company not far from the Peace Pedalers office. It’s there that he can often be found, steadily churning the raw footage into polished episodes, preparing it all for distribution as a documentary series. Survivorman’s Les Stroud has come on as an executive producer, and Jamie and his team are gearing up for MIPDoc, the world’s largest factual programming convention, in Cannes in March.

Jamie is reaching out to investors and major networks across the globe, driven to share his experiences with the world. He also wants to be able to help others live big and give big too, and will do so through Community First Consulting by helping businesses increase their profits while finding ways to reduce recurring expenses and from that savings establish a steady stream of support to local charities.

This past December I met Jamie in Santa Cruz and had the opportunity to ride a few miles with him and his new family. I met the trio of touring veterans in downtown. I rode behind Jamie, watching him cruise through the calm coastal town with Luca in tow in a Burley trailer, while Cristina and I rode side by side chatting about how she ended up on the back of Jamie’s tandem, riding Paraguay, and being introduced to a new way of seeing the world.

“Traveling on a bike is pure magic,” she told me, as we pedaled along the ebbing cliffs of the Pacific. Across the smokey blue water Monterey jutted out through the fog, a silhouette beneath the afternoon sun. Hearing Jamie tell his story, I’d have to agree.



Read more about Peace Pedalers, and stay up to date with new developments regarding the documentary film, at www.peacepedalers.com

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Last October I was invited to attend "Fijate," which was a historical event for the Puerto Rican urban bicycle scene. The rider pictured to the left is Luis Rafael Robles, a native bicycle messenger who's largely responsible for the fixed gear movement in Puerto Rico.

I was particularly interested in this cross-cultural cycling experience, because we (New York City bike messengers) have always known that the urban fixed gear movement was started by messengers from the West Indies. Not surprisingly, I found a strong connection between New York City and Puerto Rican cycling culture. The same is true with the exchange of street culture, especially hip hop, which was born in the Bronx by people from the Carribean community.

For these reasons, I strive to capture the bicycle scene as "culture" and not as "sports."

—Takuya Sakamoto

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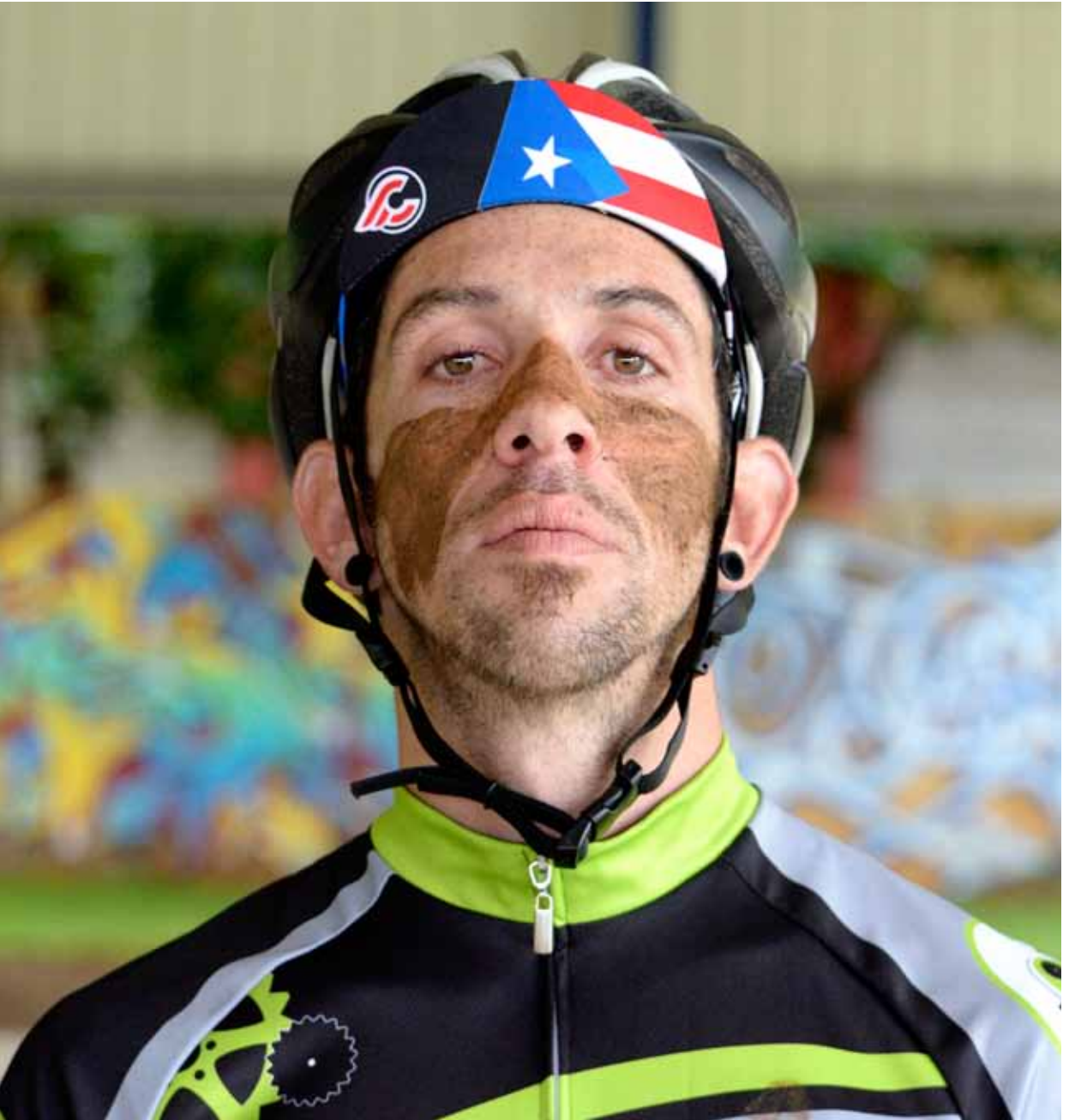
Photography by Takuya Sakamoto



Above: Street scene in San Juan.

Right: NYC bike messenger Alfred Bobe has won Monster Track four times and originally hails from Puerto Rico.





Puerto Rico

Photography by Takuya Sakamoto









A BICYCLE FRAMEBUILDING CRASH COURSE

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY BY
BRAD QUARTUCCIO

“Get comfortable. You’ll be spending a lot of time practicing.”

Roughly an hour after walking into the shop on the first day of class I had a welding torch in my hand, sloppily sticking thick pieces of metal together. I knew that building a frame within a normal work week wasn’t going to be easy, and this confirmed it loud and clear.

It’s been a goal of mine for some time to enroll in a framebuilding course and ride something crafted by my own hands. When I first learned that Mike Flanigan of Alternative Needs Transportation was offering weeklong one-on-one classes I knew it was the choice for me. I first met Mike nearly ten years ago, and besides being one of the guys I always find myself chatting with at shows, is the real deal when it comes to framebuilding and modern-day, New England bike history. He got his start with the craft as a painter at the now legendary Fat City Cycles, was one of the founding worker/owners at Independent Fabrication, and for the past decade has been working solo under the Alternative Needs Transportation (ANT) banner. Even though he eschews the label of master framebuilder, by any measure Mike has the credentials. He’s been around for much of the modern day handbuilt bicycle resurgence, and has had his hand in companies that to this day have defined what many associate with East Coast bike geometry and construction style. The chance to learn even the basics of a craft one-on-one from someone with such a resume isn’t something to be passed up or taken lightly.

The Real Cost Of A Custom Bike



Without the scaling of large manufacturers, custom builders work on slim margins. Complete, painted frames are available from overseas for less than the cost of tubes alone for the little guys.

Common 4130 chromoly tubes can run as much as \$300 per bike, stainless steel up to \$1000. Quality dropouts start at \$10 each and can run up to \$300 for polished, sliding models. Bottom bracket shells are easy to spend \$20 on, brake studs or disc mounts \$10-\$20 each, and count each cable stop and pair of bottle mounts as another \$5. Silver braze is near \$50 per ounce. Paint can go from a single color powdercoat at \$50 to fancy wet paint upwards of \$500 per bike. The list goes on.

Consumables are an unseen expense as well, with tanks of argon costing \$80 and requiring a refill every half dozen frames. Sand paper, emery cloth, files, drill bits, hole saws etc. add up quickly over the course of a year. Maintenance is inevitable and represents both significant up front cost, and shop downtime. Shop overhead in the form of rent and utility bills, insurance, advertising, shows and time spent communicating with each buyer also adds up.

It's easy to have \$800-\$1200 in raw materials and another couple of hundred in amortized maintenance and overhead in a custom steel frame. When you consider a one-man shop can at most create just a couple of bikes per week over the entire year, it's easy to see custom bikes as undervalued even if the price remains out of reach for many.

The one-week course costs roughly \$3000 and runs for five days, with a sixth day a possibility to finish things up if absolutely needed (we needed it). Open to anyone regardless of previous welding or machine shop knowledge, attendees walk in on Monday with an idea and walk out on Friday with a frame and fork designed and created hand in hand with Mike. He has taught dozens of people the basics of frame construction in that time frame, and the class itself is flexible to accommodate people just looking for an inside look at the process to those hoping to spent the time really doing it themselves. Part of getting the most out of the experience is crafting a frame appropriate to the shop—Mike has been focused on TIG welded 4130 steel commuter and touring bikes with a nod to the traditional for some time, and it makes sense to stick to that genre though students have made all sorts of different bicycle designs. I settled on an off-road capable touring bike sporting large volume 29" mountain tires with disc brakes, full fenders and Mike's signature custom racks. It was designed to handle forest road and single track mountain touring along with more common mixed-terrain rail trail and paved riding, and while it certainly is stepping away from tradition in some respects the geometry and overall design draws from Mike's years of experience building touring and cargo bikes.

Days 1-2

The first two days were spent splitting time between the welding table, learning the basics of the milling machine, and finalizing the frame design. Before the class began we discussed the basics to be sure that the proper tubes and braze-ons were on hand, and finalized the geometry and design on site with my parts kit and panniers.

Hours were spent learning the basics of how to handle a TIG welder for the first time in my life, starting with simply fusion welding two pieces of bar stock together without burning a hole in them or the table, and progressively moving on to smaller stock and incorporating wire filler. I'm fairly mechanically competent and comfortable with tools, but I've never been one to have art flow from my finger tips—TIG welding is much closer to painting than turning a wrench, and only my mother could love one of my paintings. Under Mike's patient eye and gentle critique of my heavy hand, by the end



AJ Austin

Photo: Jake Marx

milwaukeebicycle.com



of the second day I was laying a continuous bead of filler across a simulated head tube and top tube junction without burning a hole anywhere. I filled a bucket with them before I was even starting to feel a hint of confidence with all of the variables involved in the TIG welding process. I gave myself stiff shoulders, I burnt my hands, I asked a million questions. It's definitely a crash course—I went back to my hotel each evening spent, excited and intimidated at what the next day might bring.

Day 3

Having finalized the geometry earlier in the week and made absolutely sure everything was on hand, it was time to cut the tubes to the proper lengths and angles, and continue brushing up on my welding before actually putting the torch to a frame meant to take me far from home. Learning to weld was certainly the most challenging part of things, but of equal interest and intrigue to me was the process of cutting the tubes at just the right angle to fit the jig. Transferring the geometry numbers spit out by modern BikeCAD and Sputnik computer programs to custom made tooling on World War II era milling machines was easy to immerse myself in. I've been known to walk around a hardware store for fun and spent my undergrad career with my head buried in engineering texts—plunging a 2"

hole saw through a tube of steel at just the right angle to make a bicycle built for me was *cool*. Using the home made jigs at this stage and later during actual construction reveals how unique each builder's bikes truly are, with each having a certain technique co-dependent on tooling each maker devises and creates for their own needs.

Day 4

By the end of the previous day we had placed the chainstays, dropouts and bottom bracket shell into the jig and Mike had tack welded it together. First thing in the morning on the fourth day we fit the rest of the frame into the jig and tacked it in place. After a few more practice passes, the time had come to put torch to tube and pass the point of no return. Working joint to joint with Mike over my shoulder the day was spent slowly welding all of the main tube junctions, each without disastrous holes or overheating. We checked and adjusted the alignment throughout the process, as the next day's fitting of the chain- and seatstay bridges would effectively lock it all into place. Having driven to the Boston area on Sunday without ever having touched a welder, to end Thursday with the frame 90% welded by my hand was fulfilling to say the least. It was also clear that we were running behind, and that Friday would see us burning the midnight oil to finish even almost on schedule.

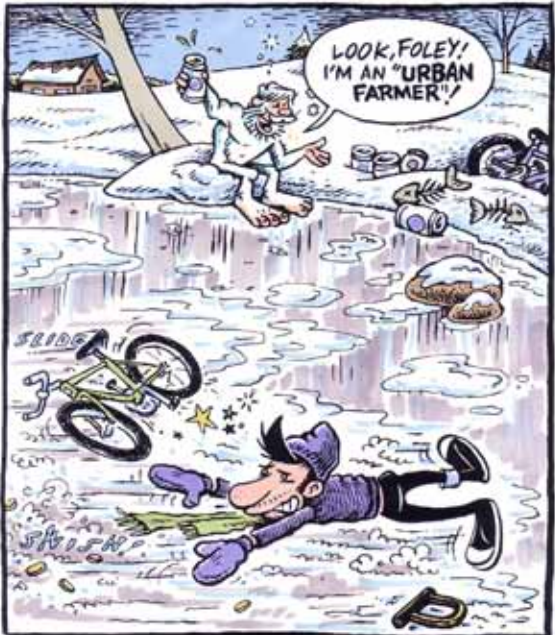
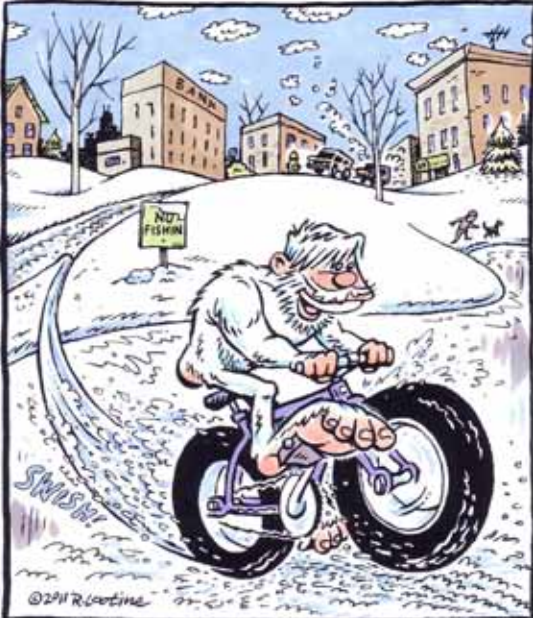


DARN TOOTIN' ...IT'S ABOUT THAT TIME AGAIN!

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The ANT framebuilding course is something I will talk about for the rest of my life, a remarkable experience to not only gain a far greater understanding of the bicycle but spend a week side by side with an artisan at the top of his craft. It's a rare opportunity, but within reach of many who would like to make it happen. Long after the class is complete there remains a bike to ride that *you* made. The experience furthered my understanding of both the machine and what drives people to craft them. It's easy to see how many find it an addicting process of experimentation and creation. I sincerely hope it is not my only opportunity to create a bicycle from a stack of tubes.

Spending a few days atop this bike on the way to Frederick MD this past October proved every decision throughout the process correct. With Mike's expertise in touring I had no doubt that it would handle like a dream, but nothing proves it like a few hundred miles in the saddle.



Day 5

With an early start Mike finished the last challenging bits of welding on the frame that I couldn't manage, such as the inside of the chainstays, and we moved on to braze-ons and crafting the fork. After learning to weld, learning to braze a water bottle or rack boss on the frame was comparably a breeze. A brush of flux, a few motions just so with the torch, and feed it a wire of silver braze. After bending the fork blades to the described offset and notching the various parts of the segmented fork, in the effort of time Mike welded the fork while I continued to tackle the umpteen cable guides and bottle bosses my ultimate touring frame required. We finished the day by giving the frame and fork a bath in etching fluid to remove the excess flux and to clean the tubes of contaminants and worked into the night readying for racks and paint.

Day 6

The mountain touring bike and racks were an ambitious project, and admittedly more than what is reasonable to tackle in a normal week's class time. Saturday morning was spent trading off between file and emery cloth, making sure excess braze was smoothed out and any unsightly welds filed down. As I filed and polished away Mike hand bent and welded a heavy duty version of his D-Rack for the front of the bike, with another rack taking shape for the rear just after. By dinner time I'd been given a quick lesson on how to powdercoat and had baked my frame in ANT blue with gloss black racks. By 10pm I took my first ride around the parking lot and it was lights out, course complete.



Full disclosure: Urban Velo traded advertising space for the framebuilding course fees, and paid out of pocket for travel expenses. Alternative Needs Transportation is our longest standing advertising client to date, having been a paid advertiser in each and every issue of Urban Velo.

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Raleigh Roper Cross Bike

The Raleigh Roper is a \$1500 disc brake equipped steel cyclocross bike meant for the serious commuter or abusive all-day rider that is more interested in the miles than the race weight. The full 4130 chromoly frame features not only a low-riding disc brake mount for rack and fender clearance, but an integrated headtube and one of the latest oversize bottom bracket systems, BB30, which has really begun to filter down from the ultra high end in the past year or two.

Beyond that, the bike has fender eyelets front and rear, rear rack mounts and some of the most overlooked braze-ons out there, a chain hanger and chainstay mounted spoke holder. The excellent Shimano 105 group makes up the shifting bits, benefiting from years of higher end trickle down, with Shimano R505 cable actuated disc calipers doing the actual stopping.

The bike shares the exact same geometry as Raleigh's racier cyclocross offerings, making it a relatively aggressive, fast riding machine. Over a couple of months of riding hitting paved roads and railroad ballast, gravel paths and full-on singletrack, I fell in love with the handling. The bike just felt fast to me, more so than my much lighter road

bike, encouraging me to ride longer and harder when I got outside of city limits. Dirt roads are some of my favorite to ride, and this bike truly excelled at tackling them.

The Shimano R505 disc calipers on the Roper took a couple of rides to fully break in as expected. While they are an upgrade from rim brakes in many respects, I did find them underpowered from the hoods which is admittedly the least powerful hand position in terms of braking power. When the going got wet or exceptionally muddy however, I never found myself wishing for rim brakes.

The very features that set the Roper apart also weigh it down—the complete bike is a portly 27.25 lbs. Given the price, overbuilt steel frame and fork, disc brakes and other accoutrements it's not really a surprise, but it's certainly noticeable. Dropping weight is possible, but losing significant pounds is going to take a lot of money. You're far better off accepting the Roper for what it is and using it for the all-weather, all-roads conditions it's meant for. If single speed is more your style, the exact same frame is available as the Furly, using a BB30 eccentric adapter and coming in at \$830 retail.

Check out www.raleighusa.com



Trangia Spirit Burner Alcohol Camping Stove

As much as we at Urban Velo are focused on city riding, each of us have a certain love of the woods as well. In my case I'm quite into bike camping trips, the more primitive the overnight camping situation the better. After much research on my end about stoves, including just using other people's for a couple of years, I decided on the simplicity of alcohol burners as my cooking solution. Pictured is my ultra-light Trangia Spirit Burner setup, showing the burner itself, the simmer ring, the screw cap, Liberty Westwind slide together windscreen and fuel bottle. Altogether it is about a \$40, nearly indestructible stove system.

Since there are so many different windscreen designs and preferred ways to carry fuel, I'll concentrate on the stove itself. A scant 115 g without fuel, the Trangia is for all intents and purposes a high-quality "beer can stove" or open jet alcohol stove. The advantages of such stoves are their simplicity and easily obtainable alcohol fuel—even in the most remote towns denatured or rubbing alcohol isn't far away. No pumping, no small parts to break, and no proprietary fuel only available at outdoors stores. The main downside is fuel efficiency, compared to other camp stoves the Trangia uses far more fuel per meal necessitating either carrying a fair amount of it to begin with or planning on finding some along the way. Alcohol burn-

ers like this won't win any speed contests boiling pots of water, but I've never complained about the cook time of a meal or coffee in the morning. Stove use is simple, just fill it up with alcohol, light the surface of the alcohol with a match and let it go. As the fuel heats up and vaporizes in the hollow outer wall the jets eventually light and give it a Bunsen-burner effect. People who've not seen one are usually impressed. The simmer ring, and pliers to hold it, allow you to adjust the size of the flame to prevent burning or the pot boiling over.

In the field there are a few things worth noting. I've never found the screw top lid to hold fuel securely enough for me to trust it—no matter what, new o-ring or not, it has a tendency to leak so I always make sure the stove is empty before stowing. While alcohol fuel is safe as far as flammable liquids go, the flame can be very hard to see in daylight and you need to be cautious when first lighting the stove. When I buy fuel at home I always use denatured alcohol for the clean burning flame, but often on multi-day trips I end up refueling with common rubbing alcohol which burns just fine but leaves behind a nasty black residue on the outside of the pots, and then your hands. The only problem I've had in use is that the alcohol fuel can be hard to light in cold weather—storing the fuel bottle and stove in your jacket for a bit or otherwise warming up the kit solves the problem easily enough though. After a couple of years of use and quite a few days camping the Trangia stove system has never let me down. One of my favorite camping gadgets honestly. Highly recommended for the minimalist kit.

Check out www.trangia.se





White Industries ENO Freewheel

I had been using the White Industries ENO Trials Freewheel on my polo bike for well over a year, and as you might expect from a \$120 American-made freewheel, I've had absolutely zero problems with it. This fall I finally decided to change up my gearing from 18 tooth to 22 tooth, and since the ENO Trials Freewheel only comes in 18, I opted for White's standard ENO Freewheel which is available in 16-22 tooth sizes.

When the bike is in the stand, you may be able to discern the difference between the trials model's 72 points of engagement and the 36 points afforded by the standard ENO freewheel. But on the polo court I can't tell the difference. All I really know is that when I pedal, the bike jumps forward with zero hesitation.

It might actually be a benefit that the whirring of the pawls isn't as noticeable on the standard ENO freewheel as it is with the trials model, but it's still plenty pronounced. But while silence on the polo court is a benefit, the sound it makes while speeding down a big hill is just about worth the price of admission all by itself.

At 177 g, the standard ENO freewheel is lighter than the trials model by 25 g. Of course, I hardly care at all about the weight, especially given the renowned quality of the product. And of course the price is significant, but if you consider that the freewheel is completely serviceable, it should outlast several less expensive models.

ENO freewheels retail for \$95.

Check out www.whiteind.com

Road Runner Bags Cell Phone Pouch

Road Runner Bags is one of those one-man, small time operations some people are always pointing to as the future of all things good. Toiling away making a niche product in the spare room, creating one of a kind items just different enough. I've been using one of the \$19 iPhone pouches for a couple of months on my giant backpack I use for grocery runs, road trips and carrying my gear to and from polo. The wrap around mounting system is compatible with all sorts of shoulder and chest straps, though I do wish there was a way to attach it to a belt for longish road rides when I'm not carrying a bag at all. The design allows you to micro adjust how tight the holster holds, accommodating different case models easily, and similar sized phones. I'd say it is best described as water resistant—the pouch is Cordura with a truck tarp liner and has a fair amount of overlap on the phone but I wouldn't trust it in much more than a light rain, and even then with the cost of smartphones I'm quick to make sure it has fully waterproof quarters when the weather turns sour. I'm usually not one for holsters as I find the various pockets on my pants and bag already suffice (and that I have a number of bags in rotation), but I've actually found myself using this one simply because it is easy to remove when I'm not using it, and it holds my phone securely enough that I actually trust it. An earlier, oversized version found a home on a friend's bag holding his even larger, giant touchscreen spacephone. Beyond stock Cordura colors, Road Runner makes bags out of salvaged materials when available, even Thomson post and stem bags for the full on bike nerds out there.

Check out etsy.com/shop/RoadRunnerBags





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Feedback Sports Wheel Truing Station

Truing stands are one of those tools that people tend to put off purchasing only to wonder how they lived without for so long when it is finally part of the collection. Truing a wheel between the brakes or otherwise on the bike just isn't the same. Like just about any tool, it is worth being realistic about your eventual uses and buying appropriately. The Feedback Sports Wheel Truing Station is a consumer tool meant for the home mechanic, or for the racer already toting a repair stand event to event.

The roughly \$75 Feedback Sports truing stand is meant to either clamp to the top of a Feedback repair stand, or sit upright on the workbench on the included weighted base. I've found that it also fits on my ancient Park shop repair stand, and can imagine the handy user finding ways to attach the Feedback stand to other objects, say their hitch rack, fairly easily. It's a relatively simple, one-sided design but don't let that fool you into thinking it is inherently inferior to double-sided shop-

style stands. The round and true adjustments slide into place and are then fine tuned with a plastic dial, allowing a degree of precision as close as anything else, and definitely within the limits of the home user. From small 16" and 20" wheels up through 29" wheels with fat tires mounted, you can fit just about any wheel with a conventional quick release or bolt on axle. The range of adjustment even allows you to true a disc brake rotor, which I've found useful a few times in recent memory. In some respects single-arm truing stands are easier to use than shop-style ones, with nothing in the way you have a clear line of sight and more working space with a one-sided stand. When building wheels one-sided stands automatically allow you to gauge even dish—simply flip the wheel over without moving the truing arm. If it isn't even on both sides, the wheel is out of dish. It requires flipping the wheel back and forth, and working the quick release or tightening the axle nuts, but the practice works and I've built a few successful wheels this way without a dishing tool.

The Feedback truing stand is not a shop quality tool, nor should you expect it to be given the price tag. For the home mechanic, or the mechanic on the go looking for a lightweight, race-ready kit, the Feedback truing stand is ideal. Anything save for some high end mountain wheels and select other oddities fit, and the design allows full access to the spoke nipples even if the tire is mounted. There is no question that a shop quality truing stand is more up to daily abuse than the plastic knobs and fixtures on the Feedback stand, but I'd be the first to recommend a shop or even daily user to look towards a more robust, and pricier, piece of hardware. A truing stand is a key addition to a home shop, and in my opinion the Feedback truing stand is a solid choice for all but the most serious users.

Check out www.feedbacksports.com



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The new All City line of shoes from **Chrome** is a progression into a slightly more upscale street style. The Riverton and Southside (pictured) models both feature full-grain leather uppers and retail for \$105 to \$120. www.chromebagsstore.com



Gary **Rothera** knows his way around a sewing machine. The seams are tight and the construction is flawless. Rothera Cycling caps are sewn in south Philadelphia and retail for \$30 to \$43. www.garyrothera.com

Darn Tough feels that their backyard proving grounds in Vermont help them make some of the finest socks in the outdoor market. Their socks retail for roughly \$17. www.darntough.com



Cooper Bikes was founded by the son of the namesake of the Mini Cooper cars many are familiar with. Their latest bike is the \$1700 Oporto, a lugged step through frame built with Reynolds steel tubing and a Sturmey-Archer 5-speed internal drivetrain. www.cooperbikesusa.com

Lancaster City Bike Polo bolt on disc brake rotor guards are machined from a sheet of 6061-T6 aluminum and are meant to cover a 160 mm rotor. The guards run \$45 each. www.lancastercitybikepolo.com



Kuat Racks makes this \$34 Bottle Lock, an interesting way to carry a cable lock for people in low-crime areas, or just looking for an always there secondary cable lock. The bottle housing fits in standard cages and hides a 5 ft long, 8 mm braided steel cable along with a small hidden compartment for keys or a bit of cash. www.kuatinnovations.com



The **Milwaukee Bicycle Co.** Bruiser has been appropriated as a polo bike ever since it was first introduced. Now there is the Polo Bruiser, a \$700 frameset made in the USA, with modified polo geometry coming in nearly two pounds lighter than the original. www.benscycle.net



The **SRAM** cable and housing cutter features a simple adjustment to allow its jaws to either open just wide enough for cutting cables, or wider to cut housing. There's a cable-end crimper built into the handles, and an integrated awl in the handle to finish prepping freshly cut housing. It retails for \$42. www.sram.com

OnGuard created the Minpin for people not looking for another tool in their life. The lock relies on gravity to lock and unlock. With the bike upright, the skewers close and lock, turn it upside down and the skewer opens freely like any other. www.onguardlock.com



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Stay Loose

By Brad Quartuccio



At first thought it may seem counterintuitive, but when the going gets rough it is important to stay loose. Especially for people who have found their love of riding through miles on the pavement, the natural reaction to going over rough or loose terrain is many times to tighten up—exactly the opposite of what will keep your bike heading in the direction you'd like.

By design bicycles are more or less self-righting, and want to keep rolling in whatever direction they're already pointed. Besides actively steering off-course, the quickest way to find yourself in the brush on a rough section of trail is by trying to micromanage the bumps with tense shoulders and a death grip on the bars.

Early in my bicycling experience I was given some sage advice on the subject, a way to visualize the goal

of maintaining a light touch and allowing the machine to do the hard work. Imagine eggs between your hands and the bar, with the goal of not cracking them with your grip. As the surface becomes rugged it's all about massaging the bicycle to where you'd like it to go, not forcing the issue which will at best lead to early fatigue, and at worst heading completely off course. A light touch lets the bicycle self steer up, over and around the irregularities in its path without feeding each and every pebble back into your arms and shoulders.

To this day I still use this visualization technique to stave off fatigue and tackle rough sections of my ride. Even on smooth roads I will sometimes catch myself tensing my upper body, especially during hard efforts. Mentally placing eggs in my palms helps me to be a better, more comfortable rider.



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Outro



April 21, 2007. Short shorts were in vogue (for men, not women) and if your bike wasn't fixed it was broken. It was the day of the "How Fast Would Jesus Ride" alleycat. And it was unwittingly the day that two freshly unemployed cyclists in Pittsburgh decided that their idea for a magazine wasn't just a project, it was something bigger.

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