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URBAN VELO

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Issue #6 • March 2008



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Contents photo: Dummy takes shelter from the rain in Pittsburgh's Strip District, Circa 1988. Photo by Brian Cummings

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On the cover: Kirk Logan Johnson has been car-free since 1995. Photo by Alex Johnson (age 12)



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Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio




Photo by Brad Quartuccio



Sheldon Brown 1944-2008

Bike people are good people. There are exceptions to every rule, but this one's done me far more good than bad. This issue features a few of those good people I've met along the way, namely Corey Hilliard and Jason Montano. Our paths initially crossed through east coast races and west coast trade shows. Corey brings an abundance of courier experience to the table to explain the basics of the independent contractor wage system for bicycle messengers, and how the workers of FedEx are challenging the status quo with potential for far reaching empowerment and reform. Jason in turn gives us an inside look at stateside UCI World Cup Track racing through his talented lens and pen.

This opener would be remiss not to mention the passing of one of the great minds of the cycling community, Sheldon Brown. Mentor to countless cyclists over the years, the depth of his knowledge and passion knows no match. Sheldon was a unique soul, sharing his knowledge with anyone who asked, having the foresight to preserve it for those who have yet to discover his genius. I don't think he ever fully realized his impact. While Sheldon will be greatly missed, his inspiration lives on. 

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



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Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero




They say a picture's worth a thousand words. While that may be true, there's often a story behind those thousand words that's never told. Take this issue's cover for example.

Twelve-year-old Alex Johnson has led a courageous life. Adopted six years ago, he caught his adoptive father's attention by wildly pedaling a tricycle around a Russian orphanage. Today Alex lives in a car-free home outside of Minneapolis and enjoys riding and wrenching on bikes. The cover shot is the result of a father-son photography lesson. Kirk had envisioned the shot he wanted to send with his I Love Riding in the City contribution, he had no idea his son would be the photographer. Or that it would be on the cover.

And then there's Brian Cummings's photo of Dummy on the table of contents. B.C. is a local music legend, and a talented photographer. Dummy's been the dispatcher for Jet Messenger Service since before I ever knew him, and I've called him a friend for at least 10 years now. His basket bike

belonged to Triangle Messenger Service. Long gone from the Pittsburgh streets, I remember a time when I couldn't count how many of my friends worked for Triangle.

The photo above has countless stories behind it. Taken at the end of a great race, it also reminds me of friends I made and parties I reveled at during the celebrated summer of 2007. The riders, Stick and Jimmy, graced the cover of our first issue. And like that photo, this one exemplifies two-wheeled camaraderie. Though they battled daily for the lion's share of delivery calls—with their livelihoods at stake—friendship always transcended competition.

It's funny... Although I've never thought of myself as a very sentimental guy, even most of the ads we run have a special meaning to me. Whether it's the pride that comes from having a legend like Joe Breeze advertise with us, or the warm and fuzzy feeling that comes with my personal friends supporting this magazine, it's all special. It's all personal. And it's all good. 

Urban Velo issue #6, March 2008. Dead tree print run: 1500 copies. Issue #5 online readership: 25,000+

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Regina

LOCATION: Amsterdam, the Netherlands

OCCUPATION: For money I work at an art house cinema where I do the books. I'm also a film director's personal assistant. And then I take photographs and make short videos and documentaries for no apparent reason.

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

A few months ago I moved from Utrecht to Amsterdam. Riding in the Netherlands is nothing compared to anywhere else I've ever been (well maybe Copenhagen). Everybody rides a bike here and the traffic is dominated by bikes, not cars. In cities this means traffic laws are looked at as guidelines most of the times—it's pretty common to see an old lady riding through a red light. Wearing a helmet in daily traffic is considered ridiculous.

There are downsides, too. Because of the number of bikes and the riding style of most people, riding fast in town is difficult sometimes. Also everybody rides, so not a lot of

people get it if you have a healthy obsession with bikes. And it rains a lot, but you get used to that pretty easily.


What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Last year I was in the bay area for six months and I loved riding in downtown San Francisco, maybe because it is so different from what I'm used to. I loved the speed of traffic and the idea that I was a part of it, not tucked away safely on a bike path like back home. And the weather... it's pretty much always great for riding. Hell, I even miss the hills sometimes—though not the steep ones!

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

When I was in the bay area I made a documentary on riding in the city over there, called "Only the City". It's 25 minutes of about 30 different people telling us about their likes and dislikes about riding in the city.

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Sylvestre Calin

LOCATION: Montréal, QC

OCCUPATION: Owner of Brakeless

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

Montreal is a great city to live in. As for riding in the city if you don't count the mad drivers you can always have a cool ride. Since Mount Royal is in the middle of the city, it's an amazing oasis right in the middle of my urban life. A place where you can push your limits while enjoying the scenery.

What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

My heart is in Montreal but when you need a good adrenaline rush, New York is the best. When you ride all the way on Broadway without taking your feet off the pedals, all your senses are fulfilled. Your mind needs to be sharp, you have to anticipate all the moves of pedestrians,

cars, taxis. From one minute to the next, you reach a new part of town, cross a bridge you're in Brooklyn. Wow I need to go back very soon—I want my adrenaline fix!

Why do you love riding in the city?

Riding in the city is the only way I can enjoy traffic and my music, while I discover what's going on.

Poetry anyone?

*When I ride in the city,
My feet feed the motion,
I own the city
Brakeless is my emotion.*

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Morgan Gleave
LOCATION: Fleckney, Leicestershire, UK
OCCUPATION: Assistant Librarian, Graphic Designer, Illustrator

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

I live in the countryside, about five miles from the nearest city, so I use country lanes to commute. Leicester is the big city, and the street and park riding is dope!

What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

So far, Guildford, Surrey, UK. Big hills, cobblestones and dropoffs—super fun!

Why do you love riding in the city?

You never know what you're going to find next, and it's great reinterpreting buildings, etc. as a riding playground... It confuses pedestrians to no end!

I have also attached some art for you to enjoy... Street inspired!



NAME: Gustar Mono
LOCATION: Bandung, Indonesia
OCCUPATION: Life-long bike racer wannabe, Government agent

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

Indonesia's cycling scene is very young, yet Bandung has its own atmosphere. Riders range from cruisers to racer-wannabes, but we all get along. Despite its hilly terrain, many people ride everywhere. Also the climate is nice. Almost everyone knows everybody here, so we don't have many problems with other road users—they probably know us, or know someone else who does.

What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

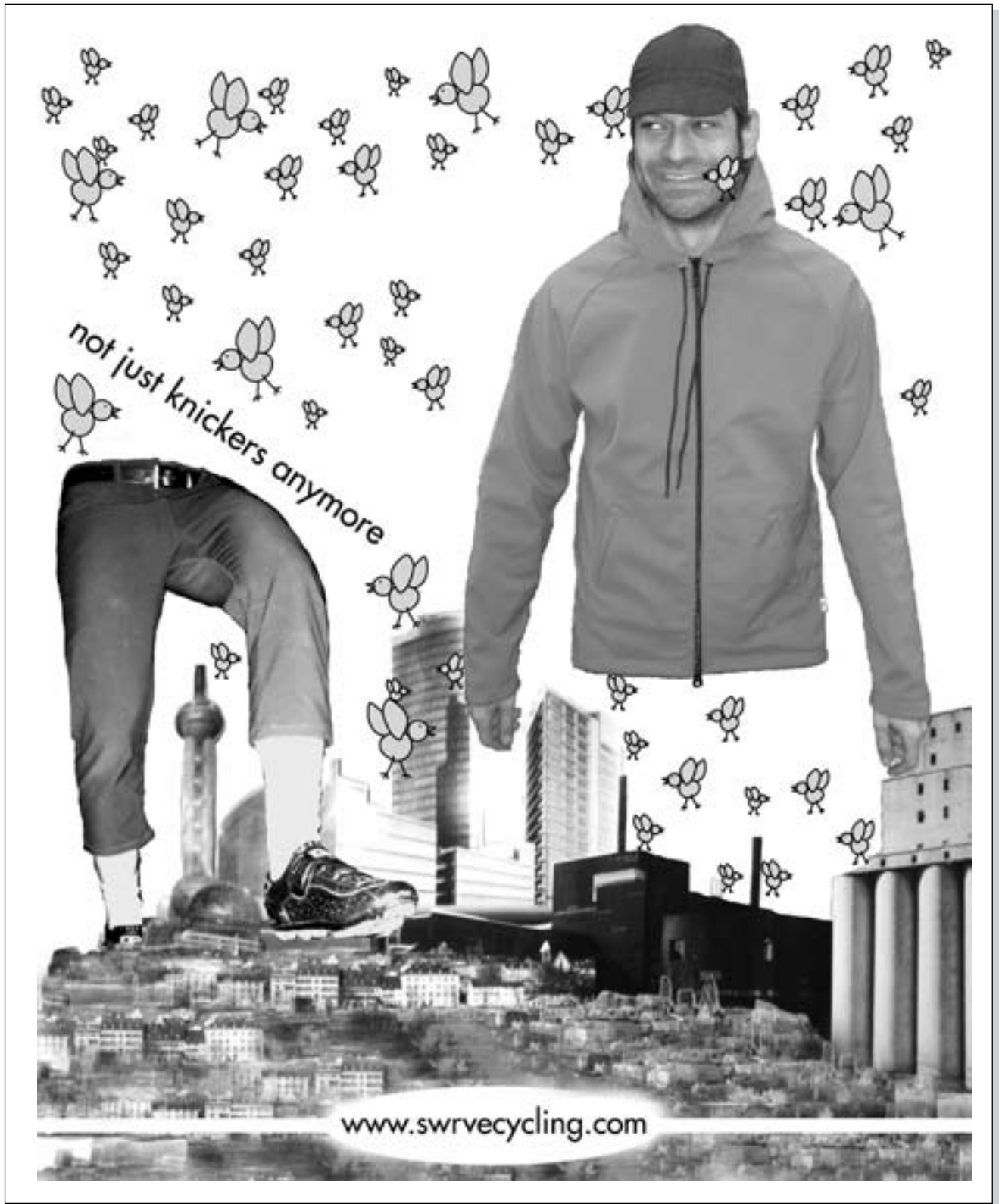
In my limited experience, the vibe of riding in Bandung is unlike riding in any other town.

Why do you love riding in the city?

The rush, the feeling of pure power. Here, many people use 125cc mopeds despite their limited competency. Beating those mopeds at the green light sure is irreplaceable.

Poetry anyone?

*Fuel for power they say, why I beat them on the green?
Meet a friend on the way; let's talk instead of wave hello.
Hiss of tires and sound of chain on mine
Giant vibrator of theirs, stuck on traffic
So, goodbye, and see you later.*



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Claus Nader

LOCATION: Toronto, ON

OCCUPATION: History and Humanities Professor, Bike Shop Employee

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

Right now (January 2008) it's actually not too bad in Toronto. We had a few very cold days in December (-12° Celsius, don't ask me about fucking Fahrenheit) where the booties just didn't do the job and my toes were in distress. Last week it was 12° Celsius, which felt like Spring. So we get all kinds of crazy conditions. Traffic is, at times, aggressive. Bike lanes are rare and either covered in snow (thanks, city hall) or serve as additional parking spots. Although the city administration claims to support alternative transportation, I don't see much encouragement to get people on bikes and out of their cars.

To date we are the largest city in Canada with the shortest network of bike lanes. To make a painful story short—Toronto is for motorists. Nevertheless, there are a lot of people who enjoy urban cycling and who ride with pride. Recently, some activists announced the creation of the Toronto Cyclists Union, which will try to bring various cycling related groups under one umbrella. I enjoy

the monthly Critical Mass rides, which bring out about 250 bikers in the summer. The November ride in subzero temperatures and snowy conditions still brought about 75 people out, which was great.

Working part-time in the fourth oldest bike shop in North America (sounds more glamorous than it is) I get to meet a lot of cyclists and have struck plenty of connections with like-minded people. While riding in Toronto has its challenges, the scene and the late night pub-crawls make it well worth it.

What's your favorite city to ride in and why?

I really liked riding in Germany. I am originally from Heidelberg, which is a rather sleepy city with 130,000 people. I can't remember any time when I felt unsafe in traffic. The entire city has a thorough cycling network (thanks to a vocal cycling community) and it's easy to get to other small towns in the periphery via country roads. My circle of operation was all within 20 miles, reaching everything quickly and hassle free. Sometimes I miss it.

Why do you love riding in the city?

Riding in the city is the only way I can transport myself around and have fun. I love the meditative aspect as well as the sense of freedom and independence. I see the city in many different ways on a bike, often ending up on side streets that I have never seen before. I am thrilled that I can contribute to cleaner air and a fit body. I believe that if more people make it out on their bikes, more novices will be recruited. And the more people ride in the city, the more city hall will have to respond to improve cycling related infrastructure.

 **Contribute!** 

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I Love Riding in the City



Name: Simon Tamás-László
Location: Rome, Italy
Occupation: Freelance Photographer & Father

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?
I am a Hungarian biker in Rome. It's a beautiful city to visit, but impractical for living. The traffic is extremely chaotic. Most drivers are so impatient that few people use a bike.

What's your favorite city to ride in and why?
I loved riding in Budapest (Hungary) because of the urban planning—good bike lanes and more rights for cyclists. There is so much bike culture there—messengers, commuters, etc.

Why do you love riding in the city?
The public transportation is no good, and I can't tolerate Roman traffic, so riding is the best option. I am faster than buses or the tram, and I love when the cars are blocked and I pass them by my bike.

When is your favorite time to ride?
Early in the morning when the city is beginning to awaken. I like the fresh air on my face. The silence in my ears. The excitement. I feel true freedom.



Name: Will Garcia
Location: Miami, FL
Occupation: Advertising Lifer

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?
Miami is like being inside an 80's video game. Cars, SUVs, buses, even cop cars seem to be out to get me in that low-res-bitmapped sort of way.

People here just don't comprehend (or seem to care) the meaning of sharing the pavement. But despite the occasional fender tap, stare-downs, middle fingers and fists up in the air, we all get along in our own deadly way. Minimal traffic laws apply.

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?
Boulder, Colorado—if you dare call it a city. I mention it for its unique love for the bike. But for a real city—New York City. With its hustle, bustle, noise, poise, freaks, treats, cabs, fabs, its got it all! Especially when coming from its boroughs. For me it was the 13-mile ride in the 90's that made it all memorable.

Why do you love riding in the city?
The mad dashes to beat the motorists whenever possible. It's what keeps me sane and in shape.

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Willie Bailey

LOCATION: Clarksville, TN

OCCUPATION: Bicycle Mechanic, Photographer

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

I live 40 minutes outside of "THE" music city, Nashville. We have some of the best road riding around outside the city limits, but as soon as you hit the city... GAME ON! The downtown has the historical vibe going and early in the morning or late in the evening the streets are almost traffic free. It's just coming into the city that poses a threat. Dirty shoulders, Wal-Mart and congestion make for an interesting ride. All in all, a great scenic cruise around town.

What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

Clarksville, for sure. I know where every bump, hump and hole is. I know every shortcut, scenic view and areas to avoid. I know the police, firefighters and politicians. We have one extraordinary bicycle shop, which I have the honor of

wrenching at. We now have two bike routes and one official bike lane. We have a campus (Austin Peay State University) and a military base (Ft. Campbell) with several people who commute or ride bicycles. And we have a mountain bike trail (Rotary Park).

Why do you love riding in the city?

The buildings block the wind... Ha ha ha.

I like that a place that is so bustling around midday can be so serene in the morning hours. When you don't have to look out for people or avoid cars you can really look. As a photographer I notice things others might not as I cruise the city streets, and I'm in total awe of the buildings or the history of the city. How many people rode down these streets on a bicycle a century ago?

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

Riding in the city? Just do it!

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Jen

LOCATION: Denver, CO (Hometown: Chicago)

OCCUPATION: Bicycle Courier, CycleJerks.com partner and Rim Job Bicycle Club Member

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

Denver is great, the streets are wide and we have beautiful weather. When there's no snow on the ground (and the river isn't flooded) you can take the bike paths along either the Cherry Creek or the Platte River through the city. To take your hands off the bars and just zone out can be great on a busy day. On the weekends when it's nice out we'll ride 15 miles to Golden and ride up Lookout Mountain. It's a four-mile climb with some killer switchbacks. I love seeing gnarly old dudes gritting their teeth, I hope I'm still gnarly like that when I'm their age.

What's been your favorite city to ride in, and why?

My boyfriend Justin and I went to Dublin for the Cycle Messenger World Championships. It was crazy—I kept almost going down the street on the wrong side. Everyone

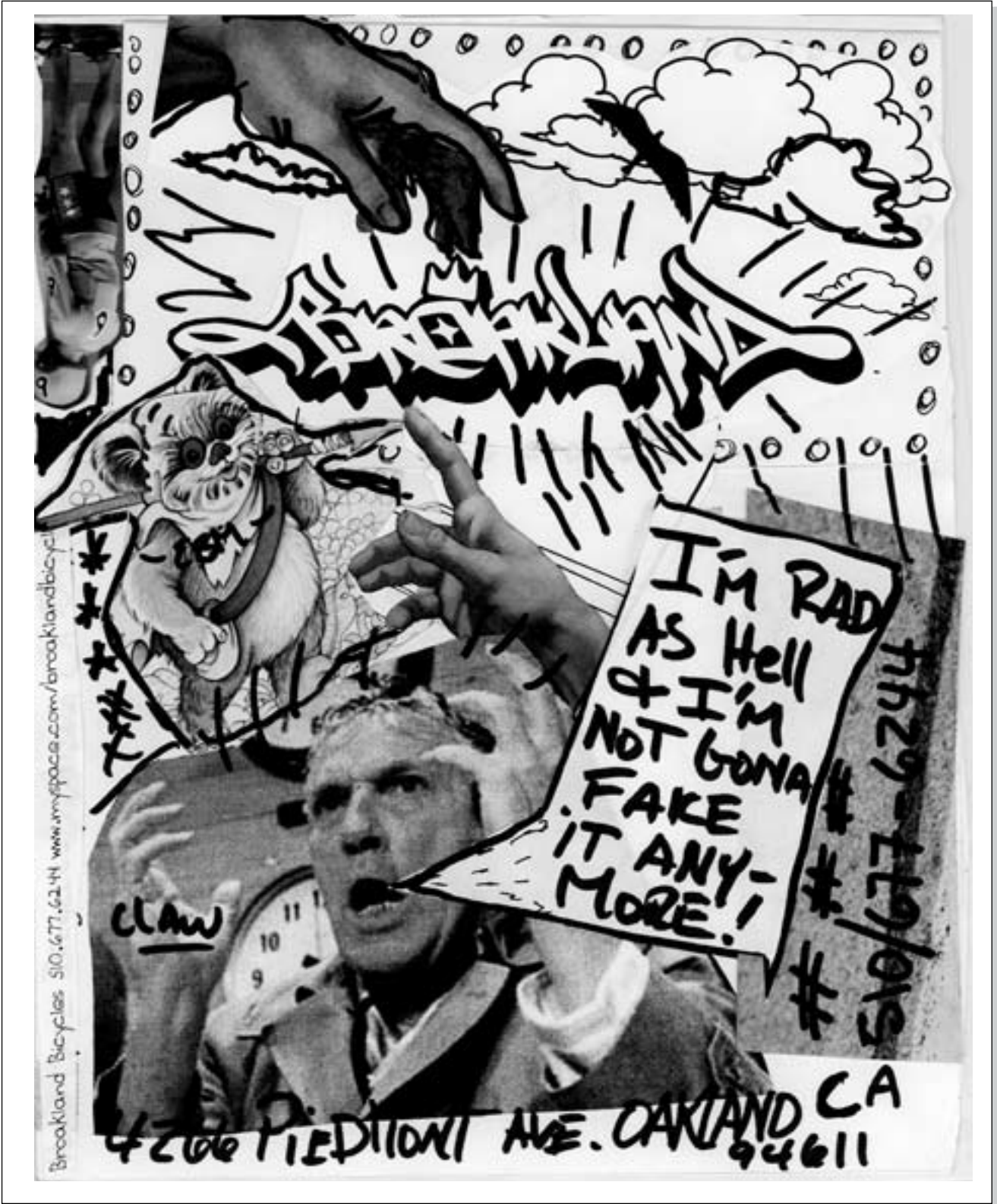
was really friendly that we met. After the race we took off for south Ireland and rode from Cork to Killarney and around the Ring of Kerry, those were the most beautiful mountaintops and ocean views I had ever seen, and everything's so green! I love Ireland.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love getting into that zone with traffic, your body, bike and music all seem to become one. Riding becomes effortless and beautiful.

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

It makes me laugh, people do the silliest (or should I say stupidest) things. Like running into the street without looking, or even worse, while looking at the ground. Silly people!



Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!

I Love Riding in the City



Photo by Alex Johnson



Photo by Kirk Johnson

Name: Kirk Logan Johnson

Location: Edina, MN

Occupation: Software Project Manager

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

The best part about biking in Edina is my daily 18-mile commute to downtown. I sold my car three years ago but my Surly Steamroller gives me more freedom than I ever imagined.

My commute is the perfect mix of urban, forest, and prairie alchemy. Where else can you see graffiti-covered cars in an old concrete graveyard, and five minutes later see a kid toting his violin through the woods?

Edina is breaking away from its car-centered transportation roots. Specifically, the city is taking a close look at its first Comprehensive Bicycle Transportation Plan (www.bikeedina.org). I served on the Bike Edina Task Force, and remain involved in the promotion of biking in my city. Changing people's attitudes about bicycle transportation is real work, but it can be done.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I looked at an old blog, "I'm heading toward Hennepin on 9th Street after rushing to Minneapolis from Edina. This is a typical scene at rush hour, which as you might know is a bit of a misnomer: The cars aren't rushing—they're stuck. I'm the one rushing."

Poetry Anyone?

I wrote this thinking about the California fires last year and the untapped transportation power represented by millions of under-used bikes:

*Cars burn. Bikes beckon.
Anagram for cars is scar;
Pedal turns to plead.*

 **Contribute!** 

Send your answers and a high-quality photo to:

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Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!

I Love Riding in the City



Name: Simon Brown

Location: Christchurch, New Zealand

Occupation: Project Engineer

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

The city of Christchurch is on the edge of the Canterbury Plains so it's mostly flat, but with hills close by! Around 400,000 live here, so the traffic is never too terrifying. It's a very English city with two lovely rivers winding through it, and trams that circle the city centre. All sorts of cycling abound, with forests and local hills all having tracks, as well as rail trails, and plenty of cycle lanes. The high mountains are also easy to reach for those epic adventures! It's a perfect place!

What's your favourite (or most exotic) city you've ridden in, and what made it special or memorable?

Wherever I'm riding at the time is the best, and what makes any ride special is the friends I ride with. It's absolutely about the people!

Why do you love riding in the city?

I'm a commuter, early morning, or evening, and that's when the city shines. Morning light, a blazing sunrise, it's awesome to be apart of. Riding in the city makes you realise how many different people makeup our community, it makes me feel apart of the city waking up. Even the cold frosty winter starts always hold the promise of a clear blue sky day. I love riding my bike, I give thanks to my God for such a great life every time I ride. Pet hates; big roundabouts, and the loss of Sheldon Brown (No relation). Tip: Want to avoid road rage learn to back-off! If someone thinks you're dumb, yell "Sorry!" you'll be amazed how forgiving people are and how enjoyable your trip becomes.

My favourite moment; getting a friendly wave each day from a handicapped rider I see, one day I'll stop and say hello, at the moment I just don't want to break the spell, we're friends who've never met.

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

Hey Dads, don't forget take the wife and kids for a ride, they'll appreciate the thought if not the exercise. It's about having fun!

Poetry anyone?

A Simple Wave from a Stranger

*It's something new every day
That fresh graffiti on a wall
City lights reflecting all
Chasing a time or just on a cruise
Making memories you won't loose
Pumping legs, avoiding danger
A simple nod from a stranger*

*What's it about? What can I say
Coloured leaves off trees so tall
Morning sky says I'm so small
No matter how or what you ride
The shows out there on every side
Giving way, avoiding danger
A grateful smile from a stranger*

*That's what it's about, that's what I say
A friendly wave from a stranger*

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Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!

I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Madeleine J. Montano
LOCATION: Portland, OR
OCCUPATION: Graphic Designer, Yoga Nerd, Friend

Where do you live and what's it like riding in your city?
Portland, Oregon... AKA Bridgetown.

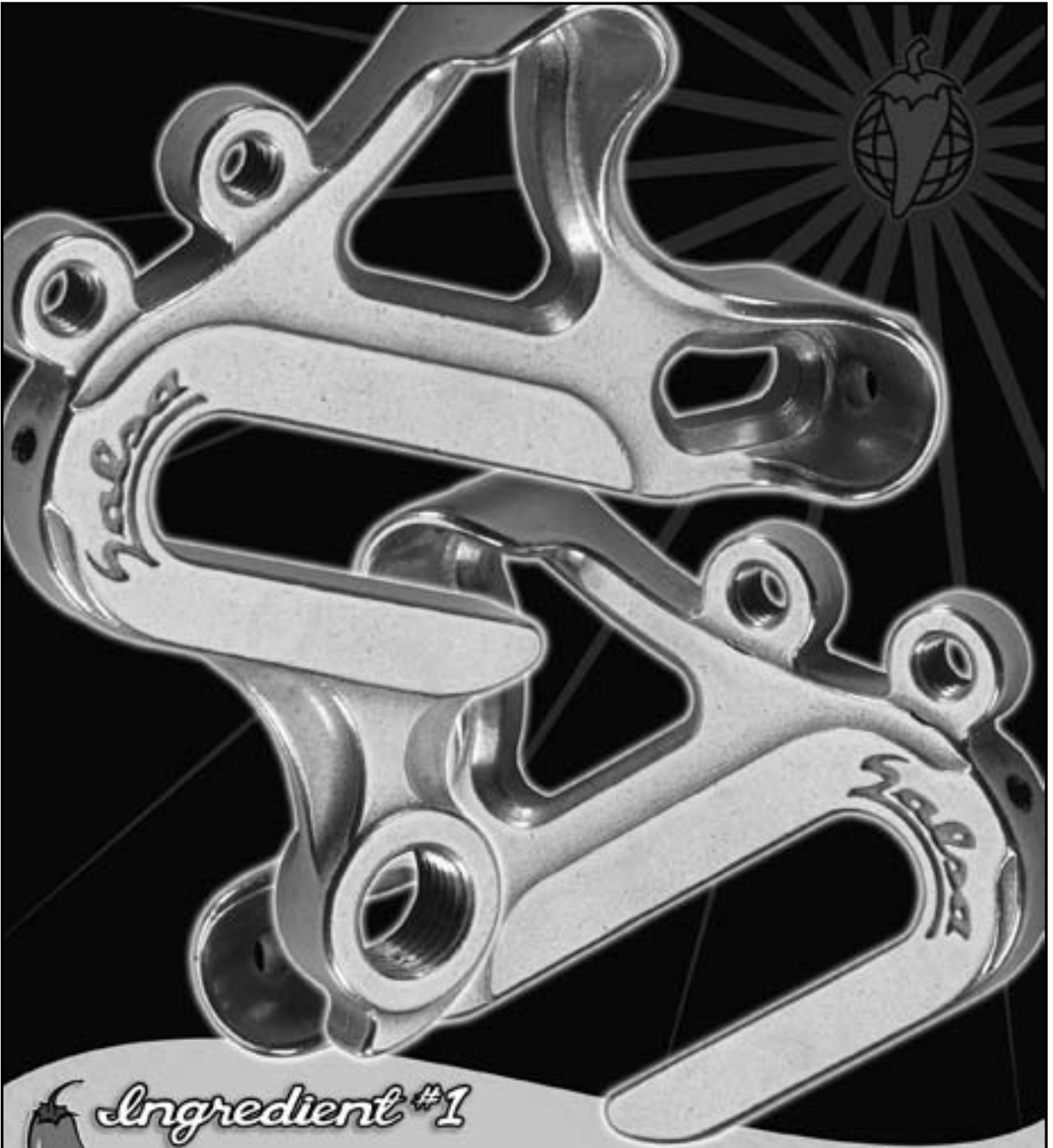
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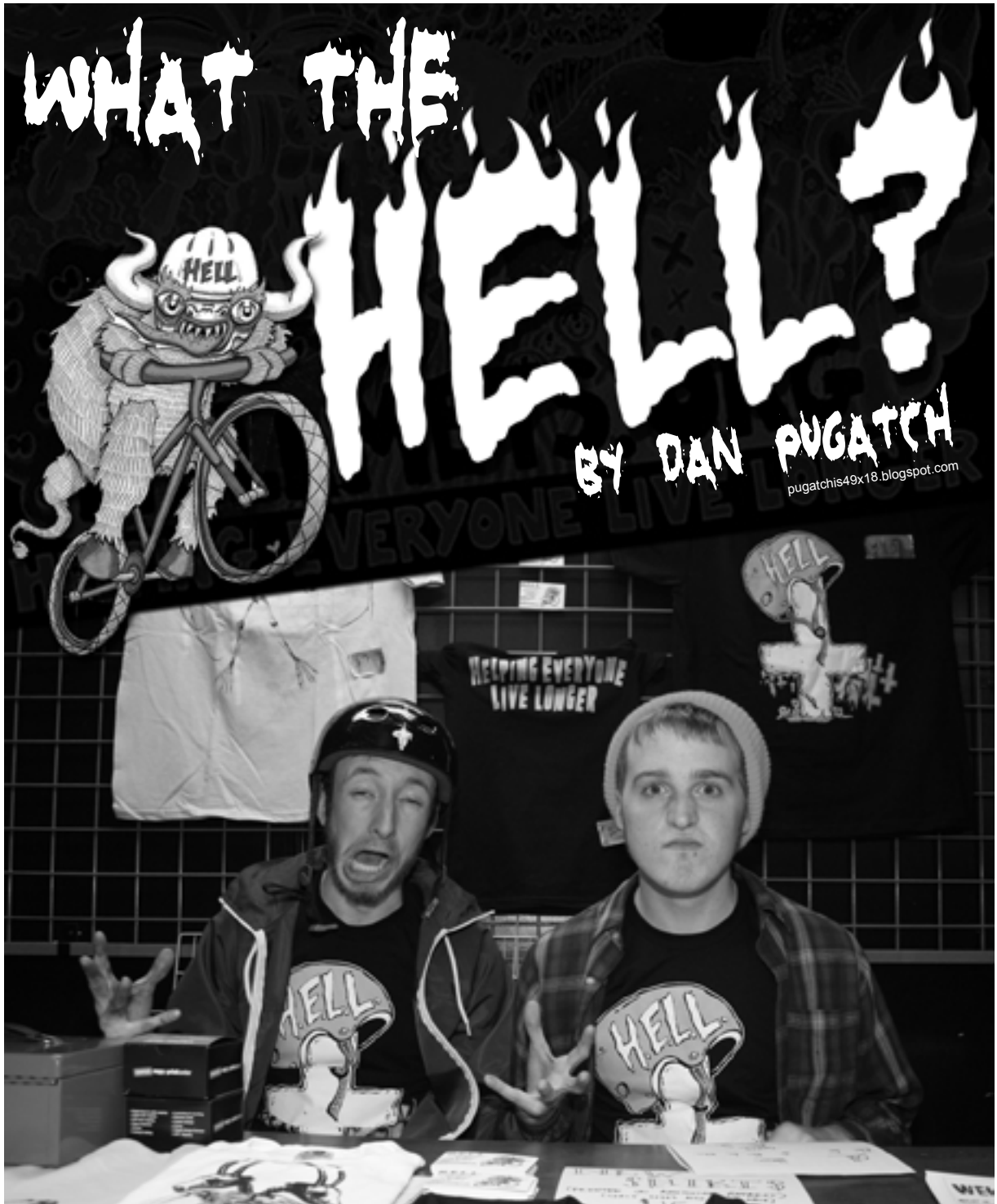
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Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!



We have all been there, sprinting across downtown trying to make a delivery on time or catch last call at our favorite dive when—WHAM!—the next moment we are laying face down on the cold pavement wondering what just happened. Luckily, the damage is likely just a few bruises and scrapes to our bodies, bicycle, and perhaps even ego. However, far too often these accidents can result in brain damage so severe the victim is paralyzed or worse yet, dead. Regardless if the cause is a pothole, black ice, a car door, taxi, or any other road hazard, wearing a helmet can prevent many serious head injuries. Sick and tired of the excuses we all have for not wearing one, Zack Smith in Boston, MA started HELL—Helping Everyone Live Longer—a not for profit operation which gives free bicycle helmets out to anyone who asks.

Smith started HELL after his close friend Kelly Wallace was fatally struck by a car back in May of 2007. This tragedy, coupled with the numerous other serious injuries and increasingly common cyclist deaths in the Boston area, sparked the beginning of HELL. Unfortunately, in the hip bike messenger world we all ride in, wearing a helmet is just as unfashionable as wearing a pair of spandex shorts. But this does not need to be the case: custom paint jobs and battle scars can transform the helmet into a status symbol. Smith tells us, “I think the bike community should be spending less time throwing u-locks through taxi windshields and more time protecting their heads and USING their heads to make this world more biker-friendly.” Just like he told me the day I emailed HELL about getting my own helmet, “If you don’t do it for yourself, do it for those who care about you.” Thinking about how your death might impact others makes a compelling argument for helmet use.

Maybe it was getting hit one too many times by a car that convinced me to start wearing a helmet; or, maybe, the promise to my grandmother after a messenger friend died on the job without one. We shouldn’t need excuses of why we don’t need a bike helmet. Wearing one will keep you living longer so that you can ride that precious track frame through the city instead of living off IVs in the hospital or sitting in an urn on your mother’s mantle. As Philip Barbosa from Canada often says in the iam.bicycles internet forum, “Wear a helmet and give your mother an open casket funeral.”

HELL helmet wearers have posted stories on HELL’s MySpace page of their accidents and how a HELLmet has saved them, including Arielle Hertzoff who was “rocked like a hurricane” when struck by the Scorpions’ tour bus in downtown Boston. That morning she forgot her helmet and didn’t go back because she was already late for work. Luckily for her, she arrived to work safely. After work, Hertzoff stopped at the Alternative Transportation and Energy Festival held at Government Center in downtown Boston. Of course her caring friends from HELL, who happened to have a table at the festival, gave her a loaner HELLmet so she would be safe on the streets homeward bound. Little did they know she’d be struck by a bus momentarily after. Hertzoff tells about the incident, “I was heading down Boylston Street and hear a bellowing honk that sounded too close for comfort as I turned the corner. I turn around and see this huge fucking coach bus riding my ass. I was as far over to the right as I could be and had nowhere to go, there

wasn’t a shoulder. It honks again right before it side-swipes me and knocks me down.” Having to walk to the hospital to get treated for a busted bloody hand, Hertzoff would have been worse off if she didn’t wear the HELLmet—there was a giant scrape across it from the tour bus. Although the comedic value of the incident is high, no one has yet made her an “I got rocked

like a hurricane by the Scorpions’ tour bus and all I got was this lousy shirt” t-shirt.

So just how does this free helmet program work? Smith, with the help of his friends, has put donation jars all across Boston, as well as setup ways for people to donate via the web and mail. Benefit hardcore and punk shows have been held to raise money, as well as clothing, and bake sales, with a pinup bicycling calendar in the works for 2009. Once Smith raises enough money to place an order (usually 50+ helmets) they arrive awaiting to be stenciled with the HELL logo and mailed out to whomever requests them. “When it comes down to it, it’s just me running this whole operation out of my bedroom. It’s usually stacked to the ceiling with helmets in here” tells Smith. Fortunately for Smith and the rest of us, he does receive a lot of help from his friend Alex Pepper, collecting donation jars and organizing benefits. “Alex is my main man and he helps me out so much with what is often an overwhelming workload.”



ROCKED LIKE A HURRICANE...



Photo by Jen Morgan


Name: Ariele Hertzoff
Location: Boston, MA
Occupation: Photographer
My bike: 1969 black Raleigh single speed

Favorite place to ride in Boston: I like riding in Jamaica Plain, that's where I live, there's a bike path that goes Downtown and there's the JP pond that's nice to ride around just for fun. Riding over the Mass Ave Bridge is always nice, and the bike path along the Charles River is also one of my favorite things to do when I have free time.

Love/Hate riding in Boston: The nice thing about having a bike in this town is that a lot of other people have bikes too, so I can ride with groups of friends when I go out, which is great. I love group bike rides! In terms of this being a safe and easy city to ride in.... Well, let's face it, it's terrible. There are roads I hate riding on because they're so dangerous. The city grid is so old and there just isn't always enough room for us to share the roads with cars, which are usually driven by people who are maniacs behind the wheel. I have had a lot of close calls, and I'm pretty sick of it.

Why Everyone Should get a HELLmet: Zack is a great guy and he deserves the support for starting this. But, like I said, I've had a lot of close calls, and almost everyone I know rides bikes and almost all of them have been hit by a car or doored at least once. I know a lot of people who don't want to bother with helmets, but after two people I know died in the span of a year in this town on their bikes, it just makes me realize how quickly and easily it can happen to anyone. We are practically naked out there on our bikes compared to people in their cars and SUVs. Might as well protect ourselves as much as we can if one of them decides to slam into us when we least expect it.

Pro-tec Classic helmets are used because their outer shell is designed for multiple impacts and rough handling. It costs Smith \$18 wholesale for a helmet and about \$5.25 to mail it to your door. Everything is free, shipping included. Smith has mailed HELLmets all over the United States and even to the United Kingdom. For those who have the \$25 to afford a helmet, your payment helps someone less fortunate receive theirs for free. Custom paint jobs are also offered for a fee, (a minimum \$50 donation) some of which include the Bad Brains Banned in DC album cover, Misfits Crimson Ghost, and a Hammer & Sickle (my personal HELLmet...)

What about HELL in the future? Smith would love to see chapters all over the country and even world; the more people working together for a great cause, the more of a positive impact the organization will make. However, for now, he has college to focus on, and is too personally invested in the mission of helping everyone live longer to let things become overextended and spiral into deterioration. For now, Smith wants to keep things centralized and efficient... yet he is welcoming help with open arms. 

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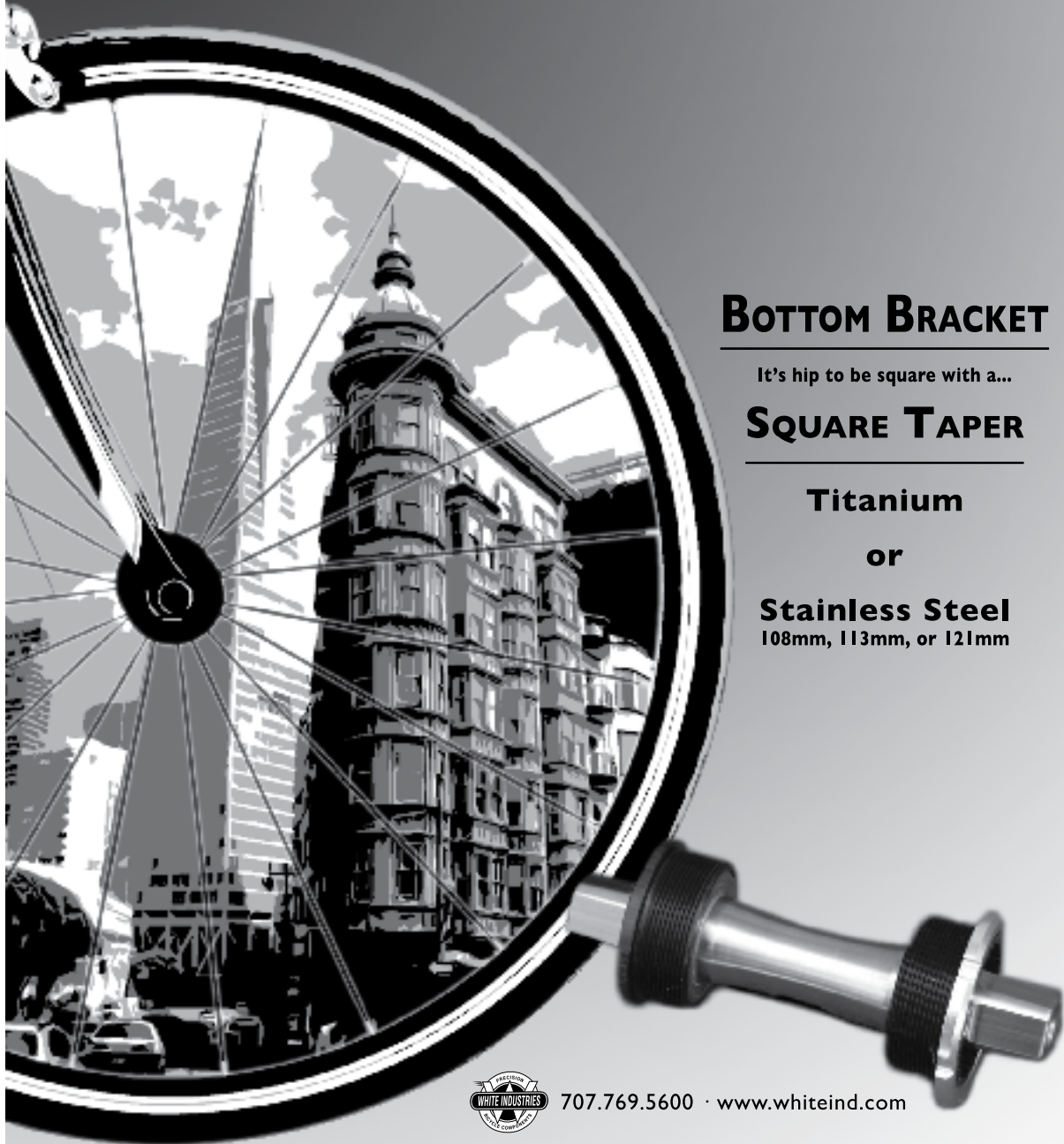
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INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STATUS in the DELIVERY SERVICE INDUSTRY

By Corey Hilliard

Photography by Brad Quartuccio

The delivery service industry in the United States is in dire need of an overhaul. Workers are grossly underpaid for their efforts. Someone somewhere a very long time ago exploited a loophole in the labor laws allowing workers at companies to be considered independent contractors rather than employees. This exploitation has become the norm.

Most bicycle messengers work for companies that classify them as independent contractors. As such, they are responsible for paying their own local, state and federal taxes, along with healthcare, insurance and equipment needed for the job. The companies are responsible for providing the customers in need of their services. The problem in the bicycle messenger industry is that the workers are not truly independent. For example, a carpenter taking a job would give an estimate of how much they think they should be paid for a specific project. In the bicycle messenger industry, the company sets delivery rates, not the rider. A truly independent messenger would definitely get paid much more to ride during inclement weather.

Pricing for deliveries by bicycle are low considering the level of service given. For three-day delivery one pays the price of a first class US Post office stamp. For overnight delivery one pays a major carrier \$10-15. For same-day door-to-door service rather than costing more than the previous method of delivery, customers are charged less. Fierce competition and the undervaluation of effort required to ride a bicycle across town prevent rate increases with the rate of inflation as in other industries.



Corey Hilliard

Veteran messenger since 1990

**Former 10-year owner of Vespid
Couriers in Philadelphia, PA**

**Currently living and working in
New York City**

Independent bicycle messenger contractors get paid per delivery, employees by the hour or negotiated salary. Rather than properly pricing deliveries, messengers must deliver more so that they will take home more money. Traffic laws are regularly broken by riders to increase potential income, perpetuating the reputation of bicycle messengers as red light running, sidewalk riding menaces to society. While lawlessness is never company policy, a wink and a blind eye are given to reckless daredevils.

Frequent dangerous riding near motor vehicles on bad roads often results in serious injuries and in rare cases death. Low wages and expensive bicycle gear combined with expenses that should be paid by the employer leave messengers very little ability to pay for health insurance. Health insurance and Workman's Compensation, while more of a necessity due to the nature of the job, are often neglected until after an accident. Exposure to harsh weather, the physical demands of cycling for several hours and encounters with motor vehicles combine to make it one of the most hazardous jobs in America.

Although the job will always be difficult, proper monetary compensation for the welfare of the workers can only occur when riders better negotiate with their companies or report abuses to the proper authorities. There is an SS-8 form available from the Internal Revenue Service, which asks questions to determine if a worker is an

independent contractor or an employee of a company. If the I.R.S. determines that one is an employee, the company must pay a fine, the taxes on the properly classified employee and a percentage to the worker. Workers who file this form are immune to being fired, with the company liable for another lawsuit with such actions. Unfortunately, most bicycle couriers are afraid to challenge their employers fearing loss of a job.

While things currently seem bleak, FedEx ground workers are setting precedents across the country by successfully suing to get listed as employees. In California, the Internal Revenue Service has determined that FedEx owes \$319 million for the year 2002 alone. In Massachusetts, lawsuits against FedEx have determined that misclassification deprives the state of revenue from deductions and taxes from workers' salary. There are suits from workers in 36 other states being consolidated into one case. After all the appeals in court by FedEx are exhausted, their penalties will be the example and prevent other companies from committing the same fraud. Although the FedEx workers are driving motor vehicles rather than bicycles, the jobs are nearly identical.

Public exposure to huge financial judgments from abuses caused by this crisis will hopefully empower riders to more aggressively fight for their rights and better oversight by the authorities.



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2008 North American Handmade Bicycle Show

Photos by Brad Quartuccio



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Signal Cycles

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www.signalcycles.com

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Villin Cycle Works

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www.villincycleworks.com



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Alternative Needs Transportation

The signature D-rack on this bike gives it away as one of Mike Flanigan's creations. No stranger to utilitarian bicycles that are both aesthetically pleasing and meant for heavy use, this would be an ideal daily-ride.

www.antbikemike.com

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Ira Ryan Cycles

It was with a congratulatory high-five that this bicycle came to be photographed - Ira was quite excited with the choice. This was one of only a handful of mixte frames on display, complete with a heavy duty front rack and custom fender flap reflecting its rainy northwest birthplace.

www.iraryancycles.com



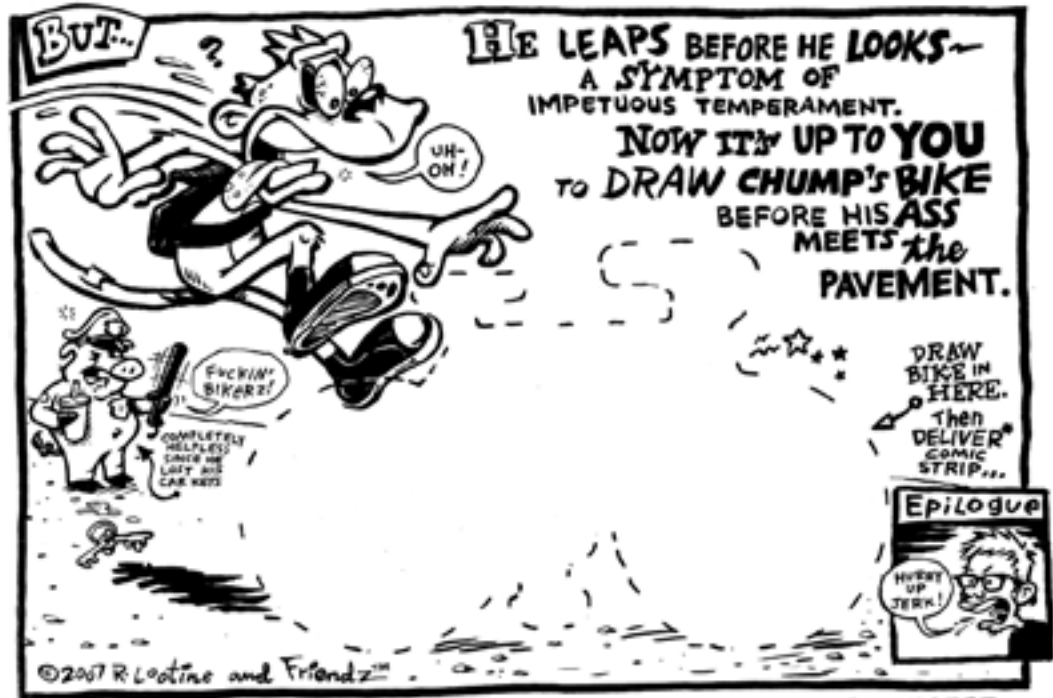
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LA WORLD CUP CLASSIC

Words & Photos by Jason Montano

www.montanovelo.com



The French Team Sprint squad sitting in the "Bull Pen" awaiting their call to the line.

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TRACK RACING REPORT



Track cycling is truly an urban event—almost all of the finest tracks around the world are located in dense urban environments, as are most of the smaller ones as well. If you are lucky enough to live in the vicinity of a velodrome it may be worth your while to go a catch a little racing or get your own time on the track. If you live in Sydney Australia, Beijing China, Copenhagen Denmark or Los Angeles USA amongst a few others, you have a chance to see some of the finest in the world during the UCI Track World Cup. This is a look at the 3rd round of the 2007-2008 UCI Track World Cup, held in Los Angeles, California.

—Jason Montano



LAX smells like jet fuel, car tires and pigeon shit. The airport's the backside of any city, I guess. The worst part about air travel is the fact that there is an airport on either side of the journey, the best that there's Scotch at the bar. Walking the shoeless eighth mile of shame, eating plastic food and reading pharmaceutical ads just doesn't do it for me anymore. Fearing a low moment, I think positive—the world class cycling I'm about to witness, the announcer's corny jokes and the final lap bell clapping hard. My heart beats just thinking about it. I'm a track fan. I love the sport in its entirety and at the level I'm about to witness, it will be mind altering.

Everyone was saying that this would be a big event—the fans, the press, even the teams themselves—yet I was still taken aback by the strong athlete attendance. The infield was overrun with activities. Athletes warming up on rollers, coaches meeting with teams, officials checking the timing machines. A real garden of activity with every exotic type of flower imaginable. The great big camps of the Netherlands, the Belgians, the French, Chinese, Germans and Australians; the small trenches of countries like Venezuela, Cuba, Jamaica, and Belarus, all buzzing and alive. With the Beijing Olympics around the corner, some athletes will be reaching out for a first piece of the Olympic pie, others just enjoying another slice. It was obvious to me that this would be a show, a real big top and a treat to explore.

O'neil rides for Jamaica. He says he likes to do road racing the best but he's built like a solid scratch racer and excels at medium length endurance events. Like many track racers, he is a true personality. Jamaica fielded three athletes in the event; Iona Wynthers, O'neil Samuels and Ricardo Lynch. Though their jerseys say Jamaica, the athletes come from all over the world and with varied backgrounds. Iona lives and races in Seattle, Ricardo lives and trains in Switzerland in a special sprinting program and O'neil flew in from Jamaica the previous night. When you get this close you get to see the people as individuals and not just countries racing under a flag. Winning and losing becomes a personal thing with individual personalities shining through.

Left: O'neil Samuels makes the final prep on his bike before warming up and racing a points race qualifier.

When you climb out of the team pits and onto the track it's like stepping out onto a large basketball court. Your perspective instantly changes and you can feel the business end of time itself. The track seems to come to life as an endless highway of wood whose speed limits are the limits of the human bodies we watch race. The events ticked by over the three day event and I marveled at how different each rider approached their craft. Take Taylor Phinney for instance...



Taylor Phinney gets in the zone before his gold medal ride in the men's individual pursuit.

I was six to seven feet away and looking up at him as he was looking over me to the timing clock behind on my left. When he first climbed on the bike he was visibly tense and nervous. Natural human emotions for a seventeen year old guy on a world class stage and riding for a gold medal. Then he pushed himself up off his aero-bars, stretched out his arms and started deep breathing exercises. With every breath he seemed to be charming himself to sleep. The clock starts its count down and by the time he gets the go, he's like a sleeping cat that springs to life. "The Zone." The level of concentration flattened me senseless. Everything poured into a moment, then another moment, then another 'till he clawed his way to a gold medal before our very eyes.



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Keirin = Would you like some head butting with your sprinting and Kilo?

Scratch = Sprinters who don't drink beer

Points Race = A mix between a criterium and a mathclass

Madison = A criterium, a mathclass and acrobatics show



Natallia Tsylynskaya starts her gold medal ride against Jennie Reed.

The stands were packed when Tsylynskaya started her gold medal ride in the women's sprint. As a true powerhouse in the sprint and 500m time trial events, they call her the Belarusian Queen of Sport. I look forward to watching her compete in the Beijing Olympics.

It's not just the athletes that make the event for me though—there's a whole crowd of people required to run these events. The athletes and the big show are still the main attraction, but inside the gates you see the sports doctors, the coaches, mechanics, soigneurs, UCI officials and event center staff all wrestling with personal races of their own. Many of them know each other having traveled from World Cup to World Cup, year after year. Even after only one day, it is obvious that the sport is steeped in tradition and respect.

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Stuart Smith, ace mechanic for the Australian team and husband of famous Australian track cyclist Kerrie Meares, takes part in a rare race, replacing the broken strap on the sprinter's pedal before being disqualified for holding up the race during call up. Job well done.

And so the weekend passed and 2008 UCI Track World Cup round #3 in Los Angeles came to an end. Riders and times and moments dissolving into the record books like cinnamon into a recipe, and me with eleven rolls of black and white film to develop to remember the event by. We stepped out of the velodrome, into a taxi and onto a plane as simple as that. Looking out my window I could still see turn #4, three riders abreast and gunning for the line, as I dozed off. When I awoke, I was back in Oakland, clutching my flim in its big lead bag like a mama bird. I headed out into the Bay Area winter wind of the passenger pick-up area and smelled home. Jet fuel, car tires and pigeon shit. 

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LICENSE TO RIDE BY DAVID HOFFMAN

In this article, Urban Velo explores the pros and cons of licensing bicyclists and registration of bikes.

For many of us, obtaining a driver's permit and then license was a rite of passage as a teenager. In fact, for the majority of Americans (I do not presume to speak for those readers in other countries) we can't wait to ditch our bike and begin driving. I remember looking for excuses to go to the grocery store just days after I had obtained my driver's license just so that I could drive less than one mile for some oddball item. Driving was a sign that I was growing up and becoming responsible. We were taught that if we wanted to drive on public roads, we had to pass a test and pay for the privilege. And most of us (myself included) couldn't get there fast enough.

So what happens when you ask bicyclists if they want to be licensed and register their bikes – or even worse, pass legislation requiring them to do so?

There are two separate issues here. The first is whether or not bicycles should be licensed (registered) within a municipality, and the second is whether or not bicyclists should have to obtain a license (operator's permit) to be legally allowed to ride a bike.

Share The Road?

(Or, "Hey - my taxes at the pump pay for this road!")

A recent article that appeared in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer sparked us here at Urban Velo to examine this question in greater detail. The article quotes a local citizen who writes, "Bicyclers [sic] are due to pay some of the costs of their special lanes and parking space removals with a 'city bicycle license' for using arterials." While this logic is flawed (I'll deconstruct it, shortly), it is an almost perfect encapsulation of the mindset that bicyclists and bicycle advocates are up against.

The basic premise of this argument is that bicyclists should have to pay for all of the "special" facilities that they use. Many people reason that the taxes that they pay at the pump are used to pay for the roads that they drive on. This is only partly true. In fact, the taxes that you pay at the pump (here in the US) are for federal and state roads. Local and county roads are built and maintained with taxes collected

locally. The vast majority of the “special lanes” and other bicycle-specific facilities are built on the local and county roads, and therefore not built with the taxes collected at the pump. The misinformed citizen in Seattle then intimates that cyclists should help subsidize parking space removals. While the first incorrect part of the argument dealing with how roads are built with our taxes can be excused as a widely held misconception, the second part relating to the removal of parking spaces cannot. Parking for automobiles (and cyclists) is a privilege, not a right. Many of us in advocacy joke that most Americans treat access to plentiful and/or cheap parking as a Constitutional right. As a politician you can kiss babies, pass resolutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and feed and house the poor; but if you remove parking spaces you’ll almost certainly lose your next election. The truth is that parking of any kind in the public space amounts to public storage for private vehicles.

Should Bicyclists Be Licensed?

This question rears its ugly bureaucratic head when vocal citizens or decision makers feel threatened by the increasing numbers of cyclists in their community. It is a question born out of the desire to gain control over a group of people who some feel are not paying their fair share of the system or are somehow getting a free ride. It’s funny; if you ask people if they want more taxes and laws in their life most will look at you as though you’re crazy. But ask if it is OK to tax and regulate others and they’ll put up little resistance.

The top two arguments against licensing cyclists are that, 1) It creates yet another barrier to cycling in a system which has been historically built to exclude cyclists, and 2) It is completely unnecessary, due to the fact that cyclists can (and are) routinely pulled over and cited by the police for vehicle code violations already. You don’t need a license to get a ticket for running a stoplight. And you still have to pay the fine regardless of whether you’re on four wheels or two.

Transportation Alternatives in New York City (www.transalt.org) fought and successfully defeated a proposed bill in 2004 that would have required anyone older than sixteen to obtain a bike license from the City of New York. This bill was defeated with overwhelming support from people from throughout the state. The basic argument was that it would create yet another obstacle to riding, and would undermine any “safety in numbers” effect by reducing the number of cyclists on the road.

To be fair, there are a couple of legitimate concerns that could be used to justify licensing of bicyclists:

Many cyclists lack the skills to cycle safely. Driver education

is required for operating a motor vehicle, why not require cyclist education as well?

Licensing will help to enforce “same roads, same rights” by penalizing cyclists who disobey traffic laws. It will also appease motorists who complain of lawless cyclists.

The number of reasons that can be used to directly counter the ones above include:


Licensing is not necessary for education, and considering how poorly some states educate their motorists, it’s clear that the two have only a tenuous link.

At what age do you require someone to be licensed to use a bicycle? For example, if the age is 12, are 11-year-olds not allowed to bike? And if they are, why is a less competent 11-year old bicyclist allowed to ride without a license while an experienced adult is not?

The core reason for licensing: to have a mechanism for removing drivers who pose a serious threat to the safety and property of others. The purpose of licensing is not to educate, or even to ensure good behavior. The proof is in the numbers: licensed motorists kill over 40,000 and injure over 2 million people a year. How many people do unlicensed cyclists kill and injure per year? Licensing will discourage potential cyclists by creating yet another obstacle.

Sadly, this question will continue to be raised the by the misinformed as the number of cyclists and bicycle-specific facilities continue to swell. Fortunately, to date no state or local municipality requires a cyclist to have an operator’s license to bike. Savvy advocates have been able to use the question of whether or not cyclists should be licensed as a conversation opener to discovering what deeper concerns there might be with bicycling in their area.

Opportunities for positive public relations exist, such as with the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition’s (www.sfbike.org) “Co-Exist” and Transportation Alternative’s (www.transalt.org) “Give Respect Get Respect” campaigns.

 **Tip For Politicians: I you want to stimulate the local bicycle advocacy organization, suggest that bicyclists should be licensed.**

Should Bikes Be Registered?

Unlike whether or not it is a good idea to require cyclists to be licensed, the question of whether bikes should be registered is a little harder to answer. For clarity, we're talking about a system in which bicycles each receive a unique serial or registration number that must be permanently affixed to the bike. My research took me as far back as 1975 – a report issued to the California Senate (SCR 47 Statewide Bicycle Committee Final Report, February 10, 1975) in which the potential for putting a bicycle registration system in place was considered. (Interestingly, in this same report the Committee recommended against licensing bicyclists). Additionally, advocates and transportation planners that I talked to for this article remember programs run by the police in the 1940's and 1950's where children registered their bikes. The short answer to this question is, "It depends."

Registering bicycles achieves two goals: 1) Generating revenue to help maintain the system itself, and 2) Providing a mechanism for returning stolen bikes to their owners. Research indicates that in most cases the fees generated by selling registration stickers or tags isn't nearly enough to cover the cost of the system. Yearly fees range from as little as a couple of dollars to nearly twenty depending on locality and complexity of registration system.

Advocates of registration systems claim that it helps to increase the return rate of stolen bicycles. Davis, California in particular has achieved some measurable results with their system. Other areas could not provide what the actual rate of return for bikes with registration stickers as opposed to those without. Opponents to registration systems claim that it provides an additional barrier to getting more people on bikes. Areas with large student populations (and therefore a higher number of cyclists on average) tend to favor registration systems. In Washington, D.C., the registration system is in the process of being repealed due to harassment by the police who have been pulling over cyclists who have otherwise done nothing wrong.

At right is a list of the types of registration systems that were surveyed. This is by no means a complete list, but is fairly representative of the range of implementations.

Davis, CA

University of California, Davis requires all campus bicycles to be registered, and the increase in stolen bike recovery has increased from approximately 1-2% to 10-15%.

Hawaii

The state has a bike registering law which costs \$15 (a one-time fee) and 100% of the funds are used for bike facilities and educational activities. A numbered metallic tag or decal is issued to the bike owner for application to the bike. Records are maintained by the state including: bike registration number, owner's name, proof of bike ownership, bike serial number. The law states that it falls to each county "to purchase a sufficient number of these tags or decals" (section 249-14). Fees collected are placed in the "Bikeway Fund" for 5 specific uses.

Switzerland

Annual bike registration stickers are issued and put on bike rear fenders for visibility.

Washington, DC

The registration system is currently being repealed because it's been used to pull over cyclists who have done nothing wrong, according to the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (www.waba.org). The police harassment has been determined to be a deterrent to new cyclists.

Massachusetts

According to MassBike (www.massbike.org), MA has a state law that gives each town/city the option to require registration of every bicycle purchased. However, with cyclists riding in multiple jurisdictions and counties, the local-only registration has been found to be useless. MassBike's currently proposed Bicyclist Safety Bill includes a provision to repeal this law.

Minnesota

The state had a mandatory bike registration program, but it was repealed in 2005.

Salt Lake City, UT

The city requires all bikes to be registered. If police stop a rider for other reasons and the bike is not registered, it can be impounded. Bike theft is not discouraged because there is no record keeping system that links the bike to its owner. If the police recover a bike, there is no way to contact the owner because no bike registration records are kept. Bikes end up being auctioned off or sold as scrap.

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Tip For The Police: Pulling over unregistered bikes can be a fun and rewarding alternative to engaging violent criminals or dealing with gory automobile accidents.


To Fee or Not to Fee

That is the question. Almost universally, advocates and regular cyclists alike are vehemently opposed to requiring bicyclists to obtain an operator's permit equal to that issued to motor vehicle drivers. The question arises when frustration with cyclists is running high, and/or when somebody feels as though their God-granted access to road and country is being threatened. The most frequently cited reason for proposing an operator's permit is to help pay for the system. In fact, most funding for building local facilities comes from sales, property, and municipality taxes. Licensing bicyclists creates another barrier in a transportation system that already heavily favors travel by car.

Requiring that bicycles be registered is a little bit more complicated. The reason most frequently cited for requiring registration is to aid the recovery and return of stolen bikes. In some cases, the fees generated by the system actually go towards putting in more bicycle facilities. In the majority of cases, the fees don't even cover the cost of implementing and maintaining the system. There have been reports of police harassment, and it does provide an additional barrier to getting more people on bikes. Some police departments don't even maintain a list of the registration numbers and therefore can't return the bike if it has been stolen! If the number of bikes in an area is sufficiently high, the rate of return of stolen bikes can be significant. There are a number of websites that will register your bike's serial number for you (usually for a small fee). The only problem with this system is that you must rely on the local police department to know that such systems exist and that they should check them. Most recovered bikes end up being auctioned off, sold for scrap, or donated to recycled bike programs.

So here are my final thoughts. If there is a proposal to license cyclists (obtain an operator's permit), fight it! Alert your local advocacy organization and have them plug in to any of the organizations listed below. If there is a proposal to require registration of bicycles, check to see what services are really offered with the registration. If they're substandard, work with your local advocacy group

to strengthen what you get for your money. Who knows? If your bike is stolen, there is a very small chance that you might get it back!

Thanks to everyone at the following organizations who helped me out by sharing research and data: Thunderhead Alliance (www.thunderheadalliance.org), Marin County Bicycle Coalition (www.marinbike.org), members of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (www.apbp.org), Transportation Alternatives (www.transalt.org), and the City of Davis, California. 



Don't hassle the Hoff!

About the Author

David Hoffman

David has been involved with bicycle advocacy for the past seven years. He founded Bike Pittsburgh in 2002 and still serves on the Advisory Board. From there David worked for the Thunderhead Alliance, the national coalition of local and state bicycle and pedestrian organizations. Currently, David works for the Marin County Bicycle Coalition and serves on the Board of Directors of the California Bicycle Coalition.

A refugee from Silicon Valley and Silicon Valley traffic, David got tired of sitting in his car four hours a day and decided to begin cycling to work. Now practically car-free, David enjoys watching others sit in traffic.

Read more of David's articles at www.urbanvelo.org/advocacy

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Wheelbuilding 101

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Intimidating as it may at first seem, building wheels is not the great mystery that many would like you to think. Anyone who otherwise turns their own wrenches is capable of building a wheel. While there is something about the touch that a wheelbuilding master can apply to each piece, making it all come together straight and true, with patience and practice you too can build up your next wheelset.

Building your own wheels gives you complete control of the entire equation – not just rim and hub selection, but spoke count and gauge, cross pattern, and nipple material. It can even save you a few dollars over time, as wheels are expensive custom orders at the retail level.

CHOOSING THE PARTS

HUB – Modern front hubs are 100mm. Rear hubs come in three widths – 120mm for track, 130mm for modern road bikes, 135mm for modern mountain/touring bikes, and a few freaks. Pick the one that fits. Forged hub bodies are better than machined for ultimate strength, sealed bearings of some sort best for all weather use. Sealed bearings do not have to be cartridge – Shimano road and mountain hubs are sealed, yet use adjustable cup and cone bearings and are ultimately some of the best hubs on the market. If you are reusing an old hub, conventional wisdom is to lace it in the same pattern as it was originally laced to match the spoke hole wear and deformation obvious on a previously laced hub. Make sure the number of holes on the hub matches the number of holes in the rim.

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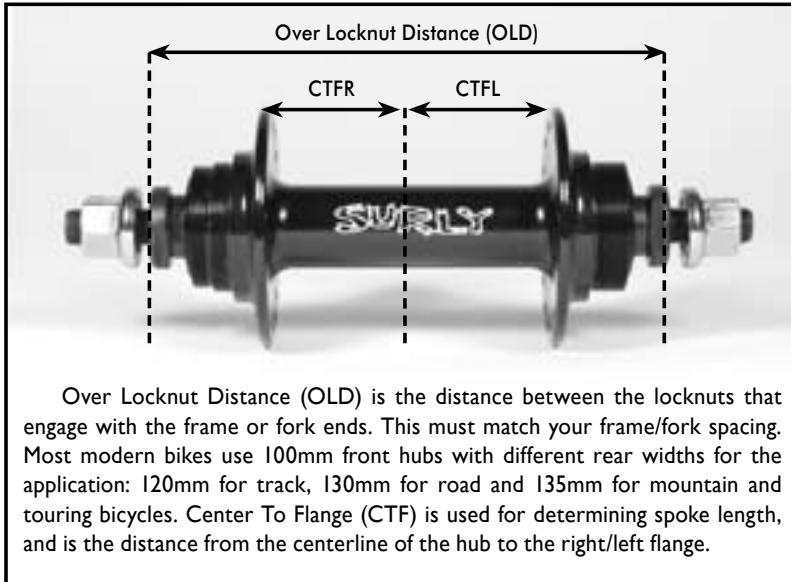


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Over Locknut Distance (OLD) is the distance between the locknuts that engage with the frame or fork ends. This must match your frame/fork spacing. Most modern bikes use 100mm front hubs with different rear widths for the application: 120mm for track, 130mm for road and 135mm for mountain and touring bicycles. Center To Flange (CTF) is used for determining spoke length, and is the distance from the centerline of the hub to the right/left flange.

RIM – There are a few considerations with rim choice, mainly cross-sectional shape/width and all of the finishing touches. Low-cross section rims are best for weight considerations and in significant cross winds on the road. High-cross section, v-shaped rims are typically stronger and can be laced to a higher spoke tension than low-cross section rims, but come with a sometimes significant weight penalty. No matter the choice, look for an even seam where one end of the rim meets the other. Spoke hole eyelets can be a nice touch and prevent cracking around spoke holes, but are not a gauge of rim quality as many perfectly good rims do not have eyelets. Machined brake tracks are not completely necessary, but are a nice touch. Make sure the number of holes in the rim matches the number of holes in the hub.

SPOKES – Stainless steel is the only way to go. Spokes come in a few gauges, or widths, mainly 14 gauge, 15 gauge and 16 gauge (2.0, 1.8 and 1.6mm respectively). Spokes can be either straight gauge, or butted where the width of the spoke varies across its length for weight savings and strength considerations. 14/15 gauge, double butted spokes are a good combination of strength, weight and price and are thus the standard go-to choice for most wheelbuilders.

NIPPLES – Spoke nipples are available in either nickel-plated brass or aluminum. Stick with the brass ones. They're cheaper and stronger than the aluminum ones. Aluminum nipples save a little bit of weight and can be used reliably, but are much easier to round off during building. You'll need nipples that correspond to the spoke gauge, and then a high-quality spoke wrench that is the correct size for the nipples.

SPOKE LENGTH CALCULATION

Calculating spoke length is the great black magic of wheelbuilding. Where there used to be complicated charts, there are now online spoke calculation programs and downloadable spreadsheets, with links at the end of this article. You'll need a few key measurements to determine spoke length.

- Number of spokes, and lacing pattern.
- ERD – The Effective Rim Diameter (ERD) is the inside diameter of the rim, along the surface that the spoke nipples engage.
- Flange Diameter – Measured along the centerline of the spoke holes.
- CTF – Center To Flange, left and right. The distance from the centerline of the hub to the right/left hub flanges. This distance will vary on multispeed hubs to account for the cogset, and may vary on some singlespeed/fixe hubs also.

These hub and rim measurements should be provided by the manufacturers, but are easy enough to measure. For hubs, use a set of calipers to take measurements. The ERD can be measured with a spare nipple and a length of string threaded through a spoke hole and across the inside diameter of the rim. It's worth double and triple checking your measurements.

Plug these numbers into your spoke calculator to find out the required spoke lengths on each side of the hub. Round off the decimal and buy spokes in the nearest length available. Cheating by a millimeter or two is possible to match lengths right to left, but anything more risks a spoke that is simply too long/short for a correct build.

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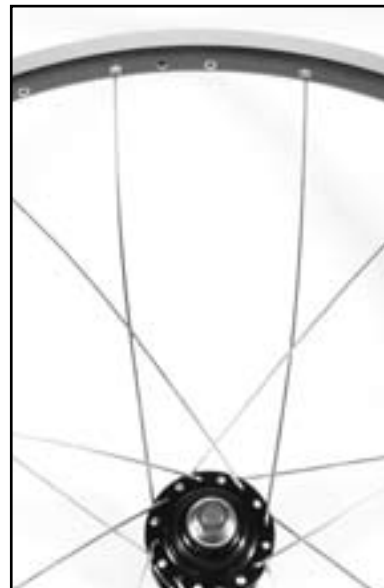
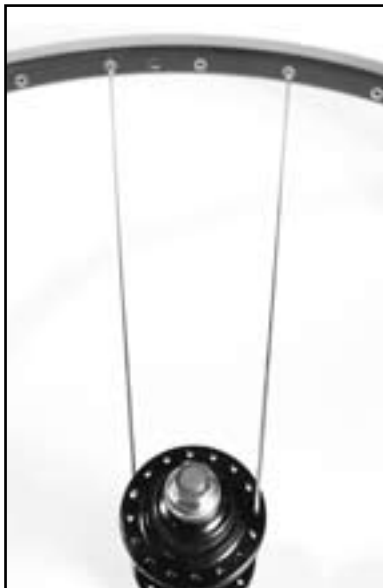
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DRIVESIDE

Before putting your first spoke into that first hole, you have to prep the spoke threads. Some mechanics use beeswax, some threadlocker, some nothing at all. Myself, I use whatever oil based chain lube I have around and have never experienced any difficulties with spokes working loose over time. I find that both beeswax and threadlocker give too much resistance in the tensioning process, leading to under tensioned wheels, excessive spoke wind-up and/or rounded off nipples. Apply a light coating of lube to the threads and wipe off any excess.

Starting with the drive side, orient the rim so that the label will be visible right side up on the driveside of the bicycle when finished. Place the first spoke head out in the hub, in the first drive side spoke hole to the left of the valve hole. As with all nipples during

lacing, just thread it on a few turns to hold it in place as tensioning comes later. Because the small touches matter, I try to line up the logo on the hub with the valve hole as best I can.

With the first spoke hole on the hub considered #1, count clockwise to hole #8 and place a spoke head in, threaded into the next available driveside rim spoke hole for the recommended 3x lacing. If you're lacing 4x use hole #10, 2x hole #6 and 1x hole #4. For 0x, radial lacing spokes go straight from the hub to the rim without crossing one another. While easy to lace, these wheels can arguably present various problems in practical use and more importantly radial lacing voids many hub warranties due to the excessive stress placed on the hub flanges.

Starting with what would be hub

hole #3, place a spoke head out and into the next available driveside rim spoke hole, intertwining it over the first and at this point only head in spoke. Continue placing head out spokes in the odd numbered hub holes, and in every other driveside rim spoke hole, until all head out driveside spokes are in place.

Next, insert the head in spokes. The appropriate holes on the rim should become obvious due to the length of the spokes. These spokes will cross other spokes 3 times. Once near or even overlapping the hub flange, once within about 20mm of the flange, and once about 1/3 of the way to the rim. Intertwine head in spokes under head out spokes at the cross nearest rim. Check your work by taking a look at the overall pattern. It should be easy to notice any spokes out of order or not intertwined properly.

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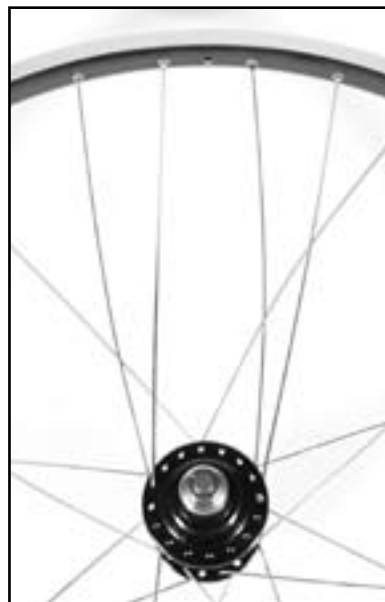
NON-DRIVESIDE

The key to this side is locating the first spoke. Find the first spoke of the driveside, the head out spoke nearest the valve hole. Looking across the hub from the non-driveside, the first spoke goes into the hole that falls to the right of the first driveside hole. The spoke goes head out in the first hole on the rim to the right of the valve hole, with the non-driveside facing up.

Once again consider that first hole #1 and count counterclockwise around the hub shell the appropriate number of holes for your cross pattern, placing a spoke head in and threaded into the first rim spoke hole to the left of the valve hole.

Starting with the head out spokes, place them in the appropriate odd numbered hub holes and into every other available rim spoke hole, intertwining over the one head in spoke on this side. You'll quickly discover that it takes some finesse to get the spokes into place with the driveside laced. When passing the spoke from one side of the rim to the other, place your finger over the end of the spoke to avoid scratching the rim. Gently bend spokes across their entire length to avoid permanently deforming any of them in the process.

The lacing pattern should become very clear now. Place head in spokes in their given holes, interlacing them under head out spokes at the cross nearest the rim.



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TENSIONING & TRUING

With the lacing complete, tensioning and truing may now begin. Preferably, you'll need a truing stand but this process can be completed with only a frame available to hold the wheel, using either the brake pads or a pencil and a spring clamp as guides

First, make your way around the rim and place a drop of chain lube on every nipple/rim joint and wipe any excess off for a smooth tensioning process. Proceed around the rim and with a spoke wrench thread the nipples so that they are consistently engaged with the threads without tensioning them for a solid starting point. In half- and then quarter-turn increments, start going around the wheel and evenly tensioning spokes on each side. Keep in mind dish, defined as centering the rim over the center of the axle (as explained later). On hubs with gears, disc brake mounts or otherwise having flanges not equidistant from the centerline of the hub the tension on each side will ultimately vary in order to keep the rim centered about the axle.

During tensioning keep mind of the wheel's true (sidebar, p72) and make corrections while bringing it up to ultimate tension. After each time around the rim doing a quarter turn or so of the spokes, gently squeeze parallel spokes together to relieve any spoke windup, when the spoke twists rather than the nipple turn during tensioning. Determining the final tension of the wheel is done by feel and experience by most folks, whereas others swear that you can't build a proper wheel without a tensionometer. For my first wheels I would compare tension with other handbuilt wheels by feel, not tone of the spokes when plucked. An undertensioned wheel will tend to break spokes and not stay in true during use, whereas an overly tensioned wheel will be near impossible to true during the building process as the rim attempts to buckle under the pressure. V-section aero rims are typically able to be laced to a higher tension than lower profile rims.

Once the wheel is brought up to adequate tension, do a round of rough truing of the wheel. Then take the wheel out of the stand, placing the axle on the ground with the rim parallel to the floor. Gently push down on opposite sides of the rim to set the spokes in the hub and rim holes, and to further relieve windup. Give it a half turn and repeat, then flip it over and do it again. You'll likely hear some clicks and pings as the spokes set in place. Put the wheel back in



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TRUE DAT

True is a measure of roundness, left to right and up and down. Both of those variables need to be brought into check while making sure the rim is still correctly dished. Just keep checking each parameter and work slowly and it won't be a problem.


HORIZONTAL TRUING – Checking roundness right to left. For a spot on the rim out of round to the right, tighten the spokes leading to the left hub flange and loosen the spokes leading to the right around the deformation.

VERTICAL TRUING – This ensures the rim is centered about the axle. Tighten spokes around high spots, and loosen spokes around low spots. This has to be done around relatively large spans of spokes, generally groups of 4 or 6 at minimum.

Check true around the whole diameter of the rim in $\frac{1}{4}$ turn increments, making small adjustments to deformations to gradually make the wheel round.

the truing stand and continue to hone in on making it true in both the horizontal and vertical directions as explained in the sidebar. Repeat the process of pushing down on the rim and truing it again until there is no change in the true of the wheel after setting the spokes. With spokes that are the of the correct length, the threads should disappear into the nipple and the end of the spoke should end up approximately even with the outside edge of the nipple.

That's it! Almost. If you built the wheel in a truing stand that is centered for proper dish or in your bicycle frame, it should be dished properly. Contrary to popular belief, you don't need a fancy dishing tool to check dish. Place the wheel with the axle on the ground, with one side of the rim touching the ground and the other against a wall. With a pencil mark where the upper edge of the rim touches the wall, flip the wheel over, and check to make sure the rim meets the wall at the same point. If so, the rim is centered about the axle. If not, adjust as necessary by evenly loosening spokes on one side of the rim and tensioning spokes on the other by about $\frac{1}{8}$ turn at a time until it is dished properly.

Once you are satisfied with your work, place a rimstrip on and call it a day. Now you know how to build wheels, save money and impress your friends. 

RESOURCES

WEBSITES

Sheldon Brown's Wheelbuilding Page – www.sheldonbrown.com/wheelbuild.html

DT Swiss Spoke Calculator – www.dtswiss.com

Damon Rinard's Spocalc – www.damonrinard.com/spocalc.htm

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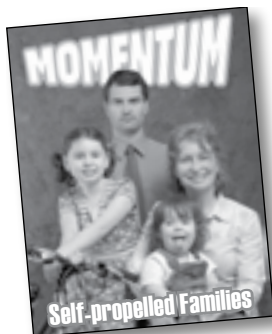
The Art of Wheelbuilding – Gerd Schraner

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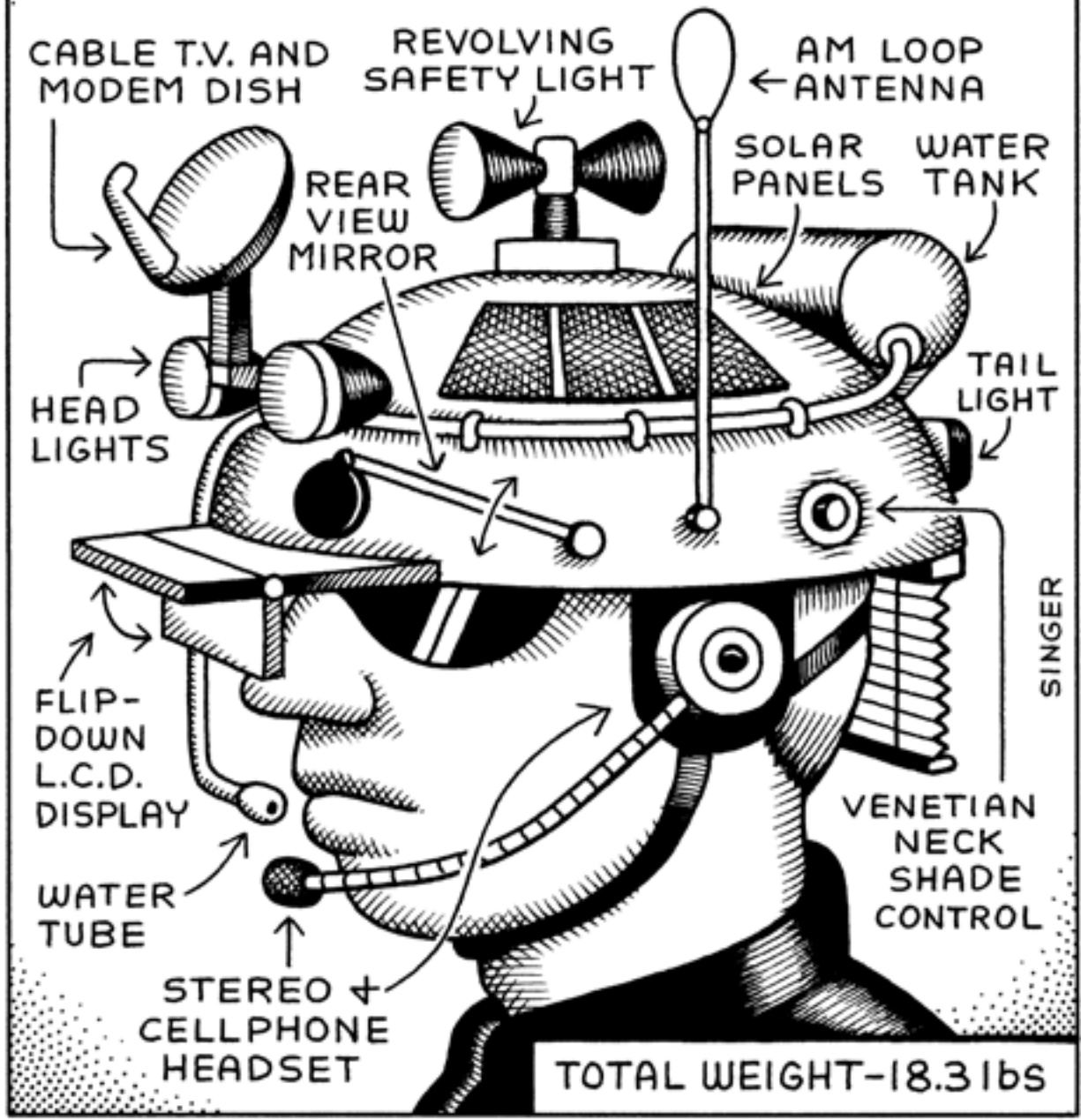


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