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URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #44 • October 2014

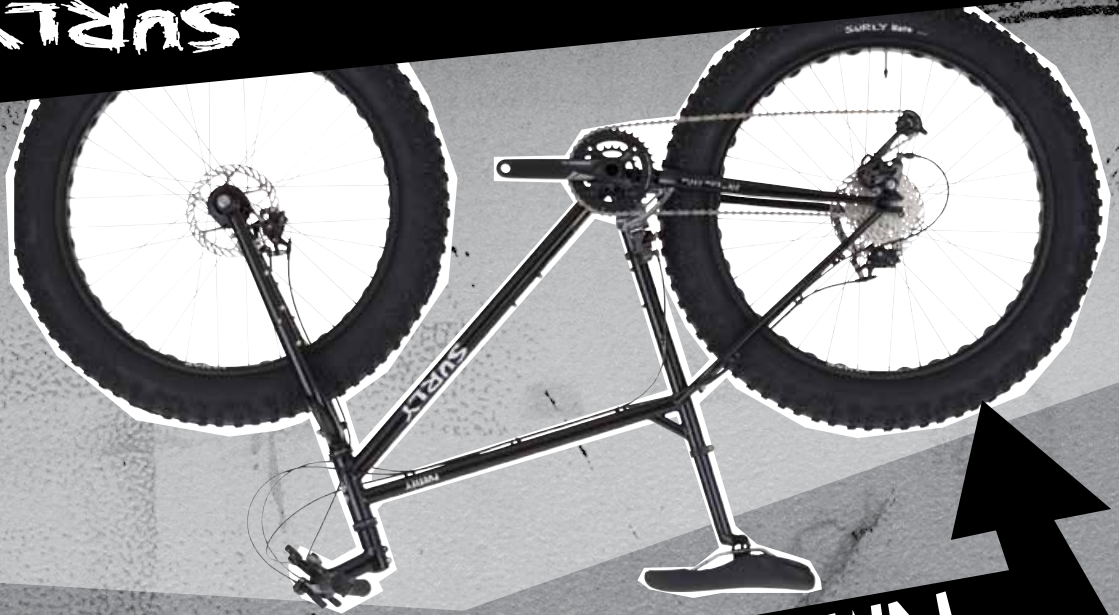
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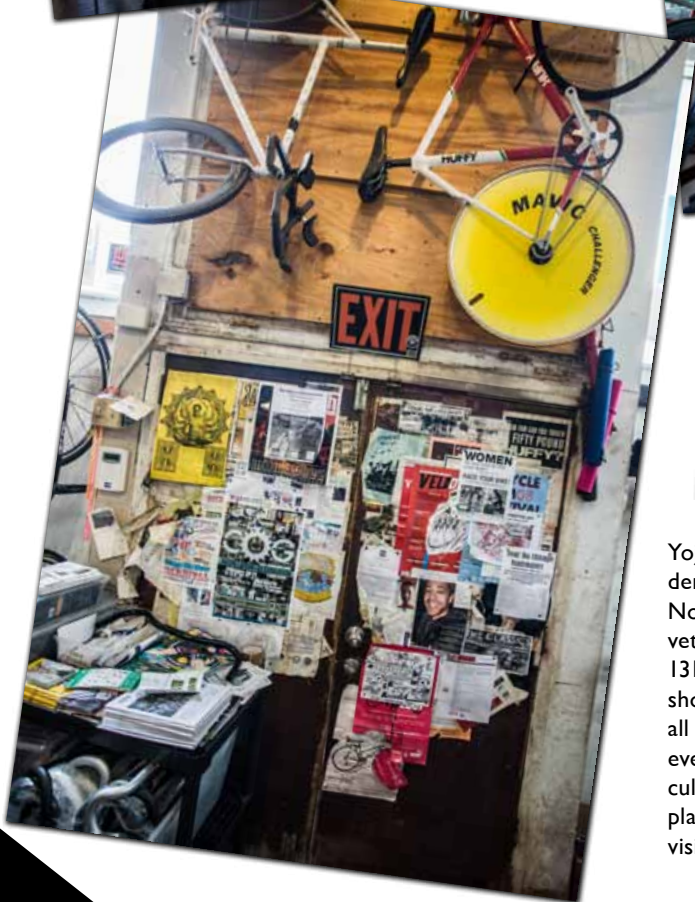
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Yojimbo's Garage is a piece of cycling nirvana hidden behind a nondescript door on Chicago's Near North Side, owner Marcus Moore a seasoned rider, veteran mechanic and life long bike nut. Knock at 1310 N Clybourn and gain entrance to a place of shop cats and beards, custom street track builds and all of the repair parts and knowledge to keep your everyday commuter rolling. It's a garage of bicycle culture functioning as bike shop since 1997, and a place every rider going through Chicago should visit. www.yojimbosgarage.com

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Issue #44

October 2014

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On the cover: On the cover: Ben Lynch of Austin TX, ten year courier veteran. Read about the changing state of the bicycle courier industry on page 50. Photo by Bryan Davis, www.bryandavisimages.com

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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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got nothing left.”

Greg Ugalde, Urban Cycling
Hall of Fame inductee 2013

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coming soon...urban security designed by messengers



Contents: Eric Rich sits atop his custom piano-bike. Read more on page 62. Photo by Grant Hinsley

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EDITOR'S STATEMENT

By Brad Quartuccio



It's a short window of time, this perfect fall weather. As we go to press with this issue the weather couldn't be better for getting out, a reward for making it through the hot summer and a precursor to a few months of colder temps that keep me tinkering in the basement more than turning miles. After a decade of end-of-summer tradeshows held in perhaps the least bike friendly place in the United States, the fall has become a re-energized time to take in the last bits of beautiful weather with short notice camping trips and mid-day rides.

From packed rush-hour traffic to lush woods and back again in but an hour and a half. Even got some product testing squeezed in (pinch flat repair). Two wheels can lend easy access to relatively nearby yet tucked away and forgotten places in a way that other transport means just don't unlock. Best to take advantage of it and explore

those ghost roads you never knew existed before they're totally gone.

It's convenient that the latest trends in bike camping and gravel road riding bikes and gear can be the basis of so much more, be it everyday commutes, long weekend road rides, or hitting certain mountain trails. Less about speed and weight and performance and more about exploring and fun and getting dirty. We're not talking about a sea-change in design—a fatter tire here, a slightly more comfortable posture there—but it's good for everyone involved to see practicality going mainstream, beyond the dominant thoroughbred options. Racing and all out performance bikes are a highly refined fun worth taking advantage of at some point, but for the long game and the sake of spontaneity, versatility is hard to beat.



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

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ALLSTON



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PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

By Jeff Guerrero



Fairdale's updated Weekender was one of the bikes on display at Interbike that I wanted to take home. Photo by Jeff Guerrero

Today I had lunch with a couple of friends who I ride mountain bikes with. While we all have an affinity for nice bikes, none of us have the kind of disposable income that would let us act on any superfluous desires. A few of our acquaintances, however, do.

One of these guys became the butt of all jokes at the lunch table, "If you ride behind him you'll wear out your brake pads." But he will never admit he's just kind of a chicken. While he can't deny that he's always the last one down the mountain, he maintains that his inadequacies are a result of equipment deficiencies.

This is all the more laughable because everything on his bike is literally worth its weight in gold. Team issue, special-edition, carbon fiber—you name it, he's got it. But it's never quite enough.

In a way I can't blame the guy. Especially being that I just returned from the annual bicycle trade show, which becomes rather comical after a dozen visits. If

mountain biking is your hobby, and you pay attention to the related media, you can't avoid the industry's incessant bombardment of advertising and advertorial. They constantly promise huge performance gains through the introduction of yet another new standard. Another gadget that will change your life. A third, fourth or fifth lever on your already overly complicated bicycle. A revolutionary way to save 15 grams.

We all know that you can save more than 15 grams by taking a piss before you ride, but c'est la vie. And frankly, there are far worse things to spend money on, ridiculous as it may be sometimes. I am rather glad the urban cycling market doesn't follow in the off-road sector's footsteps. Not that I eschew high end bikes, but I know full well that a 30 pound bike with rim brakes will get me to work and back, just the same as a 17 pound wunderbike. And that a 46 year old John Tomac could still leave me and my friends in the dust, even on a 1986 Mongoose hard tail.



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i ♥ riding in the city



NAME: Christina Neubauer

LOCATION: Perth, Western Australia

OCCUPATION: Writer

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

I live in Perth, Western Australia. Imagine a metropolis surrounded by the ocean to the west and rugged terrain to the east, thousands of miles away from any other city. I was told Perth has the climate people in LA wish they had: clear blue skies, mostly warm and dry, with peaks of intense heat in summer. The urban sprawl has turned Perth into an endless carpet of single houses—somehow, sometime in the past someone had the fore-

sight to build a network of bitumen cycle paths along the train lines and freeways, which all lead into the central business district. Whether I commute or get around for recreation—it'd be waste not to do so on a bike.

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

I grew up near Hamburg, Germany and have ridden my fare share in Europe. Perth has been, so far, the nicest place I've ridden in. Weather, terrain and scenery are amazing. With a bit of patience, choosing a slightly longer "scenic" route, I can get around town mostly on shared paths, which feels safe and comfortable.

Why do you love riding in the city?

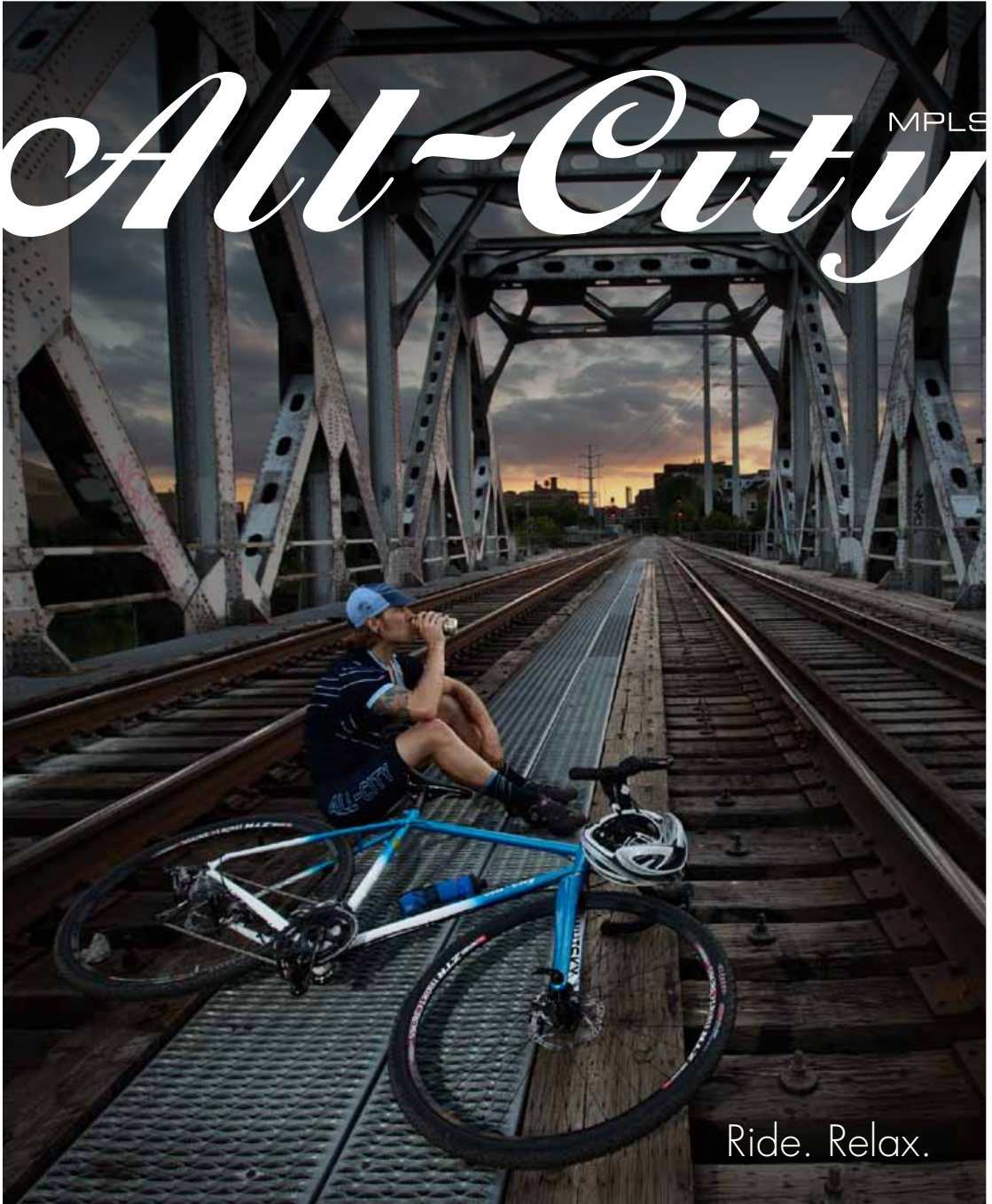
My daily 20 mile commute follows the coastline. There is always wind (seemingly always to pedal against, but never mind), a salty sea breeze, sometimes I see dolphins in the surf along the shore, most nights I have the most amazing sunset on my way home. All of this fills my heart with intense happiness.

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

Given Perth's infrastructure, not enough people use it yet, which is a bummer. I want to help change things, which is why I've become a cycle coach. Well, I don't like to call myself a coach—sounds too sporty—but I teach women who've never learned how to ride a bicycle. It's one of the most satisfying jobs I ever had.

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Future Bike

About a third of the room threw a hand into the air when Adonia Lugo, Equity Initiatives Manager at the League of American Bicyclists requested, “Raise your hand if you think that you will be uncomfortable with some of the things said or discussed today.” Lugo went on to alert everyone they would likely be uncomfortable at some point in the day, but that it would be a sign of progress. But really, it’s what everyone in the room had signed up for willingly.

Future Bike: At the Intersection of Mobility and Identity, was a half-day forum organized by the League of American Bicyclists’ Women Bike and Equity Initiative programs. The over one hundred planners, activists and community leaders who gathered to participate reflected much greater diversity of age, gender, race and ethnicity than at the Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place conference which had ended just an hour before.

Many had also attended Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place while others flew or drove into Pittsburgh specifically for the one-day program. The forum invited participants to engage in tough conversations around how to involve and be led by new and previously overlooked stakeholders, and how to genuinely integrate those new perspectives to redefine and grow the bike movement.

The vision of the event organizers was evident in the choice of the keynote speaker, James Rojas. A planner and architect, Rojas made a name for himself by breaking all existing rules of community engagement in city planning. In his breakout, Creative Biking Outreach Strategies: A Workshop with James Rojas, he led one of his signature sessions. “What is your favorite childhood memory?” was the first question asked. According to Rojas, planning is too often about words

when it should be about creativity and play. Then each group of adults was surrounded with toys and playthings and asked to build their ideal neighborhood. Using this method, everyone generated ideas on planning worth listening to.

In a session called Future Messaging presenters Monica Garrison, founder of Black Girls Do Bike; Rebecca Susman, BikePGH Membership and Outreach Coordinator; and Echo Rivera who authors the blog Echo in the City, brought together a cohesive presentation about how to bring people into cycling. Through the creation of jerseys and logos, Garrison quickly learned that black women who ride have been yearning for images of bikers that looked like them. Boiled down, all three presenters had success in engaging new audiences through the use of pictures, comics, representation, and humor.

So what will the future of the bike movement look like? For biking to ever become mainstream, it must diversify. If the vision is an America where biking is mainstream and people self-identify as bikers as much as they do air-breathers, the movement must diversify for that vision to become a reality.

“The first step is to take the concept of equity and inclusivity seriously,” said Chema Hernandez Gil, a community organizer for the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition and Future Bike presenter. “It needs to be more than just a talking point but it’s going to require money and time and energy to get it there. And it’s going to make the movement much stronger in the long run.” —Ngani Ndimbie

How Parking Almost Killed The Cincinnati Bikeway

All was well for the construction of Cincinnati’s first protected bike lane, a 2.2-mile route on Central Parkway, until a familiar foe of alternative transportation reared its ugly head. Parking.

The Central Parkway Bikeway was seriously threatened when after more than a year of planning, a property owner along the route contacted council members to complain about losing parking on weekdays between 7 and 9 AM. This all despite open houses from officials, letters of notice sent to property own-



Photo by Ryan Clo

ers, a \$500,000 federal grant and a unanimous 9-0 vote approving the project from a previous city council. Somehow this wasn't enough.

Frank Henson, President of Queen City Bike, says the complaint caught him completely off guard, noting, "this project had been vetted over a two-year process." Cycling advocate, Bob Schwartz, echoed Henson's sentiment, saying he was "dumbfounded" upon news of the parking complaint.

However, Senior City Planner with the City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation Melissa McVay says she knew going in that "this would be a challenging project," though she reiterated the exhaustive process the city went through to prepare residents and business owners alike for construction.

"I think it always comes back to a basic fear of change," she continues. "People feel comfortable with the status quo, and it can be really difficult for people to imagine how a change that might inconvenience them a little bit personally could also be game-changing in a really positive way for the broader community."

That fear of change prompted a hearing to offer an alternative that would save the parking. The plan from Vice Mayor David Mann called for moving the route off-street at a cost of \$110,000 and 15 trees—

all to save a mere 10 hours of parking weekly. Rather than dragging the bikeway into a drawn out debate, or worse, risking its death, cycling advocates agreed to the changes.

"Eight days before the final approval it appeared that, without the alternate plan, the Central Parkway Bikeway Project would be terminated," says Henson. Naturally Queen City Bike and the Cincinnati Cycling Club decided to endorse the alternative. "This project is more than 23,000-plus feet of bikeway and the change is only 500 feet."

Derek Bauman, Chair of Cincinnatians For Progress, also threw his support behind the alternative. Not out of concern for a few parking spaces, mind you, but because he has seen how the current administration in Cincinnati treats alternative transportation projects. Earlier this year, the Cincinnati Streetcar had made national headlines when the same administration came close to canceling the long-planned project. Bauman's organization is largely credited with providing the momentum to save the streetcar. When the bikeway was threatened, he threw his muscle behind it.

"Myself and a number of rail transit advocates joined with the bike community to lobby our elected officials, pack council meetings, write letters to the editor and support the project via social media," Bauman explains. "In the end we were successful, and Cincinnati now has its first protected bike lane."

Advocates ultimately count the Central Parkway Bikeway as a success. Horror stories of congestion have gone unrealized. Riders like Bob Schwartz and his wife use it regularly to connect to Over-The-Rhine's Findlay Market. Best of all, new riders are coming out with their bikes.

"Every few days I get an email from someone telling me that they used to be too afraid to ride their bike to work," says McVay. "But now with the new protected bike lanes, they felt like they could give it a try. Hearing that makes it all worth it." —Joe Baur

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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

EUROBIKE/INTERBIKE EDITION



Bamboobee BIY Bicycle Kit

Bamboobee produces their own complete bamboo and aluminum bicycles, and using what they've learned is ready to introduce a Build It Yourself bamboo bicycle kit. Each kit will ship with a single use jig, a complete set of bamboo tubes, stainless dropouts, an aluminum headtube and bottom bracket shell, and all of the hemp twine and wire you need to complete the project. The amazing part is that the planned crowdfunding price is just \$170 for a single kit, making it a tempting purchase no matter how many project bikes are already in the garage. www.bamboobee.net

Cinelli Hobo GEO

The Cinelli Hobo GEO is the latest in the Hobo line of adventure bikes, taking it further offroad with mountain bike touring sensibilities. The double butted Columbus steel frame has 650B wheels, mounts for racks and fenders, up to five bottle mounts for the long haul, and even a spoke-holder for carrying a few spares. Available complete as shown (minus the bags) with a touring friendly 39/26, 2x10 drivetrain, Avid BB7 disc calipers and Ergon grips for \$1950. The 650B wheels are going to be hard to find a spare tire on the road—better stuff an extra in the seatbag. www.cinelli-usa.com



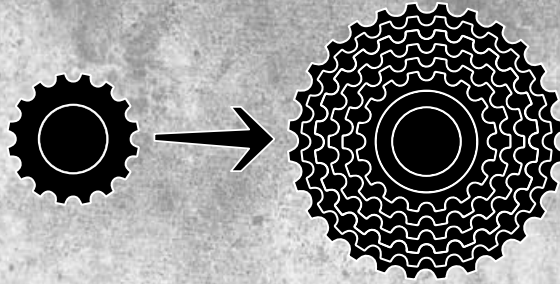
Paul Comp Klamper Mechanical Road/Cyclocross Disc Brake Calipers

After a full two years of development Paul Component Engineering is releasing the Klamper, a short-pull road or cyclocross mechanical disc brake. A remarkable piece of machining, the action is smooth, the large adjuster knobs a welcome sight, and the Avid-compatible pads a good call for future availability. The made in California calipers will be available in silver or black and for about \$240 per wheel, with adapters available for IS mount. Even with the asking price these are going to be everywhere on boutique builds this coming year. www.paulcomp.com

Blackburn Outpost Bikepacking Handlebar Roll

Blackburn has introduced a line of bikepacking gear for those looking to shed the panniers when they get out of town. The \$75 Outpost HB Roll features a quick release bracket for 25.4 or 31.8 mm bars coupled with around-the-bar straps to keep the load in place, with a weatherproof, but not true submersible drybag, included. There are light mounts and places to lash other accessories or bags, with a total listed limit of 8 lbs. Carry even more with the matching expandable seat bag and top tube bags. www.blackburndesign.com





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- Steel cable clips for down tube
- Cable guides for chainstay
- Cable and housing

Fyxation
fyxation.com





Canyon Projekt MRSC

It will likely never reach any sort of widespread market, but the carbon leaf spring and magneto-rheological (MR) fluid, CPU controlled suspension



on the Canyon MRSC is the kind of the out of the box thinking that keeps the high-end tech moving forward. Sensors throughout the bike and a central on-board controller adjust the damping of the MR bearings for road conditions and rider input, bringing subtle, high-tech suspension to the road. It will even text you maintenance needs. It's not going to be on daily rides any time soon, but still interesting to see what the race car side of things is working on. www.canyon.com

Skittle Thug is the New Black

Straight from the slopes to a bicycle near you—skittle thug is the new black. Definitely coming from the enduro mountain bike side of things, the mismatched, matte neon look is making a strong appearance this year. Sure to trickle into the urban and commuter realm, better put your sunglasses on so you can see a little. Earthtones are out, skittle thug is in, always bet on black.

GT Grade EnduRoad Line

GT has introduced the Grade bikes as their EnduRoad line, with disc brakes and large tire clearance across the board for a more versatile, yet performance oriented, road bike. Pictured is the \$1400 GT Grade Alloy 105 bike, with a hydro-formed tubeset, tapered steerer thru-axle carbon



fork and Shimano 105 11-speed shifters and derailleurs. Triple triangle as always, with fender mounts all around and six frame sizes. Double the dollars and go full carbon. www.gt bicycles.com



Twin Six Bikes

After 10 years of clothing design, Twin Six has introduced a line of four bikes—29" mountain, ti fatbike, cyclocross, and rando. The \$600 Standard Rando (\$660 with matching fenders) is a disc brake specific, steel frame and fork combo, all-day road, light touring bike or everyday commuter bike. The \$1050 Standard CX frameset is lighter and racier, with a tapered carbon fork, modular qr or thru-axle dropouts and a PF30 bottom bracket with eccentric adapter available for single speed use. All of the new Twin Six bikes feature a classic and relatively seldom seen wishbone seatstay. www.twinsix.com



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Milwaukee



The Historic Pabst Brewery.

City: Milwaukee, WI

Nickname: Brew City, Cream City, or City of Festivals.

Claim to Fame: Beer and Brats, Pabst, Miller High Life, Harley Davidson and the Calatrava designed art museum.

History in 100 Words (or less): Milwaukee is a blue collar city made from blood, sweat and beers. Milwaukee was first settled by Europeans at the turn of the

19th century, originally formed by three towns called Juneautown, Kilbourntown, and Walker's Point separated by the Milwaukee River. In 1846, all three cities grew to such an extent that they merged to form Milwaukee. German immigrants made the population boom in the mid-1800s, and the influence remains to this day. Milwaukee is famous for its cream colored brick buildings that were made in the Menomonee River valley.

Random Fact: Milwaukee is home to America's oldest

bowling alley, the Holler House, first opened in 1908 with the original wooden lanes and manual pinsetters still in service.

City's Terrain: Milwaukee is surprisingly hilly. Slow, gradual hills that tire you out over time. The Milwaukee River cuts directly through downtown creating valleys to traverse, and contribute to green spaces within the urban area. Be careful crossing the bridges when it rains or snows, they can get remarkably slippery.

Top Shops: Ben's Cycle, Cory The Bike Fixer, Rainbow Jersey and Wheel and Sprocket are great shops that you can trust. All of these shops have friendly staff that know their bike tech. They would rather see you ride away happy than make a sale.

Best Watering Holes: The Best Place, The Swingin' Door, The Polish Falcon, Foundation Tiki Bar, Burnhearts, The Cactus Club, Sabbatic.

Authentic Local Food: Comet Cafe, Fuel Cafe (Butafuccho), Cafe Corazon, Honey Pie, and Nessun Dorma are excellent, locally owned and operated choices.

Coffee: Fuel Cafe is one of Milwaukee's oldest coffee shops. When you think of coffee in Milwaukee it's hard not to think about Fuel. Stone Creek Coffee, Anodyne Coffee Roasting Co, and Colectivo Coffee Roasters are some other great sources. Do not be surprised to find some great coffee here.

Must See: The Best Place at the Historic Pabst Brewery, located just northwest of downtown. Have a pint and take a tour of the place where Jacob Best started the local brewery that his son Phillip and Captain Frederick Pabst made into the largest brewer in the nation at one time. The old sign and cat walk are still intact, and tours are just \$8.

Don't miss the Milwaukee Art Museum, with four



Downtown Milwaukee



Milwaukee has a healthy local racing scene.



Nessun Dorma, a neighborhood favorite.



Milwaukee has an extensive bicycle trail system that connects to a larger regional trail network that stretches to Madison and beyond.

floors and over forty galleries of work. The building was designed by Santiago Calatrava and around 10 AM the building literally opens its sunshade wings.

The Milwaukee Public Market, Oriental Theater, the Bronz Fonze and the Harley Davidson Museum are other places you must see before you leave.


Must Ride: The Hank Aaron State Trail is part of a route that runs from Milwaukee to Madison (about 90 miles). It's a great ride, especially during the fall. The Oak Leaf trail can get you from the northern burbs to downtown in about 15-20 min. Be careful of the deer and wild turkey that inhabit this path! The lake front is a popular destination on the weekend. There are paved trails and beaches that have become a popular playground for fat bike riders. If you fancy some indoor mountain bike or BMX action, Ray's MTB Park is the place to be.

Weather Forecast: Long winters, short summers. Milwaukee weather has a bit of an attitude. In the spring and fall it can be 70° one day, and close to freez-

ing and raining the next. Try to come to Milwaukee in the summer if you want to take advantage of the lakefront. There are plenty of ethnic festivals that happen downtown and along the lake. Plan your trip accordingly to try and avoid fully booked hotels. The bike trails are best viewed in the fall when the leaves are changing colors. Be prepared and always pack a light jacket, it's cooler near the lake.

Need For Speed: Every year, Milwaukee's bike messengers throw the Milwaukee Messenger Invitational. It's a weekend of alleycat racing and good times, attracting riders from across the Midwest and beyond.

Advocacy: The Wisconsin Bike Fed has done an amazing job making Milwaukee a better place to cycle. Over the past five years they've teamed up with the city and added hundreds of miles worth of bike paths and lanes.

Locals Only: The underwear bike ride. What started off as a small gathering is now one of the largest mass bike rides in the city. The ride happens monthly June through September. 



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FIXED GEAR FREESTYLE

* * *

IT AIN'T OVER YET

By Krista Nicole Carlson

Five years ago fixed gear freestyle was a visible and seemingly fast-growing part of urban bike culture. Times have changed. Where once there were a number of production frames available, today the offerings have shrunk and most companies that started in FGFS have branched out or gone extinct. Regional trick competitions have largely faded away, and the sport is not nearly as prominent as it once was.



Burd Phillips at the Bicycle Film Festival in NYC, 2008. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

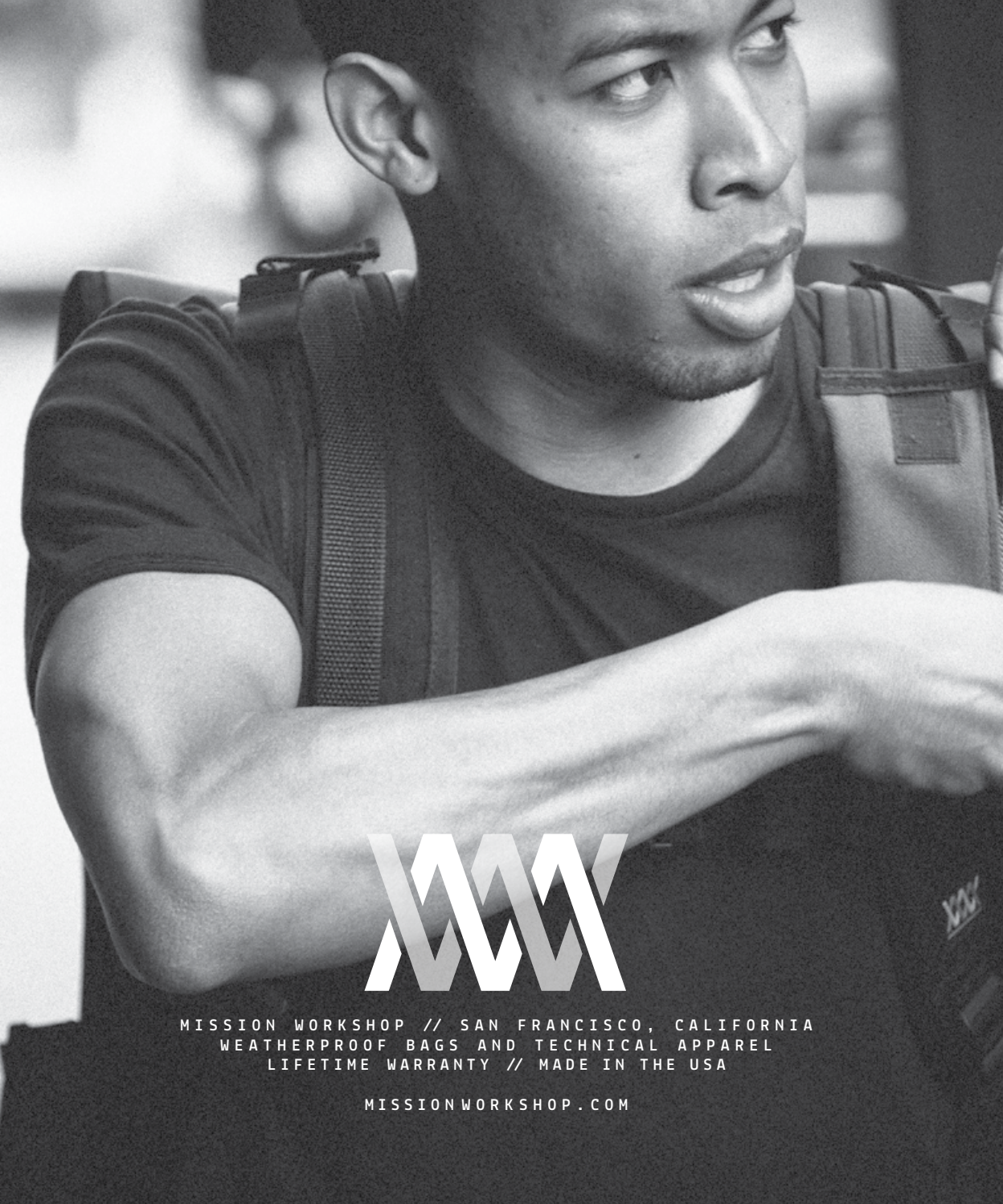
When fixed gear freestyle began it was just tricks on track bikes. Messengers messing around in their downtime, and clusters of fixed gear bike geeks getting caught up in the fun of seeing what else could be done on one. As track bikes made their appearance on city streets in growing numbers, what could be done on one was being pushed to new and surprising levels—many riders wanted to do something more than just go fast. Trackstands and skids were nice, but what else was there?

“It was unbelievably exciting at the time,” said Burd Phillips, whose *Bootleg Sessions* DVD series helped popularize FGFS as he gave some of the most progressive riders a platform to show their skills. “I was doing some stuff on my own—around 2005, 2006—and I’d gotten a fixed gear bike and just started goofing around. I was doing stuff I hadn’t seen anyone

else do so I started putting videos on YouTube.”

Searching to see what else was out there, Phillips found out about an event going on in Seattle called *Fast Friday*, run by a messenger who also ran a small company called *Cadence*. Involved in and inspired by the *Cycle Messenger World Championships* in San Francisco, and the trick competition that took place there, Klein would establish one of the first FGFS teams.

“*Fast Friday* basically made us all ride our bikes and all become buddies. Everybody did their own thing eventually, but *Fast Friday* was a foundation in all that. It put us out there. We were racing, skid stopping, just having a good time more or less,” said Keo Curry, who dominated many of the early trick comps. “It was really fun and it let you know how much you fun you could have on your bicycle.”



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Skidface, 2007. Photo by Ed Glazar

There were races, but there were also trackstand competitions, backwards circles contests, and a trick competition—an event that started out with five people on a good night, a humble sort of affair, and became a catalyst for a FGFS movement that unfolded across several continents in the years that followed.

On the East Coast, New York City is where FGFS really took hold. The large and diverse bike and skate scene along with endless urban features was a perfect breeding ground. According to Ed Glazar, a rider, writer, and photographer that documented a lot of the early trick riding, “[The photo at left] is kind of the birth of the scene in NYC. It was an event under the BQE (Brooklyn-Queens Expressway) called Skidface in 2007.” The 2008 NYC Bicycle Film Festival had a number of FGFS films, and a number of side events bringing people together at an important period of growth of the genre.

“We used to be able to show up to alleycats and they would have a trick comp as well,” said Jason Clary. “We were able to be competitive in trick comp with the bikes that we raced on.”

There was a market explosion, even if the riders truly pushing the limits remained a relatively small group. Everyone from the niche bike companies like GRIME, Break-Brake, Livery Design Gruppe, and Blackmarket, to longstanding brands with BMX roots, like Volume and SE Bikes, along with the most traditional names in cycling, including Specialized and Redline, who, along with so many others, presented FGFS riders with bikes designed to do all the tricks they’d been mastering.



Neil Bezdek Red Hook Crit **BROOKYN**

photo: Eloy Anzola



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Jason Clary. Photo by Delano Willis

“People just saw at that time that there was a market—at that time everyone was riding track bikes, whatever fixed gears were available then—everybody would just do what they had to do, like put smaller wheels on the front of their bike [to barspin].”

These new bikes had stronger tubing and distinguished geometry, made to withstand the abuse bikes take in FGFS, and more importantly, be manipulated to do new, more advanced level tricks. Where riders had redefined what could be done on a track bike, now the bikes were going to change the game again.

“A year ahead of time, before Redbull Ride + Style in 2013, I contacted Todd Lyons at SE and I said I need this particular bike and I’m going to win this event on it.” Clary said. “I catered my bike to that event.” The progression of the bikes went from light frames with nimble wheels to what was in many ways just a big BMX bike with a fixed gear drivetrain.

“It is quite like BMX, but then again fixed gear is so much harder to do all those tricks on because it’s all timing,” Curry said. “It’s not like you can just coast up to something and fly off a ramp. Everything has to be timed. Your pedals and your feet all have to be in the right position to do a trick, even to do consecutive tricks, all that has to be planned out. You have to learn how to do the trick switch, with your feet.

“I wouldn’t draw a line, but I would respect a rider who makes up his own tricks, even if it’s simple... If you can do a smoothie into some crazy barspin endo thing flatland, that looks sick and smooth—no BMX cats are doing anything like that—I would respect that more, because it’s more fixed gear driven.”

When BMX brand Volume released the Thrasher, they were surprised at the demand for it. “It was just something we made because we wanted to,” said Volume representative Matthew Lee. “We released the Cutter after that, but it didn’t do as well. We’re a BMX company, and we wanted to focus on that. FGFS wasn’t really something we ever intended to branch off into.”

It’s easy to reason that many FGFS riders might end up just trading out their 26 inch wheels and fixed drive train for a BMX, more naturally disposed to doing tricks with its smaller size and freewheel cog, while others set their track bikes up for smashing again. It’s easy to look around and see the industry around FGFS has gotten much smaller. It would be a mistake to assume that FGFS is dead. “FGFS is at



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Tony Fast at the Bicycle Film Festival in NYC, 2008. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

the point where it's weeding out the people that don't need to be there," Boothby said, "Like companies that are just in it for the money."

"A lot of people feel like it died out because it was progressing really quick," said Boothby, though he has a different perspective: "It wasn't about one or two tricks, it's about the all around complete rider—a lot of people got into fixed gear freestyle because they thought they could get sponsored really quickly. The hardest thing to do is take it from being a hobby into an actual profession where you can actually thrive and live."

"It's just a monster in the closet that's waiting to get let out," said Curry. "I think it's had its implosion, fad phase. The kids who got them just because it was cool, and the bikes just sitting there—they'll fade away."

"There are so many kids who are way younger now and getting a fixed gear bike instead of a new BMX bike. That right there is a sign that the sport is gonna progress, and then there's gonna be awesome riders in the future, on top of the ones that we already have. That there tells you this stuff is gonna be around, because I've seen 10 year olds riding fixed gears in L.A."





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by Dylan VanWeelden





Gallery

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Brompton M6L

Brompton folders are born from the small quarters and extensive public transit system of their London home, a place where indoor space is at a premium and multi-modal transport is key to making it across town on time. Founder Andrew Ritchie was introduced to an Australian folding bike by chance one day, and quickly thereafter began work on what would become the Brompton bicycle, deciding upon the signature method of folding the rear wheel under the bike with the first prototype.

Bromptons all share the same main frame design, with the model numbers designating the chosen options for the bike. The pictured model has an M-type handlebar, a 6-speed drivetrain, and the “L” fender kit option the Brompton M6L. The frame, hinges, and many of the small parts are not only designed but fabricated in Brompton’s London factory, making for a truly unique complete bicycle benefitting from years of subtle refine-

ments to the same basic design.

Three pivots allow the bike to fold in three basic steps. Unhook the small lever on the rear suspension bumper and the rear wheel swings under the frame as the first step, leaving the bike in a freestanding, partially folded, parked position. Next, release the frame hinge and swing the front wheel back. Finally release and fold the bars down, stow the folding pedal, and lower the seatpost fully to lock the bike in the folded position. The process easily takes less than 30 seconds after a few practice runs, and thanks to the 16” wheels ends with such a compact package (23” x 21.5” x 10.6”) that some have even had success bringing it along as carry-on luggage. The chain and cables conveniently end up to the inside of the folded package.

We handed off the Brompton M6L to Ngani Ndimbie, Communications Manager of Bike Pittsburgh, for feedback: “The six speed drivetrain was more than



adequate to conquer all of my usual hills, and I was easily able to keep up with conventional bikes while riding in a group. It's easy to shift gears with the Sturmey-Archer internal three speed hub and Brompton designed two speed external derailleurs and shifters. The long stem flexes enough that I never felt comfortable standing while climbing, though wheelies are easy and the bike handles really well once you have time on it. I did sometimes yearn for larger wheels."

"While I'll admit that I occasionally felt like a dweeb riding around town on the Brompton, that all changed with the Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place conference where folders proved to be the official bike of active transportation nerds on the go," Ngani continued. "Folding was easy the first time I watched a quick video and mimicked the motions. Without the video I folded it incorrectly at least two times, once leaving me getting on the bus with both arms wrapped around an inexpertly folded bike. With use it became easier, and with time it would be second nature."

There is no doubt that the small 16" wheels and long, unsupported stem rides differently than a traditionally constructed bicycle, but after a short adjustment period the Brompton M6L rides reasonably well at city speeds. While plenty of people have ridden a Brompton long distances or even raced them, the small wheels can be harsh with rocks and potholes becoming proportionally bigger as compared to more forgiving, larger diameter wheels. Given the wheel size and design constraints of a folder, you couldn't ask for a much better handling bike. Expecting the ride of a conventional bike will lead to disappointment, using a folder to ride when or where you otherwise wouldn't be able to is where a Brompton truly shines. Throw it

in the trunk of a car,

Brompton is single minded in trying to create the best folding bike on the market. The attention to purpose is clear from the folding action itself to the hinge quality, and on through the small details of magnetic closure, a single folding pedal and ancillary wheels to help roll the folded machine through a crowded station. Commuters can easily click bags on and off the head-tube mounted cleat, and a rear rack is available to further expand carrying capacity. The quick folding action is key to using the bike as intended on mass transit and in and out of buildings, with an open-bottom bag available to disguise the bike as just another piece of luggage in less-than-bike-friendly businesses and workplaces.

Bromptons are premium folders, but are priced competitively as compared to other UK or USA-made bicycles, with complete bikes starting around \$1200, and the M6L as tested coming in at \$1625. www.brompton.com





When top security and locking flexibility are of prime concern, hardened steel chain locks are hard to beat. Not always the easiest or most convenient to carry, purpose built security chains remain a reasonable choice for people in high-theft areas or those forced by circumstance to lock their fancy bikes in vulnerable places. Common sense prevails—no lock is immune to power tools or all out attack—but if these locks aren't enough to prevent bike theft you should look into at least a beater lock-up bike or perhaps a new neighborhood altogether.

ABUS **The Brooklyn Chain**

Price: \$100

Length: 47" (120 cm)

Link Diameter: 10 mm, square

Weight: 2.8 kg

Keys: Single-sided conventional key, two included

Features: Loop chain allows slipknot-like locking, titanium-body padlock, fabric chain sleeve.

The Brooklyn Chain from ABUS is their answer for people locking in one of the most theft-prone places in the country. The square, 10 mm chain links make it resistant to bolt cutters (the padlock features a 10 mm round shackle), the end-link loop makes it easy to lock, just put the end link through the loop and clasp the shackle. Given the slipknot style locking and long chain length, you have to pay particular attention that the chain can't be manipulated over the top of a parking meter or street sign. That said, the same long chain allows you to catch both wheels, the frame, and a solid object in the same loop for maximum theft deterrence. The fabric cover helps to prevent frame damage from the chain links but prevents easy wearing around the waist unless you're the perfect fit for the chain length, approximately a 36 - 38" waist.

www.abus.com

Kryptonite **Evolution Series 4 1090 Chain**

Price: \$80

Length: 35.5" (90 cm)

Link Diameter: 10 mm, hexagonal

Weight: 2.6 kg

Keys: Flat key, three included, one lighted

Features: End link deadbolt locking design, disc-style lock cylinder, fabric chain sleeve.

The Kryptonite Evolution Series 4 1090 Chain is unique in that it doesn't use a padlock to secure the chain, but a lock integrated into the end with a hardened and protected deadbolt engaging the last chain link. The integrated lock with a cylindrical cylinder flat key complicates cutting and picking attacks, forcing thieves to go for the hardened steel, hexagonal links. The non-adjustable 90 cm length isn't enough to wrap around all but the thinnest people's waists, leaving you to stow the lock in a backpack or the optional cargo bag, and the same short length prevents locking both wheels and frame with the chain. The lock mechanism itself does not allow you to remove the key unless the deadbolt is engaged, preventing the rare but real unlocked lock-up. Check out the shorter integrated chain locks from Kryptonite if the 1090 chain is more than you need.

www.kryptonitelock.com



The buckle closure on the phone pocket is great, but more overlap on the flap for protection in steady rain would be good for peace of mind. Get creative with the reflective daisy-chain mounting loops strap a pump to the outside, run a mini u-lock through them as a holster, attach a blinkie for night safety. The Chrome seatbelt strap is useful and secure, and heavy and made of metal, and contributes to a total bag weight of 520 g (the buckle alone is approximately 200 g). It's a useful bag, great for short in-town trips where a full-sized bag is just excessive. For more capacity in a similar form factor check out the Chekhov Rolltop Utility Belt. www.chromeindustries.com



Chrome Victor Urban Utility Belt

The Chrome Victor Urban Utility Belt is a beyond miniature messenger bag, meant to hold the bare essentials when you don't need a full backpack or want to deal with on-bike bags. Over the shoulder or fanny pack style, the \$85 Victor is essentially a set of secure jersey pockets when you're wearing more casual clothes that may not have pockets at all. It is just large enough to carry a phone, basic tool kit and small camera or wallet, maybe even a very compact wind-shell, but not much more. The small size is what keeps it useful, preventing one from stuffing it full of the clutter that collects in a larger bag, but an accordion bottom in the main pocket would hold more, without making the bag much larger. As it stands, a couple of tubes, a multitool and a wallet can quickly max it out.



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Lezyne Gauge Drive HP

Compact hand pumps are a must-have item on the road; ride more than a few miles from home and you're bound to get a flat. The \$50 Lezyne Gauge Drive HP is an aluminum bodied pump meant for high pressure, low volume tires and equipped with an in-line pressure gauge meant as a step up from cheap feeling plastic bodied mini pumps. If nothing else the shiny aluminum feels good in your hand, even if I've never been one to tear through plastic pumps. At 230 mm long the Gauge Drive HP fits in a jersey pocket and larger seatbags, or use the provided bottle cage mount. The handle side hides a the hose and in-line gauge inflator which has a reversible Presta or Schrader chuck with a bleed valve. Screw the hose into the end of the pump body, careful to not cross-thread the plastic fitting, and go. Over the past season the Lezyne Gauge Drive HP has bailed out a few flat tires and aired up the travel bike outside the airport. The ABS Pen Gauge gives a reasonable ballpark pressure reading on the side of the road, but you'll be hard pressed to tell a 10 psi difference with it. Be mindful of not unscrewing the gauge itself as I once did and avoid a momentary heartrate spike (I was able to put the gauge back together on the spot). The screw-on Presta chuck and small section of hose go a long way to help prevent broken valve stems out on the road, which happens to be the most common and least convenient place to break them. Like any small pump it's going to take some effort to get to riding pressure with a road tire, but it will keep you rolling and is able to get to 100+ psi without spending all day.

www.lezyne.com



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Paul Component Engineering Thumbie Shifter Mounts

Top-mount thumbshifters are a classic design that the big players have left behind in the race to make a “better” shifter. Other designs are undeniably more ergonomic and capable of faster shifts, all without changing your grip on the bars. But some of us are hooked on thumbshifters, if for nothing else than their proven durability through simplicity. No matter the conditions, no matter the muck and cold, thick gloves and rust, thumbshifters continue to shift. In fact, I still have two pairs of 20+ year old Suntour thumbshifters in service on bikes, along with this set of Paul Thumbies that I’ve been running for over 5 years.

Paul Thumbies are the answer to those of us that want indexing beyond 8-speeds or SRAM or Campagnolo compatibility but want to run top-mounts too. These mounts transform bar end and time-trial shift-

ers into old school thumbshifters. My poison? 9-speed Shimano bar end shifters mated to Paul Thumbies, run in friction mode on my 10-speed dirt road touring rig. Adjustable front derailleur trim and you can shift the entire cassette in one movement with the right touch. I’d go so far as to say, “It works every time!” but I’m to understand the phrase has already been taken. This is a shifter for the tinkerers and the explorers, best suited to people with a secret stash of parts and more ideas about bike setup than available rides to test it.

Paul Thumbies are available for \$74 per pair in either silver or black, in either 22.2, 26.0 or 31.8 clamp sizes (mountain bars and road stem clamp sizes) and with Shimano, SRAM, Microshift or Campagnolo mounts. Current Thumbies have hinged clamps for easier installation and removal. www.paulcomp.com



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New Courier Renaissance

By Mark Davis

The so-called “courier decline” has been discussed over post-work beers since the fax machine was invented, and even more so as the internet came to prominence during the late nineties. In many ways, it would seem inevitable that an industry rooted in ferrying paperwork would decline as technology became more accessible, reliable, and versatile, but one look at today’s on-demand delivery landscape tells a different story. Between Postmates, Uber Rush, SpoonRocket, Caviar, Munchery, Washio, Ice Cream Life, Eaze, Wun Wun, the recently defunct Rewinery, the soon-to-be-refunct Kozmo.com, and a slew of smaller, locally-based companies such as TCB, Send It Courier, and Flavor Cycle, it seems that everyone is getting in on bicycle couriership one way or another. As a rider, this can be either a great opportunity or a horribly frustrating experience, depending on what you want to get out of a courier job.





An original, company issued Kozmo.com Chrome bag. These were ubiquitous for a time amongst former employees and riders that picked up the scores of them liquidated online. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

What's in a Name?

Of the aforementioned companies, Postmates is perhaps the most recognizable name, and least exclusive when it comes to the deliverables. Unlike Eaze or Washio, who exclusively deliver weed and laundry respectively, Postmates' boast is that they will deliver whatever you want, in an hour. They have offices and couriers in San Francisco, New York City, Chicago, Washington DC, LA, and Seattle, with plans to open up shop in Austin, Boston, and presumably, just about every other major US city. Their service is based around an app that customers use to browse local shops and make their orders, though food delivery constitutes their business. They're also cheap in the way that only a Bay Area startup can be. \$39 million in investment funding has allowed them to expand rapidly and establish themselves as a same-day delivery behemoth.

Kozmo.com was the original web-based delivery service, during a time when the internet was still working its way to the masses, dial-up was ubiquitous and the web startup bubble was inflating, with Kozmo.com raising over \$200 million. Kozmo.com promised one-hour delivery of whatever you wanted, with no delivery charge or minimum orders. In retrospect, among the reasons they failed was their centralized operations. Huge warehouses were leased in every city they operated, housing products, couriers, even in-house bike mechanics. Everyone was paid hourly, and couriers received tips as well. It lasted less than three years.

Sign On The Dotted Line

In an effort to avoid becoming the new Kozmo.com, Postmates has decided to use the combination of more powerful, easily accessible technology along



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with a huge supply of underemployed people. Gone are the warehouses, the free bags and equipment, and even the employees. The only employees of Postmates are the engineers, operations managers, and customer service reps. Every courier who delivers on their platform is classified as an independent contractor (IC), allowing them to bring on as many people as possible to meet demand.

According to Co-founder and CEO Bastian Lehmann in a 2012 interview with TechCrunch, Postmates had a flat rate of \$15 per delivery. When asked about how he got the idea for the company, his reply was, "... why don't we help the guys who did their job already do their job better. They already know what it means to do their job for \$10 - 15 per delivery."

Since then, that fee has gone down to between \$5 - 12 dollars, depending on the distance traveled from pick-up to drop-off, not accounting for terrain. What's left of the delivery charge after Postmates takes their cut, plus tips, are what the riders take home at the end of the day. According to Nick J., a Postmates rider I interviewed, the riders of every city are dispatched by one team, based in San Francisco. Because of the sheer volume of requests they receive, riders are frequently tasked by dispatch with standing in line to make an order on behalf of the customer, eating up valuable time. Because of this, Nick tells me it's very difficult to efficiently take on more than one job at once, and even more difficult to route effectively. Other couriers tell me that they regularly make less than minimum wage, despite the hours they work. A month after we first spoke, Nick moved on to delivering food directly for a couple of restaurants in town, for an hourly wage, plus tips. "I don't know anyone who still rides for them. Their turnover is insanely high."

The Game

I sat down to interview partners Arthur Lazear and Morgan Mack of the Lazear Mack law firm and ask about the legalities and requirements of an IC employ-

ment relationship. They specialize in labor law, which they tell me tends to be quite similar from state to state. They explained to me, "It's not as easy of a question as it may seem. What determines your status as an IC is actually a number of factors, not all of which have to be met. The principle question that has to be answered is: 'Are you in control of your own work?'"

The answer to that, at least with Postmates, is yes. You don't have to wear their clothes, use their stickers, package things any particular way, or even adhere to your schedule. You can go on or off whenever you want, and reject whatever job they send your way. Are they paying what the work is actually worth? Will you make \$20 - 30 dollars an hour? Maybe not. But then again, you don't have to do it, and they're not going to fire you for not doing it. If this is just a thing you want to do for some drinking money and exercise in between classes, Postmates could probably supply you with a healthy dose of job satisfaction. The trouble comes when you expect the real, living wages as well as the freedom.

Morgan Mack ended our conversation with a lament about organization of the messenger community. "Couriers are probably their own worst enemy as far as this goes. You are so independently-minded that you don't team up and make decisions as a group. If you were to do so, many companies would have no choice but to let you have more say when laying down the terms of employment."

Maybe he's right. It's the nature of the job. Couriers don't like having people look over our shoulder, dictating how they ride and what they do when they aren't riding. It's always been a bit of an outlaw's hustle, and while the messenger community is hugely supportive of one another, they're also fiercely independent.

Takin' Care of Bidness

TCB Courier is a local San Francisco courier business. It started a few years back when some riders found a market for the kind of thing that these app-based VC companies are only recently catching on to. They deliver whatever, whenever, especially burritos, beer, and smokes. Their rates range from \$8 - 20, depending on weight and number of stops. You can even rent a courier by the hour from them to tailgate a Google bus and flyer for an event. Their business model is not altogether too different from Postmates; their riders

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Author and veteran courier Kurt Boone. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

are IC and they have an internal app used for dispatch. Because they've had to grow organically as they carve out their niche, kinks have been worked out one at a time and they've been able to make it work. It's probably not the highest-paying courier gig in the city, but from what their couriers tell me, it's competitive. They seem to have relatively low turnover, and that probably has a lot to do with the number of couriers they have on shift at any given time. Where Postmates employs hundreds of couriers in many major cities across four time zones, TCB has anywhere between 45 - 60 couriers total, depending on the season. Because they deal with one city and fewer couriers fighting for jobs, dispatch and scheduling can be simpler and more efficient.

The TCB office, a dingy hole-in-the-wall of SF's infamous Tenderloin is where I sat down to talk with Chas and Trevor, two founders of the scrappy com-

pany. They started by telling me a bit about their internal app, which is used to keep the flow of deliveries organized. It's a proven system, and one that they share with other similarly oriented messenger shops all over North America. They've formed partnerships with a number of delivery services in places like LA, Toronto, and Chicago. Other cities are joining the network all the time.

When I ask how much riders take home, answers vary. Trevor and Chas say most of the couriers average around \$130 in a five-hour shift, but I asked around and heard numbers closer to \$100.

\$100 bucks for 35 miles of riding SF hills is a lot closer to livable anyway, but here's the kicker about IC work: you're responsible for paying your own local, state and federal taxes as an IC, cutting into that take home pay. And if you get hurt? No worker's compensation, no insurance coverage (though Postmates recently bought a liability-only policy, covering any damages you may do to others while at work), and no unemployment insurance should you be unable to ride or be laid-off.

A Diverse Picture

I got in touch with longtime courier and writer, Kurt Boone to find out the latest about working in the messenger mecca of New York City. Kurt has spent the better part of 25 years doing deliveries, both for traditional messenger services as well as app-based services like Uber Rush, Ebay Now, and Zipments.

As we rode the bus together, he told me, "Ebay Now was hiring messengers a while back, that was booming. You could make an easy \$500 - 800 a week delivering for them. Some people were doing 50 hours a week. They had a uniform and all that. Pay was hourly, no commission. They started scaling it back though. They let go of most of their hires and outsourced the work to Breakaway. That doesn't seem to be going so well for them, so I think they're kind of moving away from the delivery business."

When asked about Uber Rush, he gave me the low-down on their business model. "Yeah, Uber's pretty alright. They start the commission at \$12, and you can make some cash riding around. They add an extra twenty percent onto your fee, and that's their cut. Every time you pass into a new zone, you get another \$4. It's alright."

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The impression I got from his stories is that Uber has basically taken the same model as Postmates, slowed down its growth expectations (it's been active in NYC for a while now, but nowhere else), and increased prices in the hopes of providing a faster, cleaner service through higher quality messengers.

Godspeed

On a cloudless Monday morning, I'm sitting in front of the Godspeed Courier HQ in San Francisco's Mission district. Brandon, a career courier since 1997 and one of the founders of Godspeed, is optimistic about the future of the industry. "One way or the other, it's here to stay."

When I asked him about the formation of Godspeed, he told me, "The main goal was to provide a great work environment for ourselves, to provide the benefits we deserved, and extend that to the people who work for us. The most important part was not only having a fun and great job, but providing a superior service compared to the companies than we used to work for."

According to Brandon, Godspeed Courier has some of the lowest turnover of any courier company around, with only 2 employees over their history who quit before their first year. Many of the riders have been part of Godspeed for the better part of a decade. Godspeed has some of the best talent in the field, and are damn nice guys to boot. Maybe they're in such a good mood because everyone there is an employee with insurance benefits, a respectable hourly wage (minimum is \$15/hour) or salary. "We didn't want this to be a feast or famine kind of situation for everyone... One of the things we wanted everyone to have was steady pay."

As I was leaving, he shared a story with me about a courier strike back in 1999. A giant conglomeration of foreign investors began buying up all of the major messenger companies around San Francisco. They withheld pay and "lost" paperwork related to work-hours. With the help of the ILWU, they organized enough to strike against the offending companies and file a class-action lawsuit. Not long after, couriers won damages, back pay, and court costs. Messengers aren't always completely independently minded to their own detriment as some may believe.

Lucky Number 15

I asked TCB what they thought of a \$15 minimum wage, but they were unfazed. "We put it to the riders every quarterly staff meeting. Employees? Or IC? Every time, they choose IC."

Later that evening I found myself sitting at the coffee shop down the street, watching people cruising up and down Valencia. By chance, a Postmate, a TCB'r, and I are standing around shooting the shit about messlife. I asked them what they thought about IC status, and they both shrugged, drank their coffee, and rode away.

A World of Opportunity

You live in a world with bikes in it. Even if you only ride for fun, you know how challenging it can be. Now imagine it as your job. You do it eight hours a day, five days a week, 30 - 60 miles every day, in heavy traffic, no matter the weather. It's tough, dangerous work that has real equipment costs. If you've had to send something across town before the last 3 years, you'll know that it actually costs a substantial bit of money, especially if you want it there safe within the hour.

Before I left TCB, Chas told me, "Look, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. Postmates is our rival, but they have a huge marketing budget to put bike delivery on the radar." He's right. This was largely an invisible industry to most people for years. Now, a huge swath of the urban population considers ordering by bike every day, and people all over the country are realizing that they, too can bring courier work to their locale.

In 2011 Peter DiAntoni, the editor and publisher of COG Magazine, traveled to San Francisco to do a story on TCB and realized that their business model could work just as well back home in Milwaukee. He soon decided to commit full time to his own delivery company, Flavor Cycle. He tells me, "It's really a labor of love. We make it work. It's not a whole bunch of money, but it works, and we've been growing. It's sustainable."

Rock-It Courier in Minneapolis, Star Courier in Olympia, WA, Send It Courier in Toronto. The list goes on. These are all grassroots companies who want to provide a good job and explore this freshly exposed market. Whether or not they are going about it in the best possible way is really tough to say. However, they are doing it organically and sustainably, with nothing but community support and gumption.



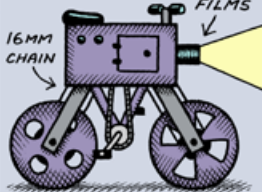
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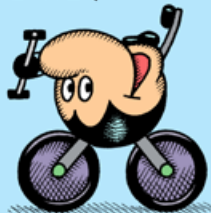
CONCEPTUAL BICYCLES

PROJECTOR BIKE

HEADLIGHT SHOWS OLD FILMS



MICKEY MOUSE BIKE (RECUMBENT)



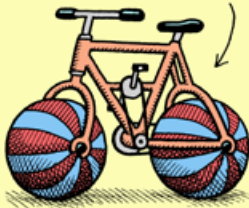
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Biking With Isa

By Mike Lepetit



Photo by Mike Lepetit

When I asked for the fastest way to get to the bank I didn't like the answer I got. "Just walk down the block and take a bicycle taxi." The people of Malawi are nice, but they didn't exactly look like they could haul all of my 200 pounds around town and I was sure that the hills in Singa Bay wouldn't make it any easier. "No, it's their job," I was reassured. "They are used to it."

So I did as I was instructed. I walked through the lakeside town of Singa Bay, a small city perched on

one of Africa's largest lakes, Lake Malawi. I moved along sandy roads, passing families preparing meals, children kicking bottles as soccer balls, and livestock eating bushes that grew between homes. When I got to the main road, the only paved road for miles, I simply waited for a cab to come by. In only a matter of moments a man on a bike with a passenger sitting behind him came up and asked where I was going. "My name is Isa," he said as he shook my hand. "As in Isaac." Despite the warm African winter he

was wearing a knit hat, pants, and a t-shirt. The bank was two kilometers away and the trip would cost me three dollars, round trip. His passenger hopped off and I hopped on.

On the back of his bike, where a basket or rack might normally sit, was a small seat and two tiny handles. I awkwardly straddled the rear wheel.

“What do I do with my feet?” I asked him.

“You just put them there,” he said as he pointed to the small bolts that stuck out from the center of the wheel. He checked to make sure that I was settled before he took his first, laborious, pedal.

The road was wide and well paved with little traffic. Occasionally a car or truck would barrel through, driving on the yellow line to avoid all of the pedestrians and bikers along its edge. Women walked along the street balancing baskets on their heads and a few people waved hello or shouted at Isa. After a while the road started to slant upwards and Isa peddled with even more difficulty. Each deliberate rotation he forced put a strain on his bike. He stood up to pedal harder and after only a few yards his chain fell off the gears. Slightly embarrassed, but not surprised, he pulled over to fix it. It was my biggest fear – the entire reason why I didn’t want to take a bike cab in the first place. I was too heavy to cart around town. But Isa just casually put his chain back. He was a seasoned bike rider. “Okay,” he said. “Let’s go.” So I straddled the bike again to continue our trip. But starting on a hill was even more difficult than before. “My bike has broken many times.” He pointed to various places on his bike, “I’ve had to weld it several times.”

As it had turned out, the old single speed bike had originally belonged to his grandfather and he had to do everything he could to keep it in working condition. As I understood, the bike had been pushed to its limits. “I’m saving my money so that I can buy a new bike.” Having a new bike had its obvious perks, but for him there was a special reason for the investment. “I need a good bike to take my grandfather to the hospital.”

“Is he sick?” I asked.

“He’s old. He has,” he searched for the word, “TB.” I knew that there was no hospital in Singa Bay. It was unusual to have a hospital in such a small city. The nearest big city was Lilongwe, the capital. That was a few hundred kilometers away.

“Where is the hospital you bring him to?” I asked, while searching the empty horizon.

“There is a hospital in Salima,” he said. “About seventeen kilometers away.”

“How long does it take you to take him there?”

“If my bike doesn’t break, about two hours, but it often breaks and we cannot make it. Sometimes I have to take him at night because he is coughing too much.” I knew what he was getting at. None of the streets out here had lights and once night came, it was hard to see your hands on the handlebars. His bike had no lights on it. A two-hour ride at night with a tuberculosis patient must have been a grueling task.

His chain fell off a few more times. I suggested to him that he take his winter hat off and he did, tossing it into the basket in the front. “Why would you wear a hat like that on a day like today?” It was about eighty degrees outside. Isa laughed. “It was cold this morning!”

The people at the hotel told me to not jump off the bike, even if it seemed more practical. “It’s a macho thing,” they explained to me. But after fifteen minutes of struggling uphill and repairing the bike chain a few times, he politely chimed in. “Do you think you could walk, just to the top of the hill?” I was glad to do it.

The way back was entirely downhill—we made it back in no time. When I got off the bike, I went into a store to get some change to pay for the ride. I picked up a few bottles of water. Isa hobbled in after me, exhausted. I handed him his money, thanked him, and shook his hand. “Good luck” I said, as I handed him a bottle of water.

He let out a sigh of exhaustion and collapsed into a chair outside of the store. “Thanks!” he said. He was going to be there for a while.

On my walk back to the hotel, I passed dozens of bike cabs just like Isa. When one considers that the locals walk everywhere and the tourists mostly come with their own transportation, it seems like business for a bike taxi in Singa Bay would be difficult. One works hard to make little money, takes long trips to treat terminal illnesses in substandard medical facilities, or repairs a vehicle beyonds its limits. Despite the challengers, Isa may have considered himself luckier than many, able to ride his bike to provide for his family, one overweight tourist at a time.



The Piano Pedaler

A SALT LAKE CITY MAN'S PIANO BIKE BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN BIKES AND MUSIC

By Rachel Krause

Photo by Grant Hindsley



“You don’t see that everyday.”

“That’s one way to do it.”

“Is that a...piano? On a bike?”

Eric Rich is used to hearing these responses when he plays his piano at the Downtown Salt Lake City Farmers’ Market. Each week he transports his piano back home with him. On his bike.

In 2010, Eric Rich saw a friend’s band perform at the farmers’ market, and learned they racked in \$800 in one day. “Maybe I can go and make money doing what I really love.” He talked to his brother who was a welder, and in three days they built a bike with a piano trailer.

The first piano bike was built out of an old Weser Brothers piano he found through the classifieds, some wheelbarrow wheels, a fork, and a headset. Rich, who picked up the keyboard and piano about eight years ago to fill in for some recordings for some hardcore punk bands, loves that he is able to transport the piano through his own power, without a middleman or boss. He doesn’t describe himself as an hardcore cyclist, but is a car-free bike commuter. “My favorite part about bikes is the idea of it—that you’re the fuel to it,” Rich says. “I also love the design aspect of it.”

The bike he currently rides is not the original piano bike. After a rough winter when the bike fell into disrepair, Rich decided it was time to make a new piano bike. “Design-wise, it was important for me to make it integrated. The old one had too many pieces, this one would be one connected piece. That was my number one goal. I lost so much power with just rolling resistance. Building this new bike was about making it more efficient and making the gear ratio lower so I can take it more places.”

Rich started a Kickstarter fund in 2013 to purchase a better quality Yamaha piano and raised more than \$6000. After raising the money, he spent months scouring the internet for special parts. Much of it came from Amazon and Saturday Cycles in Salt Lake City, which specializes in randonneur and touring bikes. In the end he spent about \$5000. And it was worth every penny. The original bike only had one back wheel, which made it fairly unstable. The new bike has two back wheels. The original bike had cantilever brakes in the front only. The new bike has a disc brake in the front and two disc brakes in the back.

The current piano weighs in at about 380 pounds

and the entire bike is about 420 pounds. Rich plays all of his own compositions (although he added a Yann Tiersen song to his repertoire recently.) For the most part, he says people are widely positive about the bike, although he will encounter the aggravated motorist who thinks Rich is taking up too much room on the street.

He recently rode the piano bike up and down a canyon road, a feat he doesn’t consider easy by any imagination. “I took it up a little canyon for a wedding, and when I rode down it was very very difficult. With the center of gravity so high and the road tilted, it could easily lose traction.”

Rich plays weekly at the Downtown Farmers Market, as well as other festivals and conventions, including the Sundance Film Festival in Park City. The farthest he has taken it was to Columbia, Missouri, for the True/False Film Festival in the spring of 2013. He transported it in an enclosed trailer that was donated to him by his family’s neighbor. One day he hopes to be able to make trips like that by the power of his own bike.

Rich has been designing a Piano Bike 3.0 that would be capable of cross country travel.

“I love designing things,” he says. “For the bike, the biggest challenge is making it narrow enough but also wide enough so it doesn’t tip over. The design challenge is very interesting. The physical challenge is also very interesting to me. I just want to see if it’s possible.”

Rich has been researching options and designing a new model. Piano Bike 3.0 would use a carbon fiber piano, which albeit very expensive, would weigh less than half what a traditional piano weighs.

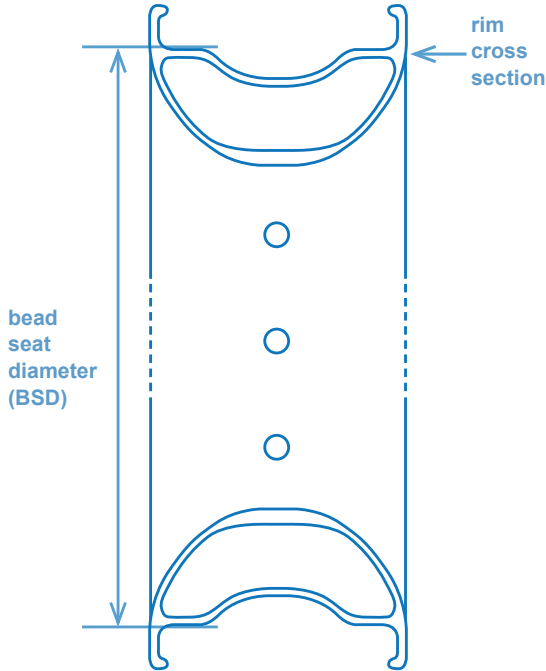
For now, Rich will keep playing at the farmers’ market until later this fall, and then has plans to start an ensemble and has purchased some new percussion equipment in hopes of playing with others soon. “The piano bike is really hard on my body, my back and wrists start to get very sore. I like to be able to switch it up.”

In the long term, Rich hopes to get a sponsorship (carbon fiber pianos cost about \$100,000) in order to make his dream become reality. “I want to address all the physical and design challenges of riding a piano bike across the country, but in the end, I want to share design and music with people that will hopefully inspire others to be creative.”




ISO Tire Sizes

By Brad Quartuccio



letter code system of different tire and rim diameters. Start getting into older American bikes and you'll find out that a 26" x 1 3/4" tire uses a different rim than a 26" x 1.75" tire—when it comes to tire conventions, fractions cannot be written as decimals—and that 27" wheels are actually larger than 700C despite the labeling. It's an imperfect world.

The ISO (International Organization for Standardization) tire sizing system relies on two numbers to simplify tire labeling and bicycle design, with tires marked according to the bead seat diameter of the rim and width of the tire casing. For example, a 700 x 28 tire would be labeled as 28 - 622, a 29" x 2.1" tire as 53 - 622, and a 650B x 45 tire as 45 - 584. This system eliminates confusion between regional and marketing naming differences that use the same diameter rim, and at this point is a standardized marking on most every tire. The conventional labels such 700C for road and 29" for mountain do help with determining proper rim width for a given tire, as it is generally understood that mountain rims are wider than road rims. With ISO sizing it is on the user to know to use a rim with an inner width roughly 65% that of the tire.

If for nothing other than conversational ease, we aren't going to see conventional tire sizes disappear, but it can be helpful to know the ISO equivalent when navigating the myriad of tire options out there. The below chart can help with the most common sizes, consult a higher power for help with your oddball Schwinn or European 26" tires. 

Bicycle tire labeling can be a confusing mix of historic sizing conventions and marketspeak. The sizing we're used to is loosely based on the outside diameter of the tire in millimeters or inches, and the width of the casing (ex. 700 x 28, 29" x 2.1"). As time has gone on, the actual diameter of the tire has become divorced from the number printed on the side as designations like 700C, 26" and 650B have grown to refer to general wheel sizes, with various width tires available, rather than wheel diameters. For example, in the 26" wheel size you can find tires as narrow as 26 mm and as wide as 4.8" that all fit the same diameter (if not width) rim, yet vary in outside diameter from approximately 24" - 30". Adding to the confusion are overlapping wheel sizes—700C, and 29" use the same diameter rim, 650B and 27.5" also share a rim diameter. Even the letter in 700C and 650B has a meaning, referring to an antiquated and mostly abandoned

Conventional Size	ISO
29", 700C, 28"x decimal	622
27" (older road bikes)	630
650B, 27.5"	584
650C	571
26" (mountain bikes)	559

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Let your bike take you places you've not been to before, and will potentially never go to again. Under the bridge, through the park, over the next hill, into the neighborhood you've never traveled through. Stand around in the dirt in your road shoes, hit the road you've never seen the end of on your mountain bike. Go where your bike isn't supposed to take you while you hit the usual loop of familiar roads. Bicycles are great vehicles for the daily grind, and an usher into the unknown. Pedal forth; ride on. 

RAPID TRANSIT

DESTINATION : EVERYWHERE

The Fairfax line is designed and built to have the speed of a road bike, with the durability and reliability of a commuter bike. All models feature highly manipulated, lightweight aluminum frames, as well as a variety of gearing options. Selected componentry at every level was chosen to balance weight, durability and comfort, while also allowing easy incorporation of your commuting equipment needs.



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