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URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #42 • June 2014

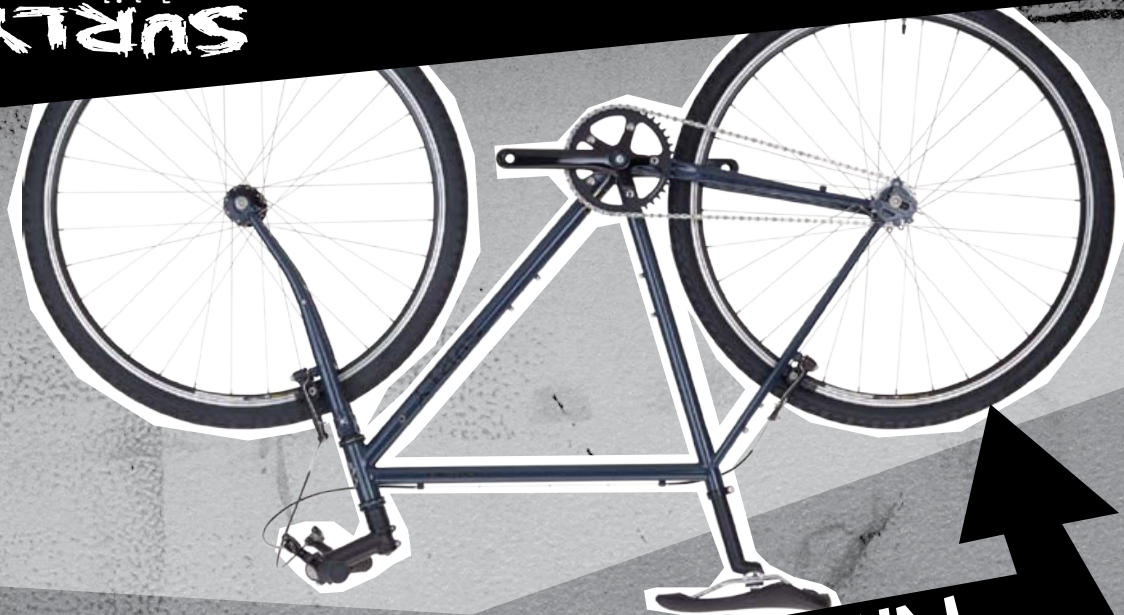


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Montano Velo is the classic rider's shop—family owned with deep mechanical expertise and a reverence for where bikes have been and where they are going next. Located on Piedmont Blvd. in Oakland CA, the compact shop balances a neighborhood feel with top end race bikes and service, and serves as the incubator for the Broakland Bikes brand. The walls have a lifetime of riding ephemera to digest, the tight rack of new bikes dense with custom road and track bikes alongside All-City, Bianchi, Pinarello and Surly. When travels turn to the East Bay, Montano Velo serves as home away from home. www.montanovelo.com

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Issue #42

June 2014

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On the cover: The urban cycling scene in Chiang Mai, Thailand is burgeoning. Much like the American bike scene several years ago, alleycats and Critical Mass rides are new and exciting. Photo by Harry Virtanen

Co-conspirators: Takuya Sakamoto, Eloy Anzola, Scott Klocksin, Michelle Cleveland, Kevin Dillard, Ryan Lindsay Bartz, Rudy Gonzalez, Adam Kroopnick, Andy Singer Aaron Thomas Smith and Craig Lindner

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

Urban Velo will be published five times in 2014, on the even months from April through December. Issues are available online and on iOS, Android and Kindle platforms. Print copies are available at 350+ bike shops across the USA.

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Contents: The Workman Cycles factory in Queens, NY builds steel bikes for factory use. Read more on page 56. Photo by Takuya Sakamoto



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EDITOR'S STATEMENT


By Brad Quartuccio



Moving the goalposts. It can seem to take an eternity, but the place of bikes in North American culture has shifted. The bike infrastructure of today is leaps and bounds ahead of a decade ago, and unacceptable by tomorrow's standards. In many parts of the continent bikes racks were quaint objects at schools, libraries and token bike friendly businesses—today they are sought after municipal installations that are often full beyond capacity. Recreational trails are sprouting vital commuter networks, lanes that not long ago simply didn't exist are packed and slated for expansion, renegade mountain bike trails are being adopted by city parks departments.

There is room for improvement. Continued infrastructure gains are important, sensible law enforce-

ment is paramount. This isn't about cracking down on rolling through stop signs, but about the victim blaming mentality that continually sees aggressive and inattentive motorists getting away with murder. With more riders than ever using bikes for recreation and transportation the number of bicycle to car collisions have risen, with the rider near universally coming out on the worse end of the equation. An attitude shift at the top will undoubtedly come at the cost of the more or less lawless existence of bikes some of us have taken full advantage of at times, but the trade off seems worth it to reduce the number of riders being maimed and killed without recourse.

It's a good time for bicycles, and a good time to move the goalposts. The infrastructure ball is rolling, next stop accountability. 

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

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PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

By Jeff Guerrero



The other morning I left the house and raced down the street. I leaned around the corner with no heed for the stop sign, leaving behind my relatively quiet residential street and entering the bike lane that parallels a busy, high-speed thoroughfare. I stood up on the pedals and looked over my shoulder as I crossed over two lanes to hang a left onto another busy street, albeit one with shared use markings dotting the right lane.

I raced around the circle, grunted up the first little hill and dipped into the quiet neighborhood on the left to traverse the side streets. As I cruised along the tree lined avenue a rather welcome feeling of serenity came over me. Maybe it was the scenery, or the cool morning air, but I found myself pondering, "What's the hurry?"

Finding myself at a loss for a justification, I proceeded to ride the way I imagine John Lennon, Jesus

or Siddhartha might commute to work. Cool, calm, polite. I stopped at all of the stop signs. I waited at red lights. I let cars pull out in front of me, and I pulled over to let a few pass. I stopped for food. I said hello to an old friend. I kept on riding, and the funniest thing happened...

Nothing.

I didn't get buzzed by any cars. I didn't hear any horns honking. No close calls with pedestrians. No angry bus drivers. No menacing taxi cabs. I cruised through downtown unmolested, and I linked up with the riverside bike path without even breaking a sweat. It was one of the best commutes I've ever had.

I'm not going to suggest that any sort of karmic forces were at work, nor do I intend on riding like I'm on tranquilizers on a regular basis. But the experiment was undoubtedly interesting, and quite possibly worth repeating.

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Neil Bezdek Red Hook Crit **BROOKYN**

photo: Eloy Anzola



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Thomas Connolley
LOCATION: Wantage, England
OCCUPATION: Scientist

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

I live in Wantage, a small town about 13 miles south of Oxford, England.

Wantage is compact and most places I need to go, apart from work, are within a 10 minute walk or bike ride. There is one bicycle shop, several reasonable cafés and there are good mountain and road biking routes. Wantage is close to the Ridgeway National Trail, which is open to cyclists and follows a route that has been used by humans for thousands of years. The town also has a branch of the Cyclist's Touring Club (CTC) who organize various rides and tours.

I mainly use my bike to commute to work, 8 miles away. I have a choice of routes, either a busy main road, or a beautiful cross-country route using backroads and tracks. I'll take the main road if it is icy or in really wet weather. The back country route can get very muddy. It's not a route for a road bike, and I think it's important for cyclists to assert their right to be on the main roads as well. There's an active bicycle users group on the site where I work who campaign for cyclist's rights and better infrastructure. There are several towns and large employment sites in the area which are within a half hour ride of each other, if only the infrastructure was better. Most people commute by car.

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

Probably Canberra, the capital of Australia. It is well planned, with good cycling routes to get around town and good places to ride on the weekend, for both roadies and mountain bikers. The one drawback are the swooping magpies! Some male birds get very territorial and aggressive in the spring, and will swoop on pedestrians and cyclists. Aussie readers will know what I mean!

Why do you love riding in the city?

Bicycles are like the fairytale "seven league boots." You can get so much further for no more effort than walking. I've always used a bike as a means of transport, for getting to work, running errands or just going for a ride. I love moving through places and landscapes at bike pace. Unlike a car or bus, there are no barriers between you and the world. Even the fickle English weather feels good! I've got a fairly demanding job and the half hour rides morning and evening are such a good way to relax and balance the mind and body. If I've been working on a technical problem during the day, the answer will often come to me on the ride home.

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

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Kelli Samuelson at the RHC. Photo by Eloy Anzola, www.groovylab.com

Redhook Crit Holds Women's Race for the first Time

The Redhook Criterium, now in its seventh year, started as a small affair drawing mostly friends and taking over streets in a quiet coastal Brooklyn neighborhood. It's now one of the biggest unsanctioned bicycle races in the world with incarnations in Milan, Barcelona and Brooklyn. This year's event was the first with a separate women's race.

Kacey Manderfield Lloyd, who won the first RHC in 2008 against a male-dominated field, was tapped by RHC founder David Trimble to organize the women's race.

"There've been requests to do a women's race

for a while," she said. "So I wasn't too surprised when David asked me to head it up."

The women who made it to the podium received exactly the same prize money as the men, something that is still not universal in the world of road and track cycling.

No license is required to race RHC events. But brakeless track bikes and drop bars are, as is some degree of bike handling skill. A 180 degree turn, a high-speed chicane and a challenging 90 degree turn interspersed with straightaways made for a fast-moving yet technical course.

On race day, the word "monsoon" was banded about—with some justification. The rain started before the first qualifying race and caused the women's race to be pushed hours back in hopes that the weather would improve. It did not. With temperatures hovering in the mid forties Fahrenheit most of the day, that look of post-race agony that adorns the face of any racer could be found even on the faces of some of the rain-soaked spectators by day's end.

"It's probably good that it was raining during qualifying," Lloyd said. "That way the riders got to test the grounds and get an idea of what they were up against."

Riders of either gender were undeterred, though there were several crashes throughout the day. A spill on one of the tightest turns on the 1/4 mile course involved five riders in the women's main race. The sound of racers smacking into a set of well-placed hay bails at around 20mph was terrifying, but what stuck in your ears was the collective sigh of relief when everyone rejoined the race.

Elsewhere on the course during the women's race, Shane Ferro, passing a lapped rider, hit a chainlink fence so hard her collar bone punctured one of her lungs. After a week in a hospital, she was in good spirits and couldn't wait to be back on her bike.

Jo Celso, who travelled from L.A. to race with the Wolfpack Hustle team, stayed on two wheels for the whole women's race and took first place.

"It was obviously a tremendous show of grit and compassion by all racers," Lloyd said. Of the 37 women who registered, 31 came out and raced. "Given the weather conditions," she said, "I was extremely happy with that number." -Scott Klocksinn



World Naked Bike Ride

I imagine most cyclists cringe at the thought of riding nude. We have enough problems with comfort and chafing while clothed, so to remove those somewhat protective barriers seems counterintuitive. But the 10,000 strong World Naked Bike Ride in Portland, Oregon proves that cyclists are not only willing to ride in the nude, but enjoy it greatly...despite any discomfort. Volunteer organizer, Meghan Sinnott, explained the ride as primarily a protest, of oil-dependent transportation, lack of awareness towards cyclists, and dominant culture's limited view of accepted body image. Put those together and you have a roving party of naked cyclists looking to draw attention to their causes while shedding some inhibitions at the same time.

The World Naked Bike Ride began, as named, in 2004 with 125 riders, but is now approaching numbers that make organization more and more difficult. The organizing group fluctuates each year and is dependent upon donations to secure permits and promotional materials. In contrast to the free-form nature of Critical Mass, the World Naked Bike Ride is coordinated with the police and the mass nudity displayed is protected under the rights of protest as free speech. In all its years of existence, only a handful of riders have

been cited with infractions, which were either dismissed in court or involved very light consequences. Now that the ride is established in Portland, ticketing is no longer related to public indecency.

Sinnott admits Portland is not known for its racial diversity, but Facebook statistics show riders attending from all over the world and a gender breakdown that is almost equal between men and women. She also points out the average age isn't as young as expected, with most riders falling in the 25 to 44 age category.

Although gathering thousands of cyclists together, in the nude, to ride bikes is a feat in itself, the World Naked Bike Ride has generated considerable media coverage for the issues at hand, convinced individuals of all types to shed both clothing and a fear of riding in traffic, and compelled participants to buy bikes for themselves, if only to join in on the fun. The extended impact of the ride reaches further than expected, but Sinnott states one of the problems going forward is keeping the message of reducing oil dependency and accepting all body types from getting too diluted with increasing numbers. Her personal goal with this year's ride is to make sure the protest issues are front and center.

The ride is popular with cyclists and onlookers because it involves nudity, but Sinnott believes that only outsiders will try and sexualize the ride, while participants understand it is just good fun with an important message. Bystanders have tried to exploit the ride with photos and videos, but in Sinnott's words, "in the end, thousands of naked people biking is not sexy." This may be true, but that doesn't mean the ride won't be attractive to more and more people each year.

The Portland edition of the World Naked Bike Ride takes place on June 7th, but you can find upcoming rides closer to your area and around the world at wiki.worldnakedbikeride.org. -Scott Spitz

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT



Abbey Bike Tools Crombie and Whip-It Combo

Abbey Bike Tools is a relatively new entrant to the tool market, making short run tools for professional mechanics over the past couple of seasons. The double sided Crombie is a \$45 tool with a Shimano/SRAM cassette lockring tool on one side, and a Campagnolo spline on the other. The long, solid handle gives plenty of leverage to break a stuck cassette lockring free, and more than enough to tighten it down far too much if you're not careful. Since you tend to use a cassette locking tool in conjunction with a chain whip, conveniently so the Crombie handle is designed to slip inside of the \$40 Whip-It chain whip. Check out their HAG derailleur hanger alignment gauge too, touted as a rebuildable, shop quality tool and the last one any shop will ever have to purchase. Made in Bend, OR. www.abbeybiketools.com



Marin Lombard 2015

Murdered out bikes don't always work, but the new 2015 Marin Lombard is an example of it working and working well. This \$1500 complete bike features an aluminum frame and carbon fork with geometry brought over from their cyclocross race bike and massaged just a bit for better all day performance. Avid BB7r disc brakes do the stopping with SRAM Apex 10 speed shifters mated to an X7 mountain clutch rear derailleur changing gears, and preventing thrown chains. The 50/34 front rings and 11-36 cassette have plenty of range for the commute or all-day mixed surface ride. The tubeless ready rims are a great touch at the price point, and the front fender mounts and double eyelets in the back make it a capable commuter or light tourer. The color scheme will look good no matter the current day's style, with reflective highlights adding a touch of shine to the black on black frame. With the chance to ride the new Lombard around San Francisco for a long day of exploring it proved to be a fun and capable ride. It had the gear range to handle the steep climbs, and felt stable bombing and weaving the other side. Road, light trails, anything in between. Fast weekend rides, in-town commutes, and the occasional two or three night tour make sense on this platform. Look for a lower tiered \$1000 model soon. www.marinbikes.com



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SRAM Force CXI

The past couple of seasons have seen an explosion of single ring, 1x setups on mountain and 'cross bikes. Utilizing much of the technology from their 1x mountain groups SRAM has announced Force CXI, a 1x11 group bound to serious commuters and all-round riders besides the cyclocross racers it is squarely aimed at. Homespun 1x systems have always required a chain retention device of some sort, and even then can suffer from thrown chains or excessive chain slap. SRAM uses a chainring with taller teeth and an alternating narrow/wide tooth pattern and a clutch rear derailleur to keep the chain engaged and control excess movement. Unlike the mountain version, the Force CXI uses the same cassette body as before, making the group compatible with the 10- or 11-speed wheels people already own. Chainrings are compatible with compact cranks and available in 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 tooth sizes, and the group uses a SRAM 1170 11-26, 11-28 or 11-32 cassette. The group, sans brakes, is expected to retail for \$1000. www.sram.com



The Kaneg Front Micro Pannier

The Kaneg front micro pannier is just big enough to hold six bottles and a rolled up blanket, and has a carrying strap for when you get to your destination. It's simple and easy to like—just enough room for a light picnic or day ride. www.kruschrhoades.com



Detroit Cargo Griswold Leather Frame Bag

At home in the fanciest office or swank restaurant, the Detroit Cargo Griswold frame bag is positioned for those more apt to down fancy cocktails than tallboys. The Griswold is made from thick vegetable tanned leather with hand burnished edges and antique brass hardware. There is a single pocket on the inside and out, with a removable shoulder strap for when it's not attached to the toptube. Give it a few years use and this bag is destined to show wear like a classic professor's briefcase. Available in three colors for \$220, each bag is hand sewn in Detroit MI. www.detroitcargo.com



Double O Bike Light

Most lights are easily removable to make taking them with you a reality, and the Double O takes it an extra step with a magnetic fastening system. The light bodies snap together when off the bike into a single unit, and the hole is large enough to pass a u-lock through if you're looking to fairly inconspicuously and securely leave them behind. The lights are USB rechargeable, with a 2 hour steady and 4 hour flashing runtime, with 80 lumens of front and 45 lumens of rear output. The front and rear pair was crowdfunded at a \$130 pre-order level. www.double-o-light.com



Photos: Kyle Kelley



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CITY REPORT WASHINGTON DC

By Michelle Cleveland

Photos by Kevin Dillard - www.demoncats.com



Andy Zalan in front of Ben's Chili Bowl, a DC staple. They even offer vegetarian chill.

City: Washington, DC

Nickname: DC, the Nation's Capitol, Dead City

Claim to Fame: You've got Obama's House, a bunch of suits walking around Capitol Hill, Ben's Chili Bowl, cherry blossoms, mumbo sauces, and of course chicken and waffles.

History in 100 Words or Less: The US capital was originally located in Philadelphia. But in 1790, a new

location between Maryland and Virginia along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers was chosen by George Washington and DC was officially established as the nation's capital. The city was designed by a Frenchman to appear reminiscent of Paris. Most of the city burnt to the ground during the War of 1812. In 1963, MLK, Jr., gave his famous "I Have a Dream Speech" at the Lincoln Memorial as part of the March on Washington.

Random Fact: When John Denver was playing a two-week gig in 1970 at a venue long gone called The Cellar Door in DC, two fellow musicians told him about song they were working on while driving through winding roads of Maryland. When Denver heard what was to become “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” he just had to have it, even though it was meant for Johnny Cash. Now, Denver’s iconic folk song is a symbol of mountains and West Virginia, even though it started here in DC.

City’s Terrain: Mostly a flat city, DC does seem full of one-way streets, diagonal nightmares, and lots of traffic downtown. The small neighborhoods of DC stemming out from downtown are very bikeable, especially on side streets. The city has seen a good amount of bike infrastructure in the past few years, with a beautiful long cycletrack down Pennsylvania Ave., and two additional separated cycletracks downtown. The area east of the River, the Anacostia neighborhoods, have close to zero bike infrastructure and are extremely hilly.

Weather Forecast: We get beautiful springtime and fall weather, perfect for bike riding with Cherry blossoms and fall leaves in Rock Creek Park. But DC feels like a southern city in the summertime with high humidity and grueling heat. The winters are fairly mild and we typically only get a few good snowfalls a year (except for this winter which was record breaking cold).

Top Shop(s): DC has so many bike shops and they each offer mechanics and shop owners with different personalities so it’s hard to choose. My personal favorite shop is the Bike Rack because of their laid back and friendly vibe. I’ve always had good service at Revolution Cycles in Georgetown. And the guys and gals that work at CycleLife, Capitol Hill Bikes, CityBikes, and Bicycle Space are all stellar folks.

Best Watering Hole(s): GBD near Dupont is my favorite bar with it’s very good “stiff punch.” American Ice Company serves its beer in mason jars and



The Bike Rack is on Q Street in Northwest DC.

has Swachos (BBQ pork nachos). Lucky Bar is where the messengers hang out after work, so there’s always someone to talk to and they’ve got cheap beer. The Pug has got hands down the best atmosphere at a bar. And Smoke and Barrel is the best for your craft beer nerds.

Authentic Local Food: Ben’s Chili Bowl with their chili cheese fries and just about any brunch spot with their chicken and waffles. Also mumbo sauce. Not sure what it is, but you can put it on pretty much anything from fries to wings to maybe even waffles.

Must See: The Old Post Office tower. It’s thought to be a tourist attraction so it took me a few years to go up and see the view, but it’s a towering view of the city you’ll never see anywhere else. And a sunset from Meridian Hill Park in the summertime is just beautiful.

Must Ride: Definitely ride down the Pennsylvania Ave. cycletrack at night heading east, with a view of the Capitol dome right in front of you. The Anacostia Riverwalk trail across the river is tree-lined. Rock Creek Park is where roadies ride on the weekends and you feel like you’re not even in a city anymore.



Enjoy the protected bike lanes en route to the Capitol dome.

Best Time to Visit: Just not the summertime, or any major holiday. Too many tourists. Come for a DC bike event to see what the city is really like, such as one of our annual alleycats (Dead City for Halloween is my favorite), DC's Eastside Thaw polo tourney in March or a monthly DC Bike Party ride.

Need For Speed: DC's probably always had bike messengers, and a lot of the ones we still have today have been at it for years. There's at least half a dozen alley cats per year, hosted by local couriers or bike kids, with the number growing. One of the favorites is the Presidential Inaugural alley cat—no other city can do that. DC also hosts one epic cyclocross race each year, DCCX, on a golf course at the Old Soldiers Home, which also houses President Lincoln's Cottage.

Two Wheeled Celebrities: Older couriers like Scrooge and Bruce—everyone knows them. They're legends. Lia who started and runs DC Bike Party somehow got 500 or so folks out on their bikes each month. And very recently, the Chocolate City Cycling crew.

Top Tourist Attraction(s): It's DC, so of course anything that has to do with the president, Congress, and the Smithsonian. Walk along the National Mall, take your photo in front of the White House, and stand at the feet of Lincoln at his memorial.

Advocacy: The Washington Area Bicyclist Association, DC's only bike advocacy non-profit, has been around since 1972. Over the years they have won major victories like getting the Capital Crescent Trail (an 11-mile rail trail from Georgetown to Silver Spring, MD), Beach Drive (a beautiful winding forested road in middle of the city) closed to motorists on weekends, and bike access on public transit. WABA launched an innovative workshop program, Women & Bicycles, to get more ladies on bikes. They host bike rides and social events throughout the year, monitor local trails through the Trail Rangers program, and do friendly outreach in the bike lanes with the Bike Ambassador program.

Locals Only: For those with cross bikes, Kingman Island in the Potomac is a secret and awesome spot to get some gravel and cross action in. And if you want to practice sprinting or work on your pace line skills, meet up with a group at Haines Point to do almost car-free laps. If you're really legit, apparently there's a superfast pace line at noon everyday called the Power Hour.



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PEDAL POWER FOR THE PEOPLE

THE PERSISTING PRESENCE OF BICYCLES IN CHINA

Words and photos by Ryan Lindsay Bartz

Bicycles, bicycles everywhere and not a part to spare! Hoards and hoards swarm the streets with cyclical crankings, rattling chain links and lanes that try to guide the chaos. Umbrellas up, phantom rain coats cover; through the sun and rain the bicycles roam; swerving, turning, slow-rolling, climbing, bumping, baskets rattling, loaded racks ker-plunkering, vegetables spilling, children squealing: One, two, even three to a bike, we go—to the market, to school, to town, for a visit! Subtly meandering, quietly gliding, a loose-limbed, helmetless happiness. Welcome to the bikes of China.



In China the bicycle is primarily a utilitarian vehicle of need and necessity; a functional possession that helps to accomplish the daily tasks of life.

If you asked someone in the past ten years or so what they thought of when they heard “China”, they most likely said two things: bicycles and/or the ubiquitous “Made in China” sticker adhered to nearly everything. Today you say China and people think super-sized cities, smog and economic takeover. Has the bicycle become a thing of the past for the People’s Republic, just a relic leftover for the poor? I think not. But in a nation so quickly trying to emulate Western lifestyle, city by city, town by town the role and presence of the bicycle is changing. And though maybe the hoards have diminished some, the bicycle remains a steadfast, essential part of life for many, its role just as multifaceted as the cultural transitions themselves.

自行车



First, a brief history of bikes in China: The first reporting of a bicycle in the Middle Kingdom (as it is commonly referred) was by a Chinese diplomat, who during a trip to Europe in 1866 was curiously taken by “a vehicle with only two wheels, which is held together by a pipe...” where people “...sit above this pipe and push forward with movements of their feet” (Binchun, Chengcha Biji, 1866/68). At first a strange novelty used only by expatriates, it took some time for the “pipe on wheels” to catch on in China. The wealthy Chinese preferred a human labor escort of course. But with all of those students, businessmen, and journalists living abroad it was inevitable that they would bring bicycles back with them. Word spread quickly about

the bikes and soon every mother and child wanted one. By the 1930s and '40s China had embraced this new invention and was mass-producing their own models. Availability and affordability grew and the market and ridership flourished, growing into the scenes of bike-packed roads some recall from China's not-so-distant past.

In the shining, new age of the automobile, the enduring bicycle quickly lost ground. The upper class and their disposable income looked to the West for the greatest, prized display of wealth and the car and motorcycle soon usurped the title spot. The car, representing wealth and forward progress, did its best to drive out the lowly pedal-powered plaything, now synonymous with poor, archaic backwardness. Some depressing statistics from the Earth Policy Institute stated, "from 1995 to 2005, China's bike fleet declined by 35 percent, from 670 million to 435 million, while private car ownership more than doubled, from 4.2 million to 8.9 million." In a country so densely populated, the catastrophic effects of the car couldn't be ignored. How could one ignore a nine-day traffic jam outside of Beijing in 2013, or the current smog problems?

Even with the newfound love of the automobile, the bikes never disappeared. In China everything gets reused and repurposed. The ridership diminished some, but bikes are beginning to regain their place.

One avenue for this cycle revitalization lies in the bike share programs that are erupting around the country. China has the biggest bike sharing fleet in the world with approximately 358,000 public bicycles available in 79 different networks (EPI, 2013). All are very inexpensive, and some even free to use. In another early 2013 study of the top 25 bike share programs worldwide, China took all but six spots, with Wuhan taking first place with 90,000 public bikes. Things are changing. And the country surely has the infrastructure to build bikes for the people of their country. True to its production prowess, China has consistently built the most bicycles worldwide for the past 20 plus years: 87 million units in 2007 alone (including Taiwan). Italy, with a mere 2.5 million units, was next in line. Electric bicycles are also making a wave and in 2008 there were close to 100 million on the road in China. The Middle Kingdom could become the "Kingdom of Bicycles" once again.





I lived in China for a year and a half where I worked as an English teacher, and resided with a host family to fully experience life as a local. In this time I was able to experience first-hand the bicycles in China in all of their interesting forms. I had no prior knowledge of Chinese, or any previous teaching experience for that matter, but sometimes you figure things out by diving in head first. Jiangmen is where I called home, a tiny “town” of four million located in the South of China—as compared to the much larger cities, four million does feel quite rural. Here, bicycles still had a fighting chance and were always a source of entertainment and brother/sisterhood for me. Before I arrived I had been warned: “You know”, my boss began in an all-knowing tone, “no one rides bicycles anymore. It’s too dangerous. You’ll be the only one. You should get a motorcycle instead.” As a seasoned traveler, I never trust words like these and upon arrival was immediately pointing out every single bicycle I saw. There were still many bicycles, but it was true that the streets packed full of cyclists that I had dreamed about were simply not there. There were lots of purring motors on two wheels though. I felt like those noisy things were constantly accosting me. Even in my bedroom I could hear them honking, revving and speeding around. “Beep, beep, ba- beeeep!” their horns would cry out as they swerved around an old woman and blazed through a red light. I grew to hate the motos and praise the calm creak of the bicycles and quiet buzz of the e-bikes. A gloriously quiet, narrow

alleyway would vanish in a second as a moto raced through polluting the air and the solitude.

Though the bicycles were outnumbered I was used to that, and as I saw it there were still tons of bicycles comparatively, all creatively set-up to manage daily tasks and serious work hauls. I was in love with the bicycles of China and I couldn’t take my curious eyes away. Everyday commuter bikes, sport bikes, fixed gears, work bikes and cargo trikes all pushing and peddling, mixing and melding on the streets. After just a weeklong immersion, I knew this was a scene I could not be left out of.

Ignoring the warnings of my superiors, I made it clear that I would in fact be riding a bicycle around this city. My host father took note that the one word I kept trying to say with great emphasis, was “自行车” “Zìxíngchē” (which literally means “personal travel machine”) and excitedly presented me with a bicycle he had fixed up not more than a week after I’d arrived. “Zìxíngchē! Zìxíngchē!” I exclaimed, likely with terrible pronunciation. ZhongGuo Ba Ba, (Chinese father) as I half-jokingly called him, understood my language attempts and watched me like any proud parent as I took my first ride down the street on that freshly spray painted blue and silver steel single speed, step-through, rack-and-basket fitted, probably been around for 20 years, recycled, pure-China bicycle. I was ready to join the People.

Side note: My host father (real name, 陈国强, Chen GuoQiang) is one of the most amazing, kind, thoughtful, resourceful, generous



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After all of the things I saw towed around China by bicycle I can never quite justify saying “...but I need a car to haul this stuff...”

people I've ever known; and a brilliant mechanic and handyman at that. I would just mention something about the bike and it would be fixed the next day. Did he do it in my sleep? I would often ask him to wait until I could watch him fix it to learn some ingenious method to fix a loose bottom bracket or to break a chain (hammer and nail over a nut). The man just had a bag of tools and a bucket of parts he would sift through, and to my surprise, always come out with the perfect matching piece. Incredible.

Truly I was fascinated by all the street-side mechanics around my town; always ready to flip a bike upside down and set to work. Their shop mostly consists of a lounge chair (essential), a couple of pumps, a few rags, a shoulder sack full of tools, oil, grease, some locks and tires for sale, and a bunch of random buckets filled with parts and scraps, and a bowl with some water, soap and sawdust to scrub your hands. Tobacco pipe and a few friends to chat with, optional. Sure the resulting fix may not always yield the smoothest ride, but they creatively make it work with their spattering of used and repurposed parts, and plenty of grease. One of the few items always in stock are new tires and tubes. I once tried to buy one of these tires without the install service and all hell nearly broke loose. “What?! No. This is impossible. Not okay. I must fix

it for you,” the mechanic plainly stated. He wouldn't let me just buy the parts, and probably rightly so, knowing well that my pathetic little plastic tire levers would snap with one attempt on those tight beads and steel rims. I tried to explain that I knew how to change a tire and bolstered my argument with the fact that my host-father was a mechanic too. He simply shook his head and explained that the price of the tire included the install and there was no other option, likely thinking, “Ok American-English-teacher-lady, leave the bike fixings to me because otherwise I'll probably see you again in 15 minutes. You stick to teaching the kids.” I finally gave in and watched in awe as he pried the tire off with two wrenches.

Riding about town I was always on alert for interesting cyclists and unbelievably loaded bikes and trikes. Being a white female foreigner on a bicycle of all things, I rightly stood out a bit myself. Riding around town people would gawk, children would giggle, or if I was stopped at a light I might get the full up-and-down check. Head turns came at an especially high rate if I decided to offer a friend a ride.

Though in the U.S. we mostly associate the bicycle with leisure and sport, in China the bicycle is primarily a utilitarian vehicle of need and necessity; a functional

possession that helps to accomplish the daily tasks of life. These “work bikes” are the every day rigs that help achieve your daily tasks. They may even be carrying your workplace like a mobile vegetable or fruit seller, mailcarrier or one of the street-side hairdressers or fixers of all things from shoes to umbrellas. These work bikes span from your usual single speed, upright bike that most people think of when they picture a Chinese bicycle, porteur handlebars, rod brakes and all, to steel frame folding bikes, to public bike share systems, to the tricycles that have varying sizes of what looks like a flat-bed truck on the back, used for towing all sorts of things. With two wheels, people often fasten bamboo across their racks in order to hang massive bags (typically upcycled rice sacks) containing whatever needs shifting across town. I witnessed some unbelievable loads hanging on those handmade panniers, shocked that the bikes weren't tipping backwards from all the weight, the riders sitting upright, pressing down on those handlebars, slowly pushing the pedals with their sandaled heels, legs bent outwards, chugging along. The tricycles are the true workhorses of the cycle world and what they manage to carry on those beat-up, but still beautiful, machines would make many an experienced cyclist's legs buckle. The most unbelievable loads were of the collectors who ride their trikes around the alleyways, circling the neighborhood ringing a little handlebar bell in hopes that someone is earshot is ready to part with their possessions, settle on a price and watch



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him ride away with it only to resell or recycle it elsewhere. That ding-bell became a part of my aural landscape in China, and the sign of a normal afternoon. I saw couches, trees, entire food stands, people, bags of recycling ten feet high and then some. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles and children of all ages—there seemed to be no age requirement for taking a trusty steel frame across the city. Every day I'd have a, "Holy! Look at that bike!" moment and quickly realized that the massive, growing Chinese economy still relies on two or three wheels, propelled by muscle rather than motor.

Men and women alike were out of their saddles and leaning into every pedal-push to make it up an incline with all that weight. The men would often have their shirts off in the oppressive humidity of southern China, showing their sinewy and darkly tanned bodies glistening as they rode. The women generally had on protective sun-gear: hats, sleeves and possibly a smog mask were their riding clothes. Rain in this near-tropical region is common, making full person-and-bike ponchos and plastic sandals standard wet weather equipment. People laughed when I said I'd be fine with my little raincoat, and I converted very quickly after a couple of soakings.

These people don't call themselves cyclists and don't wear much if any riding specific clothing, they are hard laborers who happen to ride bicycles for their jobs and I respect them greatly, not only for all the hard work they do, but for how they manage to impressively utilize the full potential of

the bicycle. After all of the things I saw towed around China by bicycle I can never quite justify saying "... but I need a car to haul this stuff..."

Though the work bikes dominated, there were also some "sport bikes" living a life of leisure and competition. With their certain cool factor, and the status symbol of such a luxury item, these newer, expensive bikes are bringing pedal-power back to a new generation of riders, and to the growing upper middle class. These riders frequent higher end shops and most likely have their bikes fixed upright, on a stand, indoors, with specialized tools; not just a hammer and an adjustable wrench. On these bikes I saw men and women in full spandex, with helmets, high-end components, carbon frames, suspension and blinking lights even during the day. The work bikes and people who ride them have no need for these extravagances. The contrast of all these different bicycles in the city is striking.

I had not been in China a week when I was introduced to a group of fixed gear riders and asked, "Would you like to come and play?" Language barriers made no difference, though getting to the right place at the right time was a challenge, as we went riding through the night, laughing as we tried to communicate and getting the local's tour of my new home. We raced around the city and I appreciated a cyclist's view of the terrain. As I sat back watching them doing fixed freestyle tricks on a neighborhood basketball court while eating hot street noodles and drinking a beer, I wondered where I had landed. This was China too, and a youthfully exuber-

ant Chinese bicycle experience to boot. China is a country of contrasts and nowhere was this more apparent to me than in this melding of bike cultures. I experienced a country where seemingly anything goes and gets quickly absorbed into a solidly traditional, yet comfortably modern and malleable, culture. Instead of the older and, for many youths, outdated martial arts traditions, people are now looking for something else to do as sport, and the bicycle, in a refreshingly new form, has arrived to provide.

The indelible images of masses of cyclists navigating the streets of China may live again. Instead of car clogged, pollution choked towns, the humble bicycle could bring back emission-free transport to the masses. The work bikes, bikeshare systems, sport bikes and e-bikes have diversified the role of the bicycle in China and all continue to make this vision possible. I don't think the cars or motorcycles will suddenly vanish, but simply having more people on bikes will begin to turn the tide.

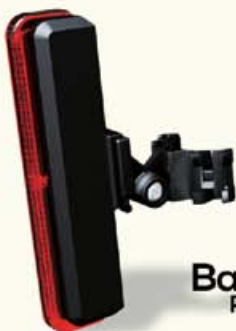
Bamboo; strong enough to withstand the storm, but flexible enough to bend and not break. The Bicycles of China have mirrored this sentiment; changing with the times, growing with a growing culture, standing strong beside the cars and motos and adapting as needed. And as we know, though a bike frame does seem quite rigid, it gives a little with the rider. With China's rapidly changing society, it looks like these traditional two and three wheeled, pedal-powered "personal travel machines" will be continue as a mainstay of life. Let the Tao of cycling reign.





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Fuji Feather CX 1.1

Cyclocross bikes have long been a choice for the rider looking for a versatile machine—enjoyable on long road rides, capable on trails and light singletrack, able to handle a light tour and near perfect for the committed medium to long distance commuter. As cyclocross racing has grown the selection of bikes under the ‘cross umbrella is wider than ever, from thoroughbred race machines to traditional steel frames and performance commuters.

Trickle down tech is at the core of most any consumer industry, and the Fuji Feather CX 1.1 takes advantage of what has become the new normal at the high end of spec and brings it to a \$1220 complete bike ready for the 9-5 and your next mixed surface adventure. The butted aluminum frame features a post mount disc brake, a tapered headtube with a 1 1/2” lower bearing, and a press-fit BB86 bottom bracket.

The carbon blade fork has a durable aluminum steerer and dropouts, and a post mount disc brake as well. Single fender eyelets adorn both the frame and fork, with seatstay mounts for a rear rack and a pair of bottle mounts for when the miles start to rack up. Geometry wise the CX 1.1 borrows heavily from Fuji’s race bikes with a few tweaks to fit larger volume tires that ends up with an 11 mm longer wheelbase overall.

The component spec of the Feather CX 1.1 is nothing much to write home about—a 9-speed Shimano Sora drivetrain and industry standard Avid BB5r brakes with 160 mm rotors do the name brand duties, with no-name Vera wheels and house brand Oval Concepts parts otherwise finishing off the bike. The 50/34 chainrings and 11-32 cassette provide a well thought out, wide gear range and while 9-speed isn’t the newest in new it has proven a durable choice with some

long time adherents. The wheels are an odd mix of bladed spokes and mountain bike width 19 mm rims — very likely to stay true over many a pothole, but sluggish feeling on a long ride. Disc brakes come with their own weight penalty, coupled with overbuilt wheels the Fuji Feather CX 1.1 weighs 23.9 lbs. Contrary to the spec sheet our 58 cm review bike came with 170 mm cranks, definitely short for the people riding this bike and something I would have asked a dealer to swap before purchase. The blacked out, gloss on matte finish on the frame and fork is hard to beat, it's a shame the Oval components don't match.

City streets, light trails, dirt roads—the Feather CX 1.1 has the person that can't keep their bike clean in mind. Add a full set of fenders and it makes a solid choice for an everyday vehicle that should last the long haul, stock it is more than up for hitting that dirt road loop a dozen miles outside of town. The geometry isn't dumbed down in the name of relaxed commuting, giving the bike the handling character so many love about cyclocross bikes.

The frameset is where you should be spending your money, and the Feather CX 1.1 gives you a platform to grow with over the years. The press fit BB86 bottom bracket makes the bike compatible with any number of high end cranksets out there, and while I had no problems throughout the test I'm not the only one still skeptical of the benefits of press fit bottom brackets. Post mount brakes are welcome, even if I had issues with the stock spacers deforming during setup. I do wish that the full-length rear brake housing had another cable stop along the top tube to curb what is an otherwise annoying rattle without a loop of electrical tape, even if it's an easy DIY solution.

Ride it now, keep your eyes peeled for deals on the easy weight saving upgrades and pick up a racier groupset a few years down the line when the original Sora drivetrain is worn out. While neither the lightest nor the snappiest accelerating bike out there, for the non-racer the Fuji Feather CX 1.1 proves a solid disc brake 'cross commuter and weekend explorer. The Feather CX 1.1 is available in five sizes from 48 - 60 cm, with a lower spec'd \$1000 CX 1.3 also available. www.fujibikes.com



Lycra shorts with a synthetic chamois pad are unbeatable for comfort on the bike, but no one wants to run into that guy at the grocery store or coffee shop. Cut offs over bike shorts are nothing new, but there is now a plethora of specialty riding overshorts available for those not looking to strut around in lycra, or just looking for some pockets.



Chrome Folsom Short

Price: \$120

Sizes: 28", 30", 32", 34"

Inseam: 11"

Fabric: 4-way stretch

Features: Seamless gusseted double layer crotch, u-lock holster, reflective rear patch.

The heavy 4-way stretch fabric and double layer crotch of the Chrome Folsom shorts are designed with all day, every day wear in mind. Not a true pad, the double crotch does make riding without padded shorts more comfortable. The water resistant fabric sheds light rain and splashes, and four deep pockets have room for your daily needs. A webbed lock holster holds a full sized u-lock, but isn't adjustable to fit a smaller shackle. Reinforced belt loops won't tear out, but a belt does block the reflective maker's patch on the right hip. Weekend camping trips or a couple of days on the road is where these really shine. www.chromeindustries.com



Club Ride Pin'It

Price: \$80

Sizes: Small, Medium, Large, XL

Inseam: 12"

Fabric: PowerWeave

Features: Seamless crotch gusset, zippered side pocket, raised rear waistband.

The navy blue and pin stripe Club Ride Pin'It shorts are the best looking shorts I own, cycling or otherwise, and see a fair bit of casual use aside from riding. The fabric is the lightest weight of the bunch, breathable, quick drying and with just a bit of stretch. Four standard issue pockets and a zippered cell phone pocket help you carry the goods, though the pockets are shallower than I'd prefer and I added my own velcro closure to help keep my wallet in place. The wide waistband is comfortable and has internal button adjustments to wear without a belt. www.clubrideapparel.com



Giro New Road 40M Tech Overshort

Price: \$120

Sizes: Slim and Regular 28", 30", 32", 34", 36"

Inseam: 11"

Fabric: 4-way stretch

Features: Side and crotch gussets, adjustable waistband, zippered side pocket.

Nylon and spandex side and crotch panels and a lack of conventional pockets make it clear that the Giro New Road 40M Tech Overshort is designed with riding in mind first. This is made in California performance clothing, but without the race kit. Stretch fabric throughout means the 40M doesn't bind or catch while riding, and the hydrophobic coating helps shed rain when the sky opens. The small key pocket and zippered cell pouch limit you to the bare essentials, and make casual wear less convenient. Five sizes, with regular and slim fit in each, gives an unmatched number of options in fit. www.giro.com



Cutoff Work Pants

Price: \$0

Sizes: Guaranteed Fit

Inseam: Custom

Fabric: Inexpensive cotton

Features: Broken in, familiar pockets, low price.

Perhaps not the best choice if you're buying new just to cut into shorts, but the pants you last painted in will do the trick for free or close to it. The cut-to-length inseam is the correct length every time, the worn fabric perfect for wiping your greasy hands on guilt-free. Raised seams can cause chafing problems for some people, and you'll eventually retire the shorts when you wear through them or blow out the crotch. Cut offs might be your only option if your waist is more than 36" around. The price is right and there is no shortage of old pants just waiting for a set of scissors.



Knog Blinder Arc 1.7

There are a lot of good things about the Knog Blinder Arc 1.7. Is it bright? Yes. Can you charge it via USB? Yes. Is it going to break if it falls off a bike? No.

With a half rubberized, half anodized aluminum body, the Blinder Arc 1.7 is meant to withstand some action. A flip-tab on the underside of the body facilitates charging, made easier with the included short extension cable. The construction is nearly as good as one-piece, and so well sealed to be completely immersible.

The Blinder Arc 1.7 has four settings: high, medium, low and flash with claimed runtimes of 1.4, 2.7, 5.9 and 11.7 hours respectively. Unlike the unfocussed reflectors of old, the Blinder lens projects a 16° x 24° elliptical beam that extends the reach of the LED to light more of the road that it otherwise would. The low mode is an effective “be seen” mode, while the 170 lumen output high setting from the CREE XB-D LED provides ample light to navigate dark roads and river paths, which tend to be uncomfortable with less-than-adequate lighting. It’s not mountain bike bright, but it’s enough to see along most surfaces as long as your speed is kept in check. The flash setting is powerful and flickers quickly, great for entering main street traffic from dark and narrow side streets.

The smart button requires an extended hold to turn on on/off, long enough to prevent jostling from turning on the light when it is stored. As someone who takes my lights off my bike every time I lock it up, I hate opening my bag to find a blinking light and draining battery. A small indicator light gives a rough idea of battery power, and changes to blue to indicate the high beam mode. The Blinder Arc 1.7 comes with two interchangeable silicone mounts, one for 25-30 mm diameter bars, another for 30-35 mm bars, each featuring a magnetic clasp. The clasp is easy to open and close; just a flick of the finger will release it. Still, it’s secure on the bars, no amount of bumps in the road or trail were enough to jar it loose. Though the magnetic closure is handy, the adhesive used to glue the magnet to the bar mount failed after a few weeks of use. Even missing the magnet the clasp holds closed around the bar or included helmet mount.

The light has proven durable—even after unplanned ejections the light remains working as usual, the recessed lens protected and with just a few scrapes to the aluminum body. Knog’s claimed charge time proved true, the battery indicator always turned green within 4 hours, so I could plug it in overnight or in the morning on the weekend and be set. Batteries are heavy, and the Blinder Arc 1.7 is heavier than it looks at a dense 100g and isn’t the most comfortable as a helmet light.

The \$65 Knog Blinder Arc 1.7 makes a good choice for a compact light bright enough to actually light the way on dark city streets. If the 170 lumen output isn’t enough, check out the 550 lumen Blinder Arc 5.5 for \$120. www.knog.com.au





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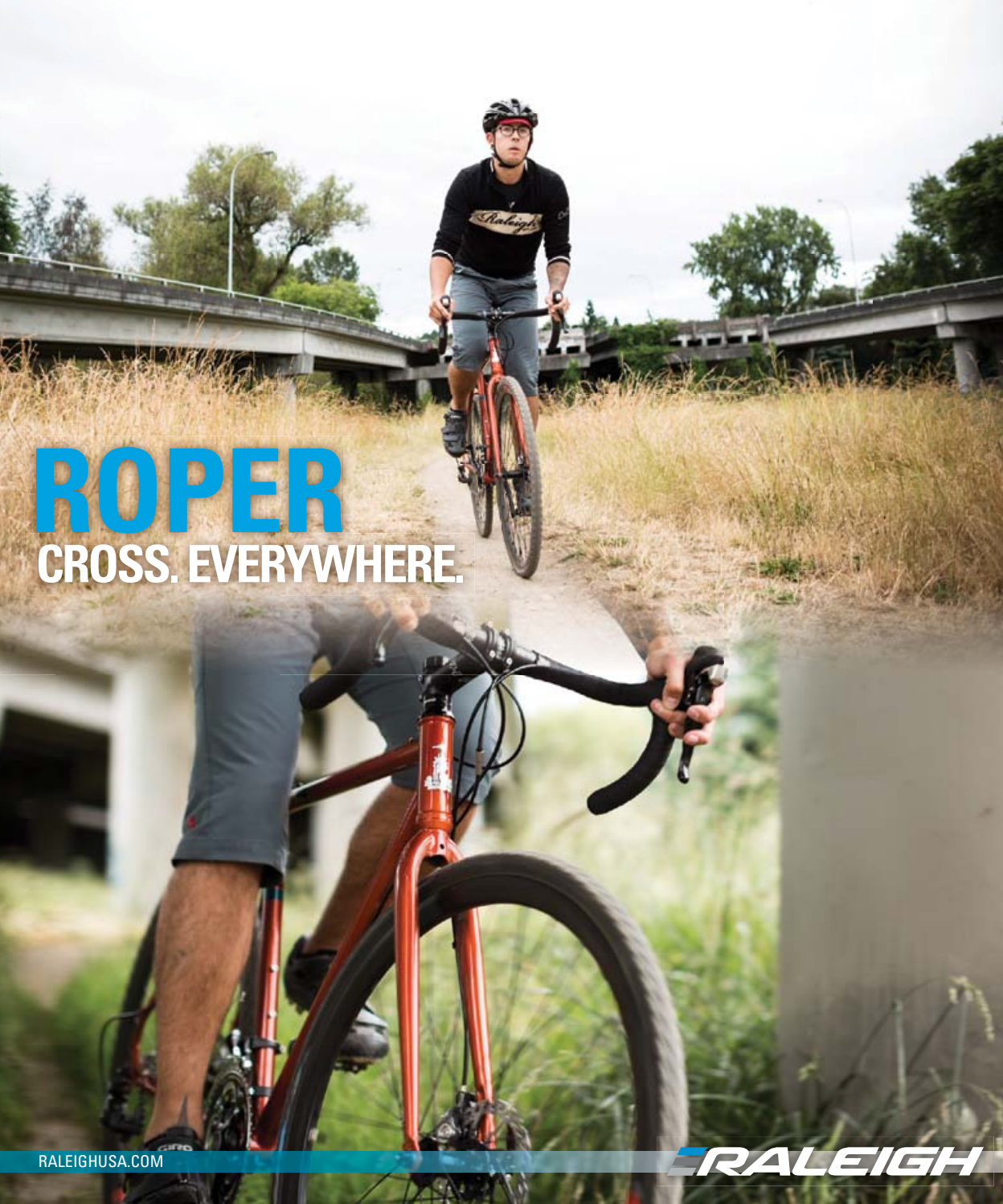
Hiplok Lite

Two simple facts have grown the Hiplok Lite into my favorite way to secure my beloved bicycle: 1) I prefer to carry my heavy things somewhere other than my back and 2) we find ourselves one and a half decades into the 21st century and somehow manufacturers of women's clothes still maintain that pockets are a luxury feature. When I'm commuting and have luggage befitting that, sure, a u-lock can be tossed in with my banana and my lesson plans. But there are times I want to walk out the door unencumbered and ride a long sunny afternoon on the trail or climb a couple big hills or put on my dancing skirt and hit the town; in these situations, pockets and bags can be hard to come by—non-existent or too small for a lock.

The Hiplok Lite, a souped-up, body-savvy version of the old chain-around-the-waist of yore, solves the problem. It weighs in at 2.2 lbs and features a durable nylon sleeve around the chain that protects clothing and skin from pinching links, and your bike's finish from scratching metal. The padlock is curved and ergonomic and outfitted with a belt loop through which a hefty Velcro strap slides handily, adjusting from a 25" to 44" waist size. For me, these features mean the lock is super comfortable, an accessory I slip around my hips

and forget is there. A funny side-benefit is that Hiplok can act as a shirt-belt, protecting that poor little lower back area that peeks out and can send chills through your whole body. On the security side, its squared 6 mm links deter bolt cutters better than rounded chain from the hardware store and it earns a Sold Secure Bronze rating, but like any chain lock it's important to consider your anchor, making sure not to lock to something over which someone could slip your bike and the Hiplok in one ally-ooop. I'd like to see a padlock that is permanently attached to one side, making locking more swift and a touch less confusing, and more pronounced reflective features. It is worth mentioning that the Velcro strap will pill certain fabrics, so might be best not to wear with your fanciest pants. While Hiplok does not offer theft insurance, word on the street is that it's near impossible to meet the requirements of such a payout anyhow, so unless you are a diligent documenter and lucky to boot, it's probably not that important to choose a lock based on insurance options. It's worth mentioning that riders in high theft locales such as San Francisco, New York, and Philadelphia may prefer the Hiplok 1.5's heavier 8 mm links and 10 mm lock shackle. www.hiplok.com





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Lezyne Steel Digital Drive



The 26" tall Lezyne Steel Digital Drive features a steel barrel and piston, a wooden handle, an aluminum base and a nylon-reinforced braided hose. It's a classic looking design with a few modern touches.

As you would expect from a full-size floor pump, it easily achieves 100 psi with a max rating of 160 psi for the track racers out there. Lezyne claims that the digital gauge is accurate to within 3% and my ordinary analog

gauge seems to confirm measurements well enough.

The digital gauge is relatively simple with no backlighting, just a simple pressure reading in either PSI or bar. It uses a standard CR2032 battery that's easily accessed from the face of the unit. The lack of backlighting makes it a bit difficult to read in my shadowy basement, but said feature would probably drain the battery quickly. As it is, Lezyne claims the battery should last at least one year.

The Steel Digital Drive is available with one of two pump head configurations—dual valve or ABS Flip-Thread Chuck. We received the latter of the two, which is probably the more interesting of the two designs. The chuck is reversible for Presta or Schraeder, and it threads onto the valve. At first I found this a bit inconvenient, but I came to appreciate it. If that's just not your cup of tea, they do include a L-shaped slip chuck adapter which also makes the pump usable on disc wheels.

The chuck also features an air bleed system. When used in Presta mode, the small button releases pressure from the hose, making it easier to remove the chuck. For Schraeder valves, the button releases pressure from the tire. The Steel Digital Drive retails for \$90. www.lezyne.com

Aero Tech Designs Men's Urban Pedal Pushers Commuter Dress Shirt

The Commuter Dress Shirt from Aero Tech Designs is touted as being "ideal for travel" so I took my pair of shirts to task in Japan for a two-week cross country trip. While "wrinkle free" might be a bit of a misnomer, they looked good enough to eat at one of the finest restaurants in Tokyo, yet were technical enough for me to stay comfortable while walking eight hours in Kyoto



with a raincoat on top. And I think the Commuter Dress Shirt actually contributed to my bowling abilities, or at least I can't blame it for missing that 7-10 split in Nagoya.

Some of the casual commuter clothing I've tried on as of late seems to be made for people with pipe cleaners for arms. I'm not Popeye, but I need room to move and the Commuter Dress Shirt provides a relaxed cut. Normally I prefer my cycling shirts to be as simple as possible, but I did find myself grateful for the zippered chest pockets for the peace of mind that I won't be losing anything valuable.

The slightly stretchable and very comfortable lightweight fabric is made from 88% spun nylon and 12% recycled polyester. Unlike traditional cotton shirts, when you roll up the sleeves, you aren't left feeling like you've got a bulky mass at the elbow. The lightweight fabric also bodes well for wearing the Commuter Dress Shirt on hot and sunny days when UV protection is important—the fabric has an ultraviolet SPF of 50+, which should please my friends in Arizona. And for my friends back in the soggy Mid-Atlantic, the fabric has a water-resistant coating that makes surprise thunderstorms a little less bothersome. The \$50 Commuter Dress Shirt is made in the USA and is available in three colors and six sizes, S-3XL. www.aerotechdesigns.com

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Vaya Blue Lagoon Rolltop Backpack

Single strap messenger bags were the epitome of urban cycling chic for well over a decade, but now is the era of the backpack. Backpacks are more comfortable and more practical for most anyone besides working couriers, with small day packs like this rolltop from Vaya growing in favor.

Vaya is a one woman shop out of the borough of Queens in New York City, handcrafting messenger bags and backpacks out of recycled canvas and surplus Sunbrella sailboat fabric. The Blue Lagoon Rolltop is a compact day bag measuring just 9.5" x 5.5" x 15" closed, featuring an interior laptop sleeve, expanding front pocket, minimalist straps

and a u-lock or bottle holder. The bag is made from waterproof Sunbrella fabric, with an 18 oz vinyl coated liner and seatbelt webbing straps, with an attractive blue color scheme incorporating repurposed tubes on the body. The Blue Lagoon has just enough space for the work commute essentials like tools, a laptop, and an extra layer but not much else—you won't be stopping by the grocery store on the way home from work unless you don't mind things hanging out the top of the bag. Rolltop closures are nice because of the way they allow you to overload when necessary, with the extra long strap helping to keep cargo in place but otherwise swinging around a bit more than I'd like when walking. The outer expanding pocket is nice for easy access to lights, gloves and your phone, and doesn't interfere with the interior capacity, but is not totally waterproof like the rest of the bag.

Reflective patches on the sides and strap are always welcome, as is the reinforced base for long wear and added protection when putting the bag down on wet ground. I like the minimalist straps, you're simply never going to fill this bag up enough to warrant heavy pads, and the seatbelt webbing was comfortable even with just a t-shirt. The side bottle holder is great for keeping liquids far away from electronics along for the ride, and handy for carrying a u-lock otherwise. Some of the stitching isn't as perfect looking as some other bags I've seen, but overall construction is solid and clearly well thought out by someone who rides and cares about the bags leaving her shop. I expect to get many years out of this bag from Vaya. Available for \$195, or in a single color as the Simple Rolltop for \$175. www.vayabags.com



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STAMPEDE UNDERGROUND

THE PASSION BEHIND THE SCENE IN CHIANG MAI

Words and photos by Harry Virtanen

Though rapidly changing and maturing, bicycle culture as we know it in North America is well established. Some alleycats and recycled bike coops are well into their second decade, Critical Mass has come and gone from many a city's radar as mainstream cycling advocacy has gained a political foothold. While bikes as transportation tools are common throughout Thailand, western style urban bike culture is just beginning to make an influence. Eighteen year old Kan Kyi Curwen's passion for cycling has had a direct impact on a small underground scene in his hometown of Chiang Mai through his Stampede Underground events. Here we discuss his cycling experience and the future of the culture in Chiang Mai.

When did you start biking?

I only started biking two years ago, I used to run 15 km a day. That's how I would get around, I would jog everywhere, and my friends asked me why I don't get a bike. So I thought why not and bought myself a really old bike and I rode it for a year. I rode it until everything was falling apart, so I bought a new one. That summer I rode to Laos, Cambodia and back here, the last day I rode 400 km.

What was your inspiration for the underground stampede race?

This race was inspired by the fixed gear culture and it was about having fun. I was watching a video called



“Line of Sight” and it was about a guy [Lucas Brunelle] following around racers in New York. Fixed gear is an edgy bicycle style and these guys are the fastest on the street. You just have to get to the check point, you cut traffic, you can break the law and you just got to get to the end with a bicycle. In the first Stampede there were 13 racers and three of them bailed out, one got lost, one crashed his bike and one had a knee problem. The entry fee was 100 Baht (\$3.05 USD) per person and you could put more if you want to so the pot ended up somewhere at 1500 Baht. By the second race we got sponsored with 5000 Baht plus the entry fees. The winner of the second race used to be a serious heroin addict and the bike saved his life because he didn’t want to quit biking so he quit heroin.

How has cycling culture impacted the people of Chiang Mai?

I see many kinds of people riding now, it’s become a social symbol and a symbol for wealth. Many people just ride and then go back to their car and I’m saying don’t go back to your car, just ride every day, just

keep on riding! But I think that poor people also ride because they don’t have any other means.

Can you tell us about the bicycle center you plan to build?

You can come with your bike to the center and you can fix it, or we can teach you how to fix your bike through workshops for adults and children. I want to be able to make wooden bikes to give to poor families, and I also want to make cargo bikes. The bike center will be in the same space as an organic restaurant and a gallery.

What are you working on right now and what do you want for the future?

I’m calling for an event called Critical Mass, community cycling. I also want to start bicycle polo—maybe Chiang Mai could be the first bike polo in Southeast Asia. I’ve been planning a bike film festival where we will show movies and documentaries of cycling. For the future I want to do more bike races and make people more aware that it is happening, but not the police.





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WORKSMAN CYCLES

By Adam Kroopnick

Photos by Takuya Sakamoto - www.newyorkbikedreams.com

Housed in a former candle factory in Queens, New York is one of America's oldest manufacturing traditions. Worksmen Cycles is a 116-year-old, family-owned bicycle maker producing machines first designed in the 1930s and whose best-selling model, says Worksmen spokesman Bruce Weinreb, is not a carbon-fiber road bike but a steel tricycle designed for carrying 500-pound loads across factory floors.

From the rugged-looking building to the decades-old machines used for bending and crimping the steel tubes for the bikes, every part of the company's business model seems to be philosophically in line with the bicycles they produce: low maintenance, no frills, and designed to last forever. For more than a century, Worksmen has survived by focusing on the niche market of manufacturers needing industrial bikes to carry people and equipment on their factory floors, and Worksmen show few signs of changing.

The company itself began in 1898 in a lower Manhattan store run by Morris Worksmen. Worksmen started out selling Columbia bikes, says Weinreb, but began selling his own design that was purpose-built for workers carrying heavy loads around the city. Worksmen's 1915 patent shows designs for a tricycle with a removable back box.

In the pre-automobile era, most deliveries and transport were done by workhorses who had to be fed and stabled and were the source of one of the major pollution problems of the day: streets filled with horse dung. Worksmen's machines did not need oats and, as Weinreb points out, were the emissions-free transportation alternative of turn-of-the-century New York.

According to Weinreb, the business remained a small-scale operation until the 1930s, when Worksmen was contracted by Good Humor Ice Cream to build their iconic ice-cream trikes—a front-load tri-



cycle model nearly identical to one they still produce today. The partnership saw their trikes popping up around the country.

The company expanded into consumer bikes after the Second World War, when, says Weinreb, bicycles they had sold to the Armed Forces started showing up in the towns around military bases. But Worksman retained its founder's focus on creating bicycles built for work, not play. American manufacturing was booming and companies like Boeing and Ford needed a way to get both men and heavy equipment around their expansive factories.

Today, most of their bikes are still built for use in factories. Weinreb says that Boeing has "literally thousands" of their bicycles, including at the aircraft company's Everett Facility, the largest building in the world by volume. Worksman bikes are used on oil fields on the Gulf Coast and in Saudi Arabia, as well as in GM and Ford's auto plants. Even Tesla has some of their

trikes, a dichotomy, Weinreb adds, of a company that is selling some of the most technologically advanced cars in the world while relying on Worksman's proudly old-school machines.

Aside from a few small custom orders, Worksman has not put a new product line to market in decades. Weinreb boasts that because they have been making the same bikes with the same few components for so long, the company only carries two parts lists, pre-1988 and post-1988—and that, he adds, is only because the standard tolerances for steel gauge changed. Weinreb says they're still getting replacement-part orders from Ford's Dearborn plant for bikes they shipped out 40 years ago.

Being stuck in their ways has allowed Worksman to build a powerful reputation. "People know that after 100 years we know how to make them right," says Weinreb. "An industrial trike is a piece of a capital equipment. It has to work everyday or you're losing

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If we had gone into kid's bikes we would be out of business.

money. If your bike doesn't work, so you can't go out riding. If a factory's bikes or trikes break, they have a real problem."

To this end, the bikes are built heavy duty: Fully lugged steel bicycles and wheels built with knockout hubs, proprietary rolled rims and 11-gauge spokes. To keep the bikes maintenance free, Worksmen uses internal hubs if they have to have any gearing at all, and avoids caliper brakes altogether, preferring longer-lasting coaster and drum brakes.

Their most robust model, the Mover tricycle, comes with welded wheels, poly-filled solid tires and forgoes traditional lugs in favor of notched welding, which allows Worksmen to build the trikes with oval tubes for added strength.

Worksmen takes full advantage of purpose building for the factory floor. Concrete floors mean that Worksmen can use solid tires that never go flat and not worry about contending with potholes or curbs. With no hills to contend with, Worksmen does not concern itself with strength-versus-weight trade offs—Weinreb says the Mover weighs over 100 pounds.

There is no standard load capacity in the bicycle industry, but, Weinreb says, "We like to say our [Mover] will hold 500 pounds of cargo and rider. The truth of the matter is in GM plants, they were putting engine blocks on our front loaders." With that much weight, he adds, it's more a question of maneuverability than it is a concern over whether the trike will fall apart.

What Weinreb calls Worksmen's "laser focus" has also helped Worksmen outlast every other American bicycle manufacturer. In the '50s, companies like Schwinn dominated the market by building bicycles aimed mostly at kids and young adults. The '70s and '80s saw a demand for lighter racing bicycles, as well as the appearance of BMX and mountain bikes. During this time, Schwinn made several critical mistakes—missing the new consumer trends and never re-investing





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in their Chicago factory, which meant they could not fabricate the lighter, thinner tubing needed. To keep up with the technology and the trends they had at first ignored, Schwinn increasingly shifted production to Taiwan's Giant Bicycles, a small company that would eventually eclipse Schwinn.

The coming decades saw all the big American bicycle manufacturers shutter their doors or move production overseas—all except Worksman, who, like Schwinn, had never bothered to re-do their manufacturing process, but whose saving grace was never bothering to try to keep up with the consumer market in the first place. As Weinreb puts it, "If we had gone into 10-speed bikes, if we had gone into kid's bikes, we would be out of business."

Worksman took a hit during the recession, but just as American manufacturing has since picked up, so too, has Worksman's business. Weinreb says they have brought on newer customers like Tesla, and begun fielding replacement orders from older customers who had stopped buying during the recession. They

are cagey about how many bikes they produce annually, but co-owner Wayne Sosin told the Wall Street Journal in 2013 they produce upwards of 10,000 bikes a year.

Worksman has survived long enough for the future to come back to them. Their tough, low-maintenance bicycles have become the ride of choice for bikeshare programs in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Their bikes are so easily adapted to bikeshare, says Weinreb, that Worksman did not even know they were supplying bikes for Tulsa's program until a year later, when the program called up asking for replacement parts. Along with these municipal bikeshares, Worksman also provides bikes for a number of campus programs.

With growing interest in public and private bikeshares, Worksman is, for the first time in years, about to roll out a new bicycle purpose-built for the sector. But this new interest in expansion does not mean Worksman is going to abandon its ways. "What we don't get into is complexity," says Weinreb. "We'll never make anything with a derailleur." 

NO EXIT

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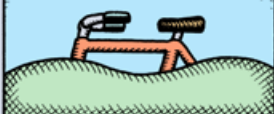
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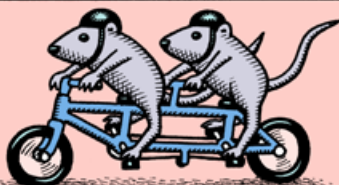
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Know Your Derailleur Limits

By Brad Quartuccio



Rear derailleurs have limits on gear range and movement, each important when choosing or setting up a drivetrain. Derailleur capacity is a manufacturer's specification that determines the gear range that the cage can accommodate, derailleur limit screws adjust the physical limits of the derailleur's motion to fine tune indexing and prevent over shifting.

Derailleur Limit Screws

Derailleurs have a pair of limit screws. The L for "low gear" screw limits the motions of the derailleur past the largest cog, the H for "high gear" screw limits the motion past the smallest cog. The high limit serves as a starting point for your indexing, the low limit prevents over shifting the chain into the spokes.

Rear Derailleur Capacity

On a spec sheet capacity is a maximum number, representing the amount of difference between the big/big and small/small gear combinations that the derailleur cage can accommodate, with longer cage rear derailleurs having a larger capacity.

Capacity = (largest chainring - smallest chainring) + (largest cog - smallest cog)

For example, consider a bike with a 50/34 crankset and an 11-32 cassette.

$$(50-34) + (32-11) = 37$$

In this example a long cage derailleur with a listed capacity of 37 or greater is required to work properly. For a single ring setup, simply subtract the smallest cog from the largest cog to determine required capacity spec.





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OUTRO

THE ALMANZO 100



A cue sheet is an intimate friend. The cues provided by Mr. Skogen at this year's Almanzo 100 did more than just light the path—they provided encouragement. Early on, they were a delightful surprise. Most of the time, others will guide you down the correct roads. The path is clearly marked by many who have come before. As the ride drags on, the cues provide hope. Half a page of cues seems much easier than the 20 or so miles you have left. The space in-between each cue is filled with doubt, but upon completing another line one feels a sense of accomplishment. Flipping the cue for another is tantamount to finishing a chapter in a book, but one you've written yourself. They point out important features in bold type. A good example is the use of caution yellow wherever you cross or end up on pavement (as if pavement is to be avoided and reviled). Other features blend in with the rest, but those who have ridden before know exactly what "Oriole Rd." means, and the matter-of-factness that the cue presents that road with makes it just a little easier. The cues stay on the bike for weeks after the event reminding you of your accomplishment. A constant friend through thick and thin.

—Aaron Thomas Smith



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