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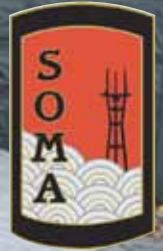
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URBAN VELO

Issue #37

June 2013

Brad Quartuccio Editor brad@urbanvelo.org
Jeff Guerrero Publisher jeff@urbanvelo.org

Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of riding a bike.

—John F. Kennedy

On the cover: Jason Clary is the two-time Red Bull Ride + Style winner, taking home first track in 2013 and 2011. See more on page 38. Photo by Dyami Serna, twitter.com/tweaksf

Co-conspirators: Derek McIntire, Krista Carlson, Takuya Sakamoto, Hal Bergman, Dyami Serna, Matt Hartman, Kayce Shelton, Ernesto Pacheco and Liam Gilson

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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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The roads weren't built for cars on Mfangano Island, Kenya. See more on page 56. Photo by Derek McIntire



CONTENTS

- 8 Editor's Statement**
Brad Quartuccio
- 10 Publisher's Statement**
Jeff Guerrero
- 12 I Love Riding in the City**
Readers share their tales of city cycling.
- 20 Product Spotlight**
New gear for the urban rider.
- 24 Racing Red Hook Crit**
Krista Carlson
Our reporter heads to Brooklyn to get the lowdown on the infamous urban road race.
- 34 Stoopidtall**
Krista Carlson
At more than 14 feet tall, one bike rode high above the rest at CicLAvia.
- 38 Gallery: Red Bull Ride + Style**
Dyami Serna
- 44 Product Reviews**
Raleigh, Swobo, Timbuk2, Hold Fast, Knog and more.
- 56 A Bike Shop for the Whole World**
Derek McIntire
Bikes may not be a solution for all of Africa's problems, but they're a good start.
- 64 Penrose Velodrome**
Matt Harman and Kayce Shelton
Discover the real jewel of St. Louis, the Penrose Park Velodrome.
- 70 Anti-Seize Compound**
Brad Quartuccio
- 72 Gear Inches**
Brad Quartuccio
- 74 Outro**
Liam Gilson
The Battle for the Midwest bike polo tournament.

EDITOR'S STATEMENT


By Brad Quartuccio



'Tis the season to turn over the miles, or casually ride with friends. I live for long summer weekends spent riding and exploring, pedaling fast and then hanging out slow. From one adventure to another, as one ride ends the planning for another just begins. There is no end to the new places to discover and explore by bike, and an endless variety of ways to do it. No matter your flavor, there is a way to do it on bike.

Whether it's changing interests or an injured body, when the door of one cycling discipline snaps shut, another opens. Chronic injuries have sidelined two cycling activities before I was ready, but the depth of riding possibilities make it easy to not dwell on past bad ideas. Over a decade ago observed trials begat single speed mountain bike racing; more recently bike polo has given way for a renewed focus on single track

and epic miles. I may not look forward to the next injury, but I do look forward to whatever the next turn on a bike may reveal.

There is no reason to self-limit your riding to but a sliver of the ways to enjoy two wheels, and no reason to let injury be the only impetus to try new things. It is a good time to be a cyclist; the bikes themselves are fantastic pieces of tech, infrastructure and political will is moving our way. Riding can ebb and flow—last year was your first alleycat, this year is your first century. Been a long time commuter but never been on single track, or taken your first self supported overnight trip? Always wanted to try bike polo or ride a tall bike? There is no better time than the present, and no better excuse than today being that much sooner than tomorrow. 

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

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PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

By Jeff Guerrero



One would think that in the grand scheme of things, nothing should take precedence over self preservation. And second to that should be the protection of all human lives. But anyone

with an ounce of sense knows that's far from the case. Countless motorists drop big bucks on cars that offer "driving excitement" that consequently turn transportation into a matter of entertainment. Even tree-hugging hybrid car owners have been known to break the speed limit and roll through stoplights in the name of expedience, forgoing fuel efficiency and safety.

Let's not just point the finger at motorists. Pedestrians are perhaps the most vulnerable road users, yet I challenge you to find a city free of jaywalking. You might think that common sense would win every time, but the desire for instant gratification via Starbucks Frappuccino has lured many a law abiding citizen to step out from between parked cars.

Of course, I'm just as guilty as anyone. I'll be perfectly honest, I've been trying to behave out there on the roadways. Really, seriously making an attempt to act like a proper vehicular cyclist. But the truth is, I'm doing it for appearances, not for my own protection. With the number of urban cyclists still on the rise, as well as the inescapable bad reputation that I admittedly helped our community earn, I feel that it's high time to show the world that we are in-fact sensible, responsible human beings.

My morning commute begins with me in the bike lane, signaling turns and stopping behind cars at red lights. As I get to the warehouse district, things invariably change, as the bike lanes give way to sharrows. Most people don't know what shared use markings mean, so even if I'm not verbally assaulted I'm guaranteed to be passed at a distance that's too close for comfort, usually when there is a full open lane to the left. By the time I get to downtown, my good behavior is out the window. I think of it as having entered the Thunderdrome, and even though I'm now arguably in the most dangerous portion of my commute, I feel

energized. I feel like taking risks, swooping around jaywalking pedestrians, passing cars on the right, riding between trucks and busses. Like everyone else, fun and convenience become more important than arriving in one piece.

I'm not a psychologist, or a philosopher, so I won't try to explain such complex thought processes. And maybe someday when I'm an old, white-bearded recumbent rider my tune will change. But for now, I feel pretty astute for even recognizing it.

This train of thought started a few weeks ago when a local child on a bicycle was struck by a motor vehicle. One of the major news sources created a rift by encouraging the audience to feel sorry for the driver, essentially pointing out how distraught she was over having injured the child. As you might imagine, this didn't sit well with vocal members of the cycling community. At first I took the commentary the same way that my peers did, thinking, "To hell with the driver, think about how sad this kid's family is, let alone the kid himself."

Then it occurred to me, maybe the reporter really did the cycling community a favor. Because let's face it, hearing another collision report isn't going to do much to affect much change in the average driver's habits. And frankly, in a world where people are mostly concerned with themselves, the fact that the driver was unharmed only helps perpetuate the notion of, "Oh, too bad, but..."

Now, on the other hand, when the evening news showed the driver sitting on the curb at the scene of the accident, head slumped between her knees and crying, the message was clear—this is not driving excitement. If you hit someone with your car, you will feel bad, even if you aren't deemed to be at fault. You might even cry.

I know, it sounds a little far fetched, but I still think there's something to my theory. Either way, I encourage everyone to be safe out there, even if you have to have a little fun in the Thunderdrome from time to time.



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CH



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Matt Bailey

LOCATION: Lexington, KY

OCCUPATION: Dog Retail Clerk

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

I live in Lexington, KY and it's a great city to ride in. You can get pretty much all over with two wheels. The city is fairly flat and everything is close so it's easy to get around quickly. We have a nice college campus too so the scenery is amazing certain times of the year.

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

My favorite city to ride in so far has been London. It's an awesome way to explore the city! There are so many bikes there—it's amazing to see so many people embrace cycling. No matter when you are out on the

bike it's always a blast cruising around. I will say that they are a little strict about lights on your ride in the nicer areas—I got stopped by the fuzz for being lightless.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I grew up out in the country so when I started riding my bike in the city it was a whole new experience. Being on a bike allows you to experience the world around you much more personally than in a car. Cycling gives the ability to experience the sights, sounds and smells first hand.

photo - John Walker



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photo - Christopher Ditts

i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Yannick Read

LOCATION: London, UK

OCCUPATION: Cycling Advocate, Inventor

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

I live in Kingston, a town on the banks of the river Thames about 10 miles from the center of London. We British enjoy a good moan, and for sure things here aren't perfect for those of us on two wheels, but for me cycling through London is a joy.

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

I'm no poet, but I express my passion for cycling artistically through creating unusual bikes. At first glance they appear little more than frivolity, but each has an underlying message—I like to think of it as subversion by design.

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i ♥ riding in the city



Photo by De Mis Ojos Photography

NAME: Jessica Alexander

LOCATION: Austin, TX

OCCUPATION: Photographer, Musician

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

I live and am from Austin, TX, which I usually refer to as, "The best city to live in the world." I've been very lucky to be able to travel professionally all over, and I still find that Austin draws me back every time.

Riding in Austin is pretty awesome, despite often having over six months of "summer weather" above 90° F. We have pretty mild winters where you will barely pull out a rain poncho or full-fingered gloves though. There are a lot of hills, which I love bombing, but mostly, it's the decent bike trail and lane setup we have that keeps me riding nearly 365 days a year!

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

I love riding in Houston and Chicago, despite the bike lanes of Houston being pretty questionable.

I still find though that riding in downtown Austin during intense traffic whilst the Capitol is in the background beaming down on me is one of the biggest thrills. It's no NYC, but for Texans whom love their trucks there are many close calls with mirrors.

It's also rad that I can ride for a mere 10 miles from my house and be in the country, free of almost anything other than livestock and hay. Those are the best times for me to clear my head of busy city life.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love the noise, the buzz, the feeling of being alive with motion all around me. Mostly though, I love the sense of community that is gained when seeing many other cyclists in an urban setting doing their own thing.

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

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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Brad Gehman

LOCATION: Lititz, PA

OCCUPATION: Depression, Full Time

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

I live in a town called Lititz, winner of Budget Travel Magazine's "America's Coolest Small Town 2013." There currently aren't any bike shops here. One that used to be around was called The Village Peddler, where I bought my first skate shirt in the eighties. Another was called Bicycle World, which held a few Tour de Lititz races in the mid-90s. Stage racing returned in April 2012 with a three stage race called The Rock Lititz Tour whose third stage was a criterium downtown. A clip of a crash during the crit went viral via NBC Sports' Off The Bench blog.

Why do you love riding in the city?

When I'm out pedaling around town, I'm either getting coffee in the morning at Dosie Dough's, (best buns in town), getting a beer at The Bull's Head, or off to Appalachian Brewing Company to either get my growler filled or buy some bottles of ginger beer. You also might find me riding to the post office to mail random stuff to random buds, or making a trip to the library for reads. I occasionally ride just for fun as well. Like to the mom and pop pharmacy to pick up my Ativan.



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www.vp-usa.com



Brooks C17 Cambium

Brooks is known for their leather saddles, but this summer they're releasing the Cambium C17 saddle, the first non-leather saddle from Brooks in a very long time. It's made from flexible natural rubber with an organic cotton top, with the nameplate and rivets you'd expect from Brooks.

www.brooksengland.com

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The Fyxation Eastside is now available as a complete bike for \$595. Features include a full 4130 chromoly frameset with real world 46 x 17 fixed gearing, 28 mm tires, fender eyelets and Fyxation parts throughout. Available in 49, 52, 55 and 58 cm in matte black, silver or copper.

www.fyxation.com





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www.problemsolversbike.com

The Grime G.O.A.T.

The Grime has introduced the 4130 chromoly G.O.A.T. frameset, the Greatest Of All Track. The bike borrows from the venerable GTB track from the '90s, with integrated headset cups and reinforced dropouts. Steep angles and a short wheelbase give the bike the responsiveness many love, with a sturdy build that fits up to 32 mm tires. Available in five sizes for \$650.

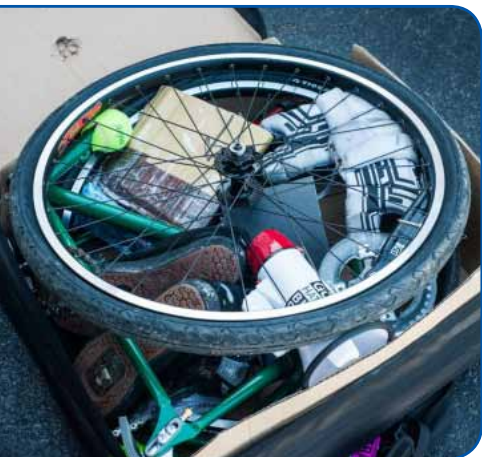
thegrime.bigcartel.com



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Bikes that feature coupler systems for breakdown and easy air or bus travel are continuing to gain in popularity. Given the price of bags on the market, it's no surprise people have been searching for alternatives such as this \$70 NRS bag, meant for stowing an inflatable boat. Though larger bikes may not fit, and the mesh panels necessitate careful packing, the IK size fits a 56 cm bike and 26" wheels with room to spare. Airline legal, the bag is lightweight allowing space for traveling needs without going over the weight limit and has backpack straps for easy carrying.

www.nrsweb.com



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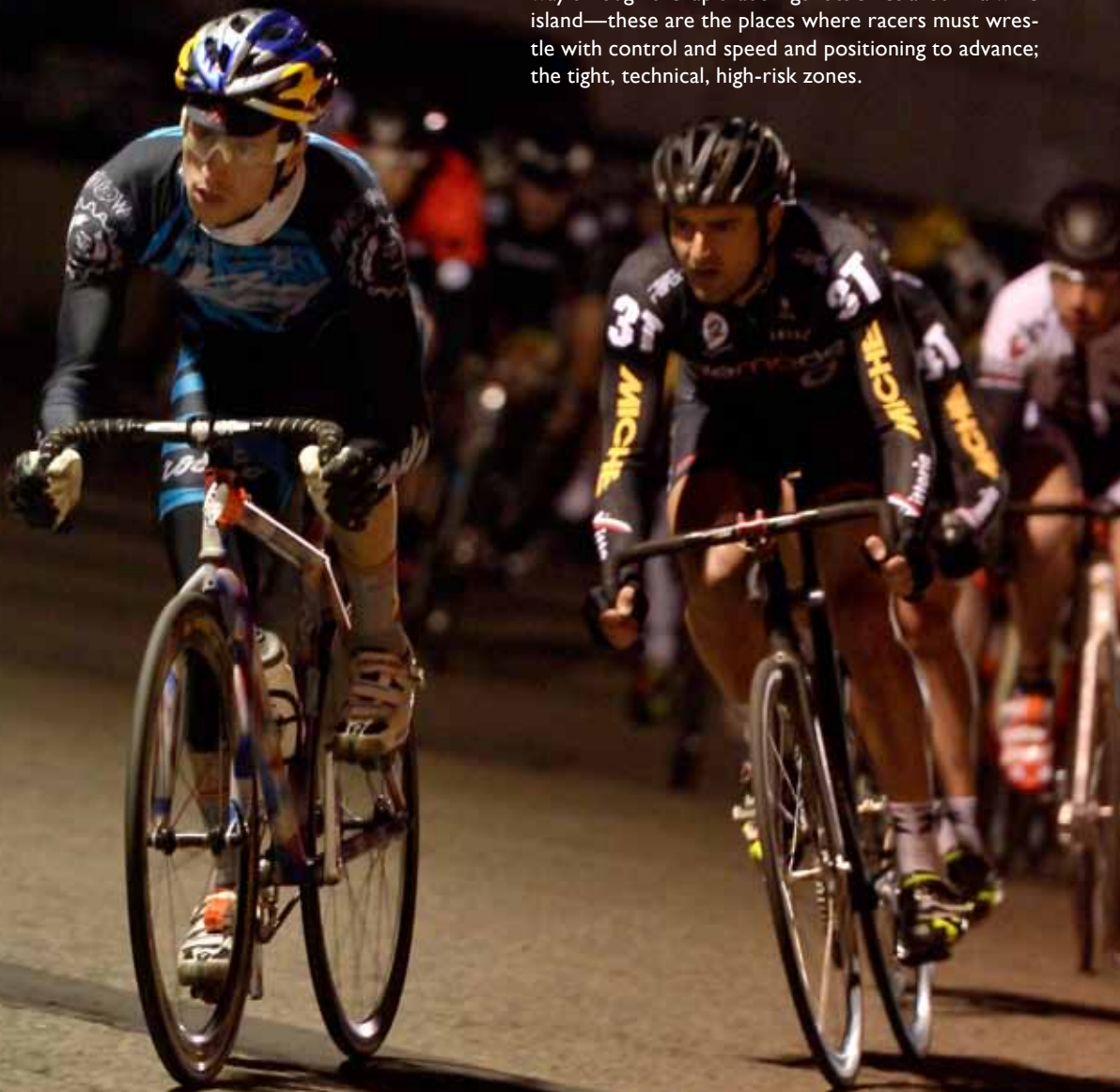
Racing RED HOOK Crit

By Krista Carlson

PHOTOS BY TAKUYA SAKAMOTO
www.newyorkbikedreams.com

Returning racers and newcomers alike streamed into the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook in the early afternoon of March 30, eager to get a feel for the course at the Red Hook Crit.

It was a sunny Saturday, uncharacteristically warm for early spring in New York—a perfect day for a perfect bike race. Loading docks and shipping containers flank the 1.25 km course. Across the Hudson in the distance the Statue of Liberty rose from the horizon. Bikes circle through, putting extra attention on the hairpin turn at the end of the circuit and the bend half-way through the lap that slingshots bikes around a wide island—these are the places where racers must wrestle with control and speed and positioning to advance; the tight, technical, high-risk zones.



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RHC 2013 SERIES SCHEDULE

All races in the series will offer the same challenge in the same format, though the terrain in Barcelona will require strength in climbing. The next race will be held at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on June 8. The navy yard circuit will provide new challenges for racers with narrower sections of course, cobblestones and blind corners. The second race of the 2013 series will be a new milestone in RHC history; it will also be a landmark day for the Navy yard itself, as its first major public event.

ROUND 1: MARCH 30TH, RED HOOK CRITERIUM BROOKLYN

ROUND 2: JUNE 8TH, RED HOOK CRITERIUM NAVY YARD

ROUND 3: AUGUST 24TH, RED HOOK CRITERIUM BARCELONA

ROUND 4: EARLY OCTOBER, RED HOOK CRITERIUM MILANO

www.redhookcrit.com

“It demands a lot of different types of skill,” said Rudy Melo of 5th Floor, “so it makes people question their gearing and it favors different people’s skills—those guys who are used to riding the streets with the sharp stops and fast accelerations; those guys who are used to riding the velodrome and can just maintain that endurance, high speed.”

The unconventional track bike criterium format draws enthusiastic cyclists from the traditional road and track racing domains along with dedicated street racers, from the United States and beyond. Amateur and pro, man and woman; at Red Hook Crit all racers are on the same level and are out because they love the challenge of a good race, especially one as well curated as RHC has become.

“All these guys are coming down and really showing their A-game,” said Christopher Rabadi of Washington D.C. “I’m unaffiliated; I don’t really race for a team so it’s just kind of cool to be in this atmosphere. I’m just a kid that rides his bike and delivers packages for a living.”

Many of the cyclists at Red Hook Crit were supported racers who had earned their backing by proving their mettle within local racing arenas, garnering support from companies that believed in the sport and the racers. Eight women were among the field of 200 racers, including Olympic road racer Ingrid Drexel, coming out from Mexico, and Kacey Manderfield, winner of the first RHC in 2008.

The Red Hook Crit began as a fun way for David Trimble to celebrate his birthday.

“I was a bike racer; a lot of my friends were bike racers,” Trimble recalled. “I was racing alleycats and road races at the time, and I wanted to try and make a race that would attract both alleycat racers and road racers at the same time.”

Before racing bikes Trimble raced shifter go-karts professionally. “My background’s in motorsports, so I took a lot of my ideas from grand prix racing,” said Trimble, “more so than any other established bike racing. I tried to do something in cycling that was completely new.”

Trimble’s grand prix-style bike races provide a spectator-friendly environment, and continue to draw several thousand spectators each year. Another element that comes from grand prix is the circuit design. “I wanted to ride a lap of the course kind of like a racing

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driver would approach a racing circuit,” Trimble says of the technical corners built in to the RHC courses.

Six years since inception, Red Hook Crit has evolved from an annual bike race at the edge of Brooklyn to a world class race series that bridges North America and Europe, and incorporates a 5K running race as well. In 2010 Cinelli and the Bicycle Film Festival became the race’s first sponsors and laid the groundwork to hold a sister race in Milan. This year support from Rockstar Games has made it possible for RHC to evolve in a four-race series that will include the addition of two new races, to be set at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and in Barcelona.

Along with hosting more races, Trimble Racing is also hosting bigger races. Establishing a qualifying round this year lets in twice as many competitors. “That was the biggest thing I was nervous about going into it,” Trimble said, “In the end it worked better than I thought it would.”

Sorted into four groups of 50, racers qualified

according to their fastest lap during the 25-minute rounds. Racers on the borderline watched the times update as new racers placed among the fastest.

“It really set the field correctly. it made the race much safer, kind of weeded out the less experienced riders and also gave the riders an opportunity to ride the course at high speed, you know, really get used to it.”

The mix of RHC vets and a great number of newcomers in the final 100 made for a high-energy race with no clear leader throughout. Both the sun and the field had been set for hours when the race began at 9 that night, launched by the entire crowd counting down the last ten seconds to go. Out of the saddle sprinting blew a force of wind through the night air, electrifying the deep crowd lining every edge of the course. Team efforts dissolved as it became every rider for themselves.

“It’s now or never!” Trimble shouted through a megaphone to the blur of racers passing him as they made the push for the final few laps.

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With three laps to go Austin Horse took to the front of pack. Coming off a recent win at Monster Track, the New York messenger was poised for another victory—but by the time the peloton hit the last lap he had given up his lead. “I burned everything I had to get there.” As Horse fell back another NYC local was on the attack. Neil Bezdek surged forward in the last stretch, flying in across the finish line in a flash.

“There’s no race where you spend the whole race fighting the whole time,” said Evan Murphy, who trailed mere inches behind Bezdek, followed closely by Walton Brush. “When you’re racing, every single thing in your life just falls away.”

Standing on the podium, Bezdek laughs and smiles next to Murphy and Brush. Bezdek stuffs his cash prize in the back of his red champion’s jersey, his face wet with champagne and bearing a wide smile, and holds up the prize Cinelli bike and laughs heartily, happily. This night marks his third RHC win, and an especially sweet one following a crash during RHC Milan last fall that left him unable to finish that day.

“I knew he wanted it more than anyone else,” Trimble said of Bezdek’s win. “There was a lot of people coming into the event that I thought were maybe even a higher caliber of a rider than Neil, but none of them wanted it as much as him.”





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STOOPID TALL

By Krista Carlson

PHOTOS BY HAL BERGMAN

When the streets of Los Angeles were closed to car traffic for CicLAvia in April, bikes of all shapes and sizes came out of the woodwork to enjoy the protected roads. Some of the bikes were old and a little bit crusty, others were brand new, like their riders. One was taller—much taller—than all the others.

At 14.5 ft to the saddle, Richie Trimble's "Stoopidtall" towered high above the moving mass that filled the streets. The unofficial King of CicLAvia and his tall bike were flanked by a protective circle of friends who helped him navigate his way through the crowded streets.





PED XING



“The plan was simple, a group of bikes in front to cork the intersections and a group of us make a barrier around Richie as we ride so no one gets too close to him,” said Rosie Fatemi, who was part of Trimble’s protective bubble of bikes that day.

Five years ago Richie got the itch to build a tallbike; his first also stood head and shoulders above the rest, as a seven and a half-foot triple-tall dubbed Kabuki Sky. Built at the West side bike repair co-op, the Bikewave, Kabuki Sky was one of the first freak bikes to be built among a collective of creative cyclists that banded together to form Los Angelpes.

After Kabuki Sky proved a successful (rideable) tallbike, Trimble eventually decided that it was time to grow—so he added a fourth frame, and Kabuki Sky was reborn as Kafourki Sky.

Instead of adding more frames to build a bigger bike, Stoopidtall is made up of just one common Huffy beach cruiser that has been lengthened with steel tubing to give it a brand new life as an extraordinary freak bike. In place of conventional shop tools Trimble utilized what he had at his disposal—a shopping cart, a log, and a few c-stands—to bend and brace the tubes as he built the bike up. Twelve hours and 32.5 ft of bike chain later, Stoopidtall was born.

“I went on a bicycle ride and someone made a joke about me being jealous that they were on tallbikes and I wasn’t, so I challenged him to the tallest bike in L.A.,” said Trimble, “and then I went and built the tallest bike in L.A.”

Debuting it at CicLAvia, strangers and friends alike gazed upward in awe, including the heckler who had ended up on the other side of the tall bike challenge, Rick Hill.

“The first thought that came to mind was, ‘That jerk set me up and had the metal to build one when he challenged me,’” Hill said, laughing over it. “I am currently working on a bike that will top Stoopidtall, and I’m trying to keep most of the projects details as secret as I can.”

As the pair egg each other on, Trimble hopes to set a new record for the world’s tallest rideable bike before the year’s end. The current record was set by Terry Goertzen in 2004, when he rode an 18 ft, 2.5 in bike in Winnipeg, Canada.





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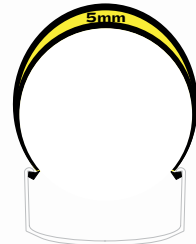
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That the explosion of bespoke road and light touring bikes at handbuilt shows has caught the attention of the large bike companies comes as no surprise, with bikes like the Raleigh Port Townsend clearly taking design prompts from the well-attended shows. While show bikes are out of range for most consumers, the Port Townsend brings the cohesive look of show bikes to a more digestible \$900 complete production build.

Meant as a serious commuter and dirt road explorer, the Port Townsend delivers out of the box. The round-tubed Reynolds 520 butted chromoly frame and drop crown curved blade fork are time tested designs, with geometry tuned for the long haul. The geometry is squarely between 'cross and road, with the 72° head and 73° seat angles of a cross bike, but a road-like 65 mm of bb drop and a 50 mm fork offset for more stable handling. The 1053 mm wheelbase on the

tested 59 cm bike frame is long and stable as compared to road and track bikes, but not as stretched out as a loaded touring bike, and while the top- and head-tube measurements are the same a similarly sized road or 'cross bike, the matching stock stem yields a more upright position with less saddle to bar drop. The small bits like hooded dropouts and a chain keeper show that cyclists that know their way around had their hands in this one. Finished off with metal fenders and small front rack, the Port Townsend appears more put together than many bikes twice its price.

Cantilever brakes paired with comfortable Campy-shaped Tektro levers do the stopping, and while the bike ships with 28 mm tires it has clearance for at least 35 mm tires with fenders for when you need more cushion. A Sora double 50/34 tooth front crankset and an 11-25 cassette provide real world gears, controlled by classic bar end shifters. For those used to integrated

shift and brake levers, bar end shifters have a learning curve and require a more relaxed shift as hand moves back and forth between shifter and bar, but keep the cost down and are durable to a fault. The classic bend bars, faux-quill stem, toe clips with leather straps and riveted saddle match the aesthetic goal.

Over the course of the review there were a few all-day hauls blending road and trail, hitting sections of blacktop between long runs along gravel road or crushed limestone trail. It's not an aggressive feeling bike by any means, but it does not feel sluggish like longer and more relaxed touring bikes. The Port Townsend is stable but not at the total cost of the ride—while certainly not a crit racer, the bike remains enjoyable to ride on short jaunts even if the real specialty of the bike is when the miles really start piling on. All day or across town, the Port Townsend is equipped. During the ride I wanted to take the long road home, after the ride I found myself planning out the next.

At 28 lbs the bike is a far call from lightweight, especially in light of the vast numbers of carbon road bikes more than 10 lbs lighter crowding the shop floor. While the front rack adds to the look and I did find it useful with a packed handlebar bag, you can lose it and 1.5 lbs along with. The metal fenders and mid-level parts also come with a weight penalty, but start changing out these things and you might as well look (and start saving) for a bike more like the one you want.

As an all-weather commuter I can't think of anything save lights and a bottle cage I'd add to the spec, though if I could have two wishes I'd swap the 11-25 cassette for a wider range and spec it stock with larger volume tires. Just a few more teeth on the cassette would make the end of the day hills that much easier, and larger tires the gravel more forgiving. Give me a third wish and I'd turn it into a third bottle mount and maybe even another pair of rear rack eyelets, but these aren't deal breakers. The Raleigh Port Townsend is a wonderfully riding bike, enough so that the miles I turned made me question the worth of paying much more besides feeling better on the scale. For a similar build but with integrated shifters and caliper brakes check out the Raleigh Clubman for a couple of hundred dollars more. www.raleighusa.com





Swobo Novak

Swobo set out to create a high-quality bike with virtually everything you need and hardly anything you don't, all at a reasonable price. The Swobo Novak is the no-nonsense commuter bike they came up with.

At the heart of the bike is a chromoly steel frame-set featuring teardrop profile main tubes, rear rack and fender mounts, as well as bosses for two bottle cages. The Novak's most distinguishing feature is the Shimano 3-speed Nexus drivetrain. For quite a few urban cyclists, one speed is plenty. For others, myself included, gears are nice but simplicity is certainly appreciated.

The Nexus hub offers a 186% overall gear range. Second gear is direct, so the 38 tooth chainring and 19 tooth cog result in 54 gear inches. In first gear you've got the equivalent of a 38 x 25 drivetrain (40 gear inches), and in third gear you have approximately 38 x 14 (73 gear inches). In practice, the gearing has been

awesome at times, somewhat disappointing at others. By that I mean when the gearing was appropriate, I was in seventh heaven. While the low gear did allow me to stand and climb some mighty big hills, it's not a true granny gear. But I'll say this much, after the initial setup was complete I never had to make a single adjustment.

Many companies like to outfit their city bikes with disc brakes, and I'm not one to complain, but they come at a cost. The Novak's Tektro dual pivot caliper brakes do the job, even in wet weather.

At first glance I thought that Swobo had taken the low road and set up the Novak with some imitation metal fenders, but no, they're bona-fide aluminum. Ordinarily, I don't go in for chainguards, but the polished chainguard just seems right for the Novak. I kept thinking, since I've got fenders and a chainguard, can I have a kickstand too?

As you can imagine, the Novak has an upright riding



position—not great for racing, but perfect for spotting jaywalking pedestrians and other road hazards. And to be honest, riding a bike with fenders and a chainguard kind of put me in a different mindset... Dare I say, I felt a little more grown up. Or at least smart. I got passed by quite a few whippersnappers on my commute, but I passed a few fellow commuters as well. In general I felt like taking my time on the Novak, even though it felt great on long descents.

The Novak weighs in at roughly 25 pounds, which is neither especially light nor heavy. It seems that when faced with a choice between light weight and durability, however, Swobo took the high road and accepted the weight penalty. Even though I'm a relatively light rider who does a decent job of avoiding potholes, I can appreciate the durable 36 hole wheelset.

Elsewhere on the bike you'll find Swobo branded components of appropriate quality—bar, stem, grips, post and saddle. I do like the bolt-on bar end caps. The puncture resistant 700c x 28 Kenda Kwest tires did exactly what they're supposed to and I didn't get a single flat during the test period.

Aesthetically, I think the Novak is a pretty sharp looking bike. In my personal opinion, though, the Nexus crankset is a bit of an eyesore. Sure, the satin finish is complimented by the fenders, but for a second imagine how cool this bike would look with polished aluminum crankarms. Now swap those fenders for some shiny hammered ones and you're almost at show bike status.

The Novak retails for \$789 and comes in sizes 48 (tested) through 60. www.swobo.com



Timbuk2 Especial Messenger

With the Especial series Timbuk2 set out to showcase their best materials and workmanship, and the Especial Messenger bag may very well be the best bag they've ever created.

As you might imagine, Timbuk2 went with tried and true Cordura ripstop nylon construction. They also made significant use of thermoplastic polyurethane laminate (TPU) inside and out. The result of the black on black textiles is both subtle and striking. What's more, the entire bag is highlighted with black reflective trim and like all other Timbuk2 bags carries a lifetime warranty.

The Especial Messenger is available in two sizes, and I had a chance to try out both the \$179 small and the pictured \$199 medium. The small bag measures just



under 14 x 16 in, and is a great size for a laptop bag, airline travel, etc. It will work as a commuter bag, but I definitely prefer more cargo capacity. At 18.5 x 16.1 in, the medium bag suits my needs pretty much perfectly. I can fit a change of clothes, shoes,



tools, spares, etc. It's big enough to handle light grocery shopping, and yes, it can hold a case of beer cans.

Some of the most obvious features are the magnetic buckles on the flap. They aren't as big of an improvement as they are when used on a bike helmet, but they're pretty cool. On the more elemental side, the flap has nice gussets and the main compartment is topped with a unique stiffener that helps make the closure extra water resistant. There are a number of external pockets with waterproof zippers, a handful of internal organization pockets and a padded laptop compartment. Like most good bags, the liner is fully floating, so you can ride in the rain with confidence.

The main strap is reversible for left or right shoulder, and the angle is adjustable thanks to some slick use of Velcro on the back of the bag. The main strap features a pad that extends well beyond the upper connection for superior comfort. And Timbuk2 took pains to provide various clips and such to keep the excess straps from flapping around erratically.

My only real criticism is actually more of a suggestion: There should be a size large, and maybe an extra large. No professional bike messenger would use a small or medium sized bag. And if I could only own one bag, I would want one that's larger for true grocery shopping and such. But as I said earlier, for daily use, the medium size suits my needs just fine.

www.timbuk2.com



Crank Brothers Sterling S and Gem S Pumps

In my experience, short pumps are fine for pumping up mountain bike tires, but they're all but useless for higher pressure 700c tires. So imagine my surprise when I managed to adequately inflate a pair of 28 mm tires without breaking a terrible sweat. I can't say it was a quick affair, but both the Sterling S and Gem S managed to get the job done. Sure, it takes a lot of pumping to achieve 90 psi, but it's a matter of patience, not upper body strength.

Both pumps feature a knob that switches between high volume and high pressure. In high pressure mode the pump is remarkably easy to operate, even as the tire reaches the appropriate pressure.

Of the two pumps, of course the Sterling S is the nicer one. It's a hair shorter (171 mm), a bit lighter (116 g) and at \$35, more expensive. It also feels a bit more powerful and boasts a sleeker design with a CNC machined body. Its universal head works with both presta and Schrader valves with no need to adjust the pump head.

The Gem S pump is an exercise in value. At \$22 it's a good looking, affordable pump that will get you home after a puncture without taking up a ton of space in your bag. The Gem S measures 176 mm and weighs 128 g. The head is reversible to accommodate presta or Schrader valves. Both pumps carry a five year warranty. www.crankbrothers.com

BiKASE DRiKASE

The DRiKASE is a simple yet well-executed design that holds your smart phone on top of your stem for times when you may want to have better access to your mobile device while riding. The case protects from moisture, shock, and vibration and fits most phones even with protective cases, with an XL in the works. The urethane window is touchscreen compatible, and besides additional glare in some situations doesn't interfere with phone use. Claimed to be "nearly waterproof," I imagine it would take a storm of biblical proportion for rain to get inside though it is not submersible.

The \$30 DRiKASE held my phone safely and securely, even on rough city streets. I don't envision using this for every ride, but I'll definitely feel comfortable using it when I'm looking for a specific address or riding in another city. It's also nice to note that the mounting strap is removable, so you can use the DRiKASE off the bike. www.alt-gear.com





Banjo Brothers Pocket Cycling Wallet

Not every problem requires an expensive solution. For years a plastic baggie has worked quite well to keep my phone protected from sweat and rain on long rides, but a grocery store zip-lock is far from perfect. The Banjo Brothers pocket cycling wallet is an affordable solution at a mere \$6, providing a water resistant pouch for your phone on one side with two small pockets on the reverse all accessed through the same full length zipper. The clear window is touch screen compatible, and the wallet itself is constructed of waterproof materials though it isn't seam sealed for total immersion, nor is the zipper a fancy waterproof one. Perfect for putting into a jersey pocket or bag and not worrying about it in anything but a full on down-pour, I've been using the wallet for a couple of months without much to note other than finding it incredibly handy. I run my phone without a case, and this provides just enough protection to drop my phone in my bag, use it with wet hands or fumble it into the dirt trailside. The wallet fits everything but the largest smartphones on the market, and has a loop to attach a key ring or carabiner. www.banjobrothers.com

Knog Blinder I Standard

At just 15 g and 25 x 25 x 33 mm, the Blinder I represents the minimalist spectrum of Knog's rechargeable light offerings. Gone are the days of watch batteries and 100% silicone construction, the completely waterproof Blinder I features a slick anodized aluminum face, polycarbonate lens and housing and a silicone bar attachment that fits 22 - 32 mm bars.

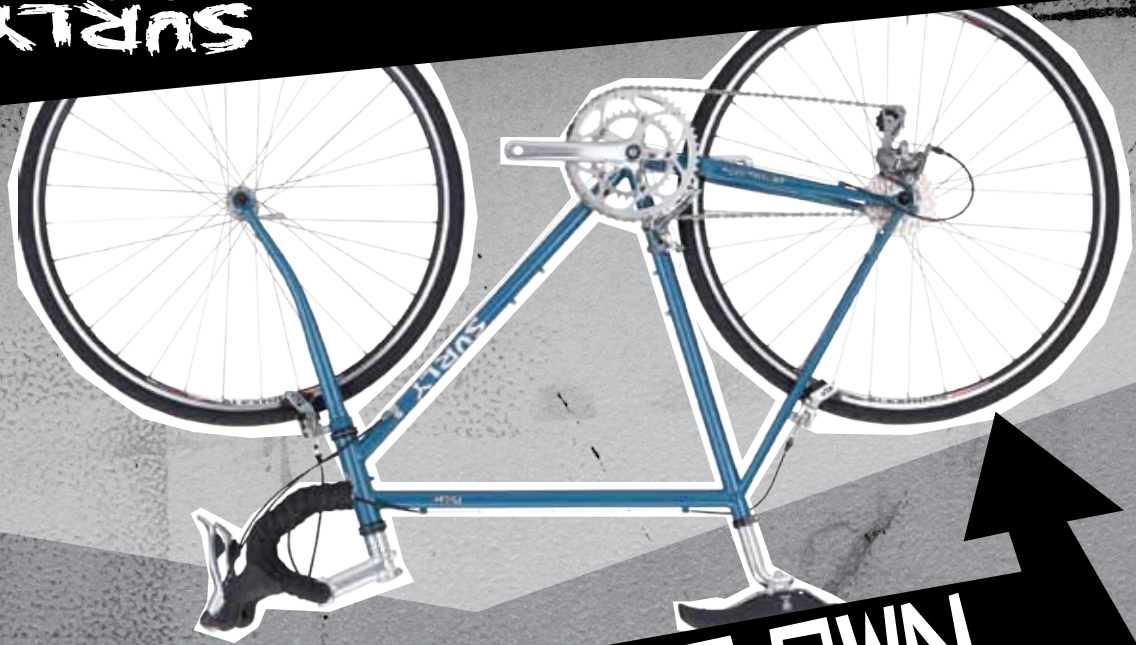
The surface mount LED puts out a reported 20 lumens on the front headlight model and 11 for the rear version. In my opinion, the beam is especially well tuned for a small light.. It's wide and soft, illuminating the immediate area without casting distracting patterns on the road. The main reason to have a light like this is for being seen, and Knog claims this one can be seen from over 500 m.

The USB rechargeable lithium polymer battery is rated at more than two hours on high, and 11 hours in flashing mode. Unlike many rechargeable lights, which have a female connector requiring a cable, the Blinder has a built in male connector to plug directly into a USB port.

The Blinder I retails for \$30. There are a total of six faceplate styles available, including a heart, cog, and flower. A twin-pack of front and rear Blinder I lights is available for \$55. www.knog.com.au



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Rubena V66 Flash Stop Thorn Tires

Rubena may seem like a new name in tires to North American consumers, but back in the Czech Republic they've been making tires since 1928. The V66 is their basic touring and commuter tire, available in 28 - 40 mm widths in 26" and 700c versions, with flat proof and reflective options. The tested V66 has both the 3M reflective stripe on the sidewall and Rubena's Stop Thorn flat protection system, a stiff 3.5 mm thick strip embedded in the tire. At 450 g each the 700c x 32 tires aren't light, and the Stop Thorn strip is anything but supple, but I've always found that heavy tires full of air roll faster than lightweight tires with a flat. So far so good, after months of riding around carrying a pair of spare tubes and a pump I've yet to have had a flat tire. Stiff sidewalls didn't make the V66 tires the easiest to install, but by the same token provide further pinch-flat protection and have bailed me out when not paying the closest attention to airing up before heading out. Perhaps not the best choice for performance riding, but for the everyday commute or a long tour the \$30 Rubena V66 with the Stop Thorn casing and reflective strip seem an appropriate choice.

www.rubenatires.com

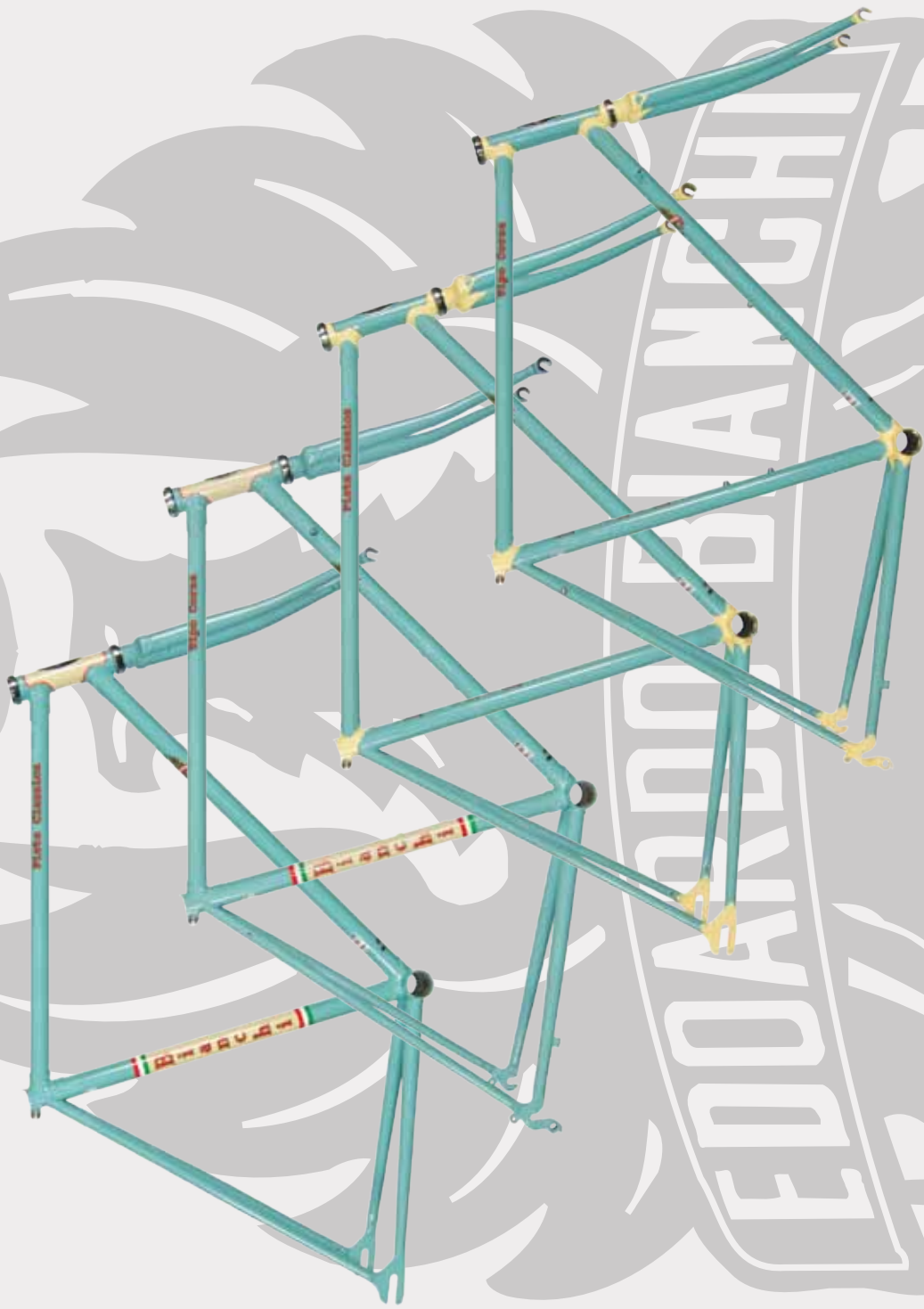
Hold Fast Foot Retention System

Hold Fast foot retention straps remain much the same as ever, identical in construction to the versions I first reviewed back in 2009. In that first review, after but a month of riding, I wrote "...I must say I'm thoroughly impressed, and possibly completely converted to this style of pedal retention." Since then I have in fact completely converted to Hold Fast straps for any of my not-clipless riding — I've not used a toe-clip and strap system since the fall of '09 and have at least three sets of Hold Fast straps in service, including that first review pair.

Even with the latest in casual clipless shoes in hand I still prefer flat pedals and Hold Fast straps for some rides. It's hard to beat a traditional sneaker or soccer shoe for off the bike, or a good waterproof boot for the commute through the winter. Unlike toe-clips, Hold Fast straps don't hurt my toes and in my experience cause far less wear on your shoes at the contact points over the long term. I've gotten used to the decreased cornering clearance of platform pedals as compared to traditional flat road or track pedals, but it is still worth mentioning to new converts.

Hold Fast straps are available for \$57 per pair, and are completely made in the USA. If you had told me five or six years ago that there was a better system for casual shoes than toe-clips and double straps I would have bet against you. Today I'm a convert, it's either clipless or Hold Fast. www.holdfastordie.com





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Rickshaw HALO ZERO

The HALO ZERO is collaboration between Rickshaw Bagworks and HALO. Rickshaw was founded by the former CEO of Timbuk2, Mark Dwight, in 2007. The bags are proudly and sustainably made in San Francisco.

HALO is also from the City by the Bay. Their first product, a fiber optic LED belt, was especially well suited for urban cyclists. The HALO ZERO pairs a cus-

tom HALO LED optic strip with Rickshaw's medium size Zero Messenger bag.

The Zero Messenger is an exercise in simplicity. The bag is made from classic Cordura fabric with no additional liner. This means the bag is light, albeit not waterproof. The bag has just two front pockets and the main compartment—no secret compartments or anything of the sort. In fact, the bag comes with neither a strap pad nor a cross strap—it doesn't even have closure buckles on the flap. You do, of course, have the option of adding these things and more. But it's kind of interesting to strip a bag down to its bare essentials and see how well it performs.

And the bag does perform pretty well. At about 11" high and more than 18" wide, it holds a decent amount of cargo for a smaller sized messenger bag. Its light and flexible nature allows it to easily conform to your body, making it stay in place relatively well under most circumstances. I do personally like the added stability of a cross strap, but I've begrudgingly made due without one. You can order one separately that attaches to the bag's existing D-rings. I also kind of like having buckle closures, but they can be purchased separately at the time of order. Additionally, an optional padded laptop compartment can be attached to the existing Velcro strip inside the main compartment. It's all very well thought out. I do rather wish that the bag came with larger Velcro strips, though.

The HALO component attaches via Velcro to the outside of the bag. The illuminated portion is about 5" tall and 12" wide, and is covered by a removable translucent fabric so that it's essentially impossible to tell that it's a light when not in use. The unit is powered by two standard CR2025 batteries which should last between 20 and 75 hours, depending on whether you ride in solid, strobe or flashing mode.

Unfortunately, my one big nit to pick with this bag is that the light just isn't very bright. Most high visibility rear lights will temporarily blind you if you stare right at them. This is not the case with the HALO light. It's a nice addition to an existing nighttime safety system, but unfortunately I don't feel as though it's bright enough to rely on by itself.

The \$150 HALO ZERO is available in black with red, yellow, green or blue accents, and the HALO shines in the corresponding color. www.rickshawbags.com

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A BIKE SHOP *for the* WHOLE WORLD

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY DEREK MCINTIRE

Stepping out of the lobby and into the parking lot at Kisumu International Airport, I got my first glimpse of Kenya. The sun dangled behind an umbrella tree, creating a silhouette almost synonymous with an African sunrise. I could already see workers tilling the fields as I looked out beyond the roadway. Small buses, pedestrians, and of course bicycle riders hurried by. There was no diluted big city entrance for me. No prefabricated or framed perspective. I had been dropped straight into the heart of Africa.





I was here to volunteer my time at the Ekialo Kiona Bicycle Project on Mfangano Island, just off the shores of Kenya in Lake Victoria. Originally, I had planned to come to East Africa and spend a couple months riding my bicycle, but upon discovering Ekialo Kiona I was fascinated and drawn immediately to their story. So I changed my plans and decided to spend a month living on the island, offering my skills as a bike mechanic. In return I hoped to learn about the people and history of the island, while developing my own skills and experiencing life in a new place.

After a two hour minibus ride, and about four hours getting sunburnt in a large wooden canoe, I finally arrived at Sena Beach on Mfangano Island. I was met by a young man named Tielen, the manager at the Ekialo Kiona bike shop. Tielen is a friendly, easy going guy who's a skilled carpenter and electrician and served as the grounds keeper at Ekialo Kiona before becoming the bicycle shop manager. He was to be my host on the

island. I would live on his land, eat with his family, and spend most of my time working with him at the shop.

My first impression of the island was its staggering landscape. It's the largest island in Lake Victoria, and at the center, rises to over 5500 ft in elevation. Villages dot the shores, and farms sprawl up the slopes, where they meet rocky cliffs and thick forest. Banana, mango and coconut trees lay closer to shore, where most of the population lives.

I made my way through Sena, getting my first glimpse of the bustling market place, the island's largest. Shacks put together with sticks and tin served as restaurants, bars, electronic stores and the like. Hand painted signs boasted "Ghetto Electronics" and "Pimp Ass Hotel" etc. The trickle down of western influence was everywhere. It was busier than I expected on a Friday afternoon as we made our way by motorbike to the village of Malamasa, where I would be calling home for the next four weeks.

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The bike shop itself is part of a community center called Ekialo Kiona, which, in the Suba language, means “the whole world.” Started by locals with the help of an NGO called The Organic Health Response in 2006, the center was meant to provide computer training as an incentive to be tested for HIV. Mfangano has an estimated 30 to 40% HIV prevalence, and overcoming the stigma attached to the sickness, as well as providing medical treatment and access to counseling are OHR’s main objectives. The bicycle shop was created in early 2012, with the help of Bicycles for Humanity, as a means of mobilizing the island communities and getting people better access to much needed medication and counseling.



With a population of around 20,000 people, and a 40 mile long coast, transportation is an issue. Recent developments have brought a road that circumnavigates the island, and a regular ferry that connects Mfangano to the mainland, but infrastructure is rough, and electricity is still only available to a limited portion of the island.

Earlier in the year, the first matatu (a minibus used for public transport) was brought to the island, but on its first day of operation it crashed while attempting to climb a steep, rocky portion of the road on the north side of the island. The accident left one person dead, and several injured. This was the first and last attempt at introducing regular automotive service to the island. My first weekend on Mfangano, I spent a day riding around the island, and came across the vehicle, left abandoned on the side of the road. These roads were not built for cars.



Without automobiles, most people have relied on motorbike taxis to get them to the market, work, or the medical centers. This can be costly. In a country where unemployment rates are as high as 40%, and many people rely on fishing and farming for food, the extra burden of paying for transportation is not always possible. The heavy, rod-brake bikes from India and China widely available throughout Africa work for some people, but traveling outside the main market is difficult, as the roads become extremely rough. These bikes often break, and are not suitable for climbing steep hills, so most people either pay for a motorbike, or more often, have to walk long distances for daily necessities.

In July 2012, Bicycles for Humanity sent the first shipment of mountain bicycles to Mfangano, and Tiel-



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Traveling outside the main market is difficult, as the roads become extremely rough.

len and his team got to work. By December, they had assembled more than two hundred and fifty bicycles, and sold most of them to Ekialo Kiona members, with some bicycles reserved for community health workers and research teams. These bicycles made navigating the rocky roads between villages possible, and connected communities and people with crucial resources, including much needed HIV treatment.

My job was to work with Tielen in the shop, assisting him with organizing and developing good work practices and methods. I also offered some basic mechanics training to volunteers who were interested in learning. My first day in the shop I met Sam, a local farmer who had recently rekindled his affection for the bicycle, thanks to Ekialo Kiona's project. He was there, along with three other students, for the mechanic training.

Sam was a daily commuter, and rode his bike everywhere. I spoke with him at length about his history with bicycles, and how he plans to use his skills as a mechanic to earn a living and help others. His interest in bikes started when he was ten years old. While his father was away working, Sam would take his father's bicycle and that's how he learned to ride. Although he got many punctures, his father never questioned him about using it. Soon though, life moved on, and the bicycle was left behind.

When the first shipment came to Mfangano, Sam, at the age of 50, purchased his first bicycle, 40 years after learning how to ride. It took him a month or so to get used to it, but he said he never forgot how to ride a bike. Since then, he has ridden all the way around Mfangano and beyond. He beamed with pride as he told me he took his bicycle over 200 km from Luanda to Kisumu, and back. He hasn't met anyone from Mfangano who has ridden that far.

My best student, Sam was often at the shop before I was. He helped organize parts, fix punctures, and developed his skills as a mechanic. While others often

took breaks, relaxing in the shade of a papaya tree, or quenching their thirst with juice from fresh mangos, he was always working. There were endless amounts of bikes to fix, as people stopped by on a daily basis with new problems and issues. He may have worked on all of them.

Sam was not the only one to embrace and celebrate the bicycle. The other projects at Ekialo Kiona were all enhanced and supported by the bicycle project. From the media team commuting to work by bicycle, to the community health workers using their bicycles for field work, and the radio team pedaling their way to interviews, it was clear these bicycles were essential to the mobility of the Ekialo Kiona staff, and everyone seemed to enjoy their rides.

In my time on Mfangano, I can safely say I gained far more than I was able to give. Spending a month in a mud hut on the side of a mountain with no electricity or running water, I was able to strip away a lot of the unnecessary burdens of living in the modern world. I was able to glimpse into the lives of Tielen and his family, as well as our neighbors in Malamasa. I was able to see how in a place like Mfangano, a rural island community that is beginning to develop quickly, the bicycle can realize its true potential.

As an efficient and sustainable form of transportation, bicycles can play a key role in community development. They help create healthy populations through physical exercise and by connecting people with resources and each other. They bring not only the need for skilled workers and employment, but also the simple pleasure of self propelled motion. Bicycles are empowering and joyful, and Tielen and his crew recognize this. The mobility and freedom that bicycles have brought to their island has fueled their passion, and continues to bring them hope and progress toward better community health.

As I left Mfangano, pedaling along the chunky dirt road towards the ferry, and pondering my experience, it was easy to see the bicycle's immense value. This hundred and fifty year old technology will continue to stay relevant and have a meaningful impact for many years to come. The population on Mfangano is rising, infrastructure is improving, and the future is changing. As the island grows, so will Ekialo Kiona, and I think the bicycle will play a crucial role in linking "the whole world" together.



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TRACK RACING IN ST. LOUIS

By Matt Hartman and Kayce Shelton

PHOTOS BY ERNESTO PACHECO

They say that track racing is one of the most addictive types of bike racing. Over and over people say once you take a lap on the velodrome you'll be hooked forever. Fixed gear culture has exploded over the past 10 years, and much of this popularity can be attributed to things like the allure of the bike messenger, the aesthetic of the fixed gear bike and the ability to customize it. Most riders aren't familiar with the roots of the track bike and racing on the velodrome, and St. Louis is no different. Until now.

St. Louis' Penrose Park Velodrome has been around since 1962 and has birthed both national and Olympic champions. Until recently the Penrose Park Velodrome has been a hidden jewel in St. Louis reserved for riders in the know. On Thursday nights you will find a tight knit group of racers competing in low key but highly competitive races until the sun goes down. The velodrome has no lights, plumbing, parking lot, bathrooms or bleachers. The first sign went up last week at the entrance to the track.



With the goal of introducing more people to track racing, SpokedSTL put on a free eight week long clinic for new riders. Until this season, it was more or less the same racers coming out every week. Thanks to the clinics the racing population has nearly doubled. New interest from riders of various disciplines as well as juniors has created a buzz around the track. SpokedSTL Team rider Crystal Lashley was one of the people we had in mind when developing the clinic—a strong rider, but unsure about racing. “Had you asked me a year ago if I planned on racing,” she said, “the answer would have been an embarrassed laugh and a meek ‘no.’ I had zero confidence.” The Velo Clinic helped her and over twenty other new riders give track racing a shot. Every clinic night consisted of a combination of explanation of technique, etiquette, and strategy as well as demonstrations and practice drills. Most nights ended with clinic participants racing against each other in events that are a part of the sanctioned race series.

The growing interest in the sport and the venue has sparked large fundraising efforts to reach a goal of \$650k to revamp the track. We want our track to be on par with other velodromes in the country in hopes we can draw racers from around the country. Currently the track’s surface has serious cracks and jarring bumps, among other set backs to the facility a sewer pipe under the track collapsed in the 1970s and remains in disrepair. Penrose Velodrome has been resurfaced a few times since, but the cracks continue to reemerge due to the unstable ground underneath. The Penrose Park Steering Committee hopes to level the current track and rebuild it using concrete. During this redevelopment, the goal is to run electricity and plumbing for lights and bathrooms.

Groups like SpokedSTL and Wolfpack HuSTL have grown a large base of urban riders in St. Louis, many of them already on fixed gears. The SpokedSTL alleycats and off the radar events have generated a large draw from cyclists of all types. Some of the fastest riders in the city had never been to the track or tried their hand

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at formally organized racing before the Velo Clinic. Emmett Wilson has a similar experience to many of the riders that were a part of the Velo Clinic “After riding my fixed gear for several months with Wolfpack HuSTLe I started noticing myself becoming stronger... I found myself wanting to give the velodrome a try and really enjoyed it when I did.”

This new group of racers arrived with a lot of bike experience. Toph Perron thinks that his time on the streets helps him on the track, “Riding in traffic you have to be aware at all times. It’s something that can be directly applied to mass start races.” There are some major differences between dodging cars on your way to work and racing shoulder to shoulder on the track, but an urban fixed gear rider can come in with skills that translate well. The biggest factor is that most riders who came out to the Velo Clinic already have the stamina to hold up for a night of hard racing. After the eight weeks of training and instruction the group is ready to take on the field for the Mr. Bumpyface Track Series.

SpokedSTL’s Velo Clinic is just one piece in the

growing work from many sources at the Penrose Park Velodrome. This off season a new website for the track was launched to centralize the needs of the velodrome community. There have also been several fundraisers organized. And there has been a large media push to get the word out about the track’s current usage and our fundraising goals. In the meantime masters world champion Jim Host helped a group of riders with some major concrete patching on the track. Mr. Bumpyface is a little less bumpy, but it is not there yet. To go along with SpokedSTL teaching skills to new riders, national champion Zak Kovalcik is going to be hosting a training to teach more experienced racers how to run madison races. The SpokedSTL Velo Clinic is just one part of the track community. Community is the best way to describe track racing in St. Louis. It is by the hard work of so many people that track racing is growing in St. Louis.



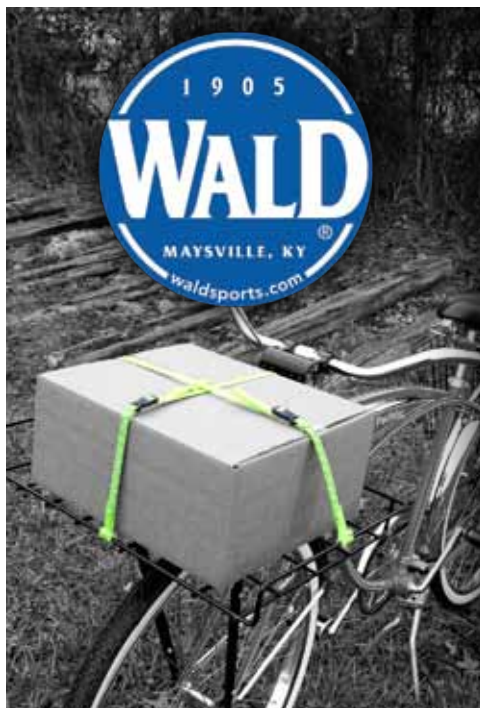
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Anti-Seize Compound

By Brad Quartuccio

One of the more frustrating workshop situations is a parts seizure, when a bottom bracket, seatpost or bolt just won't budge not due to overtightening or deformation but because of a chemical reaction locking the two metals in place. Defense is the best offense, with the appropriately named anti-seize compound the shield of choice.

Bearing grease works well enough to prevent corrosive seizure in most cases, but anti-seize is inexpensive insurance against galvanic seizure between dissimilar metals. When in contact two metals can form a galvanic cell, especially in the presence of water and salt, forming anode (current flows in) and cathode (current flows out) with deposits forming on the cathode as the anode corrodes. Galvanic reactions of dissimilar metals exchanging electrons is what powers cheap batteries, and what can lead to a seatpost or bottom bracket cup stuck in place as the deposits cause the post or cup to "grow" enough to become mechanically stuck. Anti-seize is a lubricant with solid particles of copper, aluminum and/or graphite suspended in it that prevents the galvanic reaction better than a barrier of grease alone. Beyond that, the solid particles suspended in anti-seize continue doing their job of preventing seizure even when the grease is washed away, contaminated or all together dried out.

While anti-seize is a good idea between aluminum and steel, be certain to always use it with titanium frames and parts more prone to galvanic seizure. When anti-seize isn't available use grease, but never substitute anti-seize for lubricant in bearings or with carbon parts. In the shop it is worth noting that anti-seize is remarkably hard to remove from your hands or other surfaces, more so than marine grease—application is best handled carefully, with a cotton swab even. Just a few dollars at the auto parts store on a lifetime home shop supply of anti-seize can go a long way to prevent a potentially expensive lesson later.



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Gear Inches

By Brad Quartuccio

Over a century since the death of the penny-farthing we still quantify bicycle gearing in reference to a high wheel bicycle. Like the terms horsepower and album, gear inches quantifies today's technology in terms of the past, left over from when safety bicycles with equal sized wheels took over the market towards the end of the 19th century.

High wheelers are the first and most efficient of fixed gears, with the crank arms directly attached to the axle and no drivetrain to speak of yielding a 1:1 ratio of wheel to crankarm revolutions. Given the design, it was the size of the wheel that determined and described the relative speed and pedaling effort of each bike. The larger the wheel, the harder to pedal and the faster a high wheeler can ultimately go. With chain driven bicycles the gear ratio (front chainring : rear cog, ex. 46:16 or 3:1) represents how many times the rear wheel turns for each crank revolution, with a 3:1 ratio meaning the wheel revolves three times for each turn of the pedals. As bikes with smaller wheels and chain drives appeared and gained popularity, with the rear wheel turning at a speed different than that of the cranks, it was necessary to describe them in the familiar terms of the high wheeler.

Gear inches is an expression of bicycle gearing equivalent to the diameter of a high wheel—one crank revolution of a modern bicycle geared at 70 gear inches moves the bicycle forward the same distance as a penny-farthing with a 70" wheel. Note that gear inches is not an expression of the distance forward a bicycle will travel in one crank revolution but merely a measure used to equate modern bicycles to high wheelers. Simply multiply gear inches by a factor of π to calculate the inches of rollout or "development."



Gear Inches = Wheel Diameter in Inches X (Number of Front Chaining Teeth / Number of Rear Sprocket Teeth)



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OUTRO



The second annual Battle for the Midwest bench tournament went down this past April in Minnesota at the Mankato Curling Club. Teams of seven from across the midwest tried to lay claim to the trophy. Columbia, MO eventually beat Milwaukee, WI in the finals.

Photos by Liam Gilson, www.liamgilson.com



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