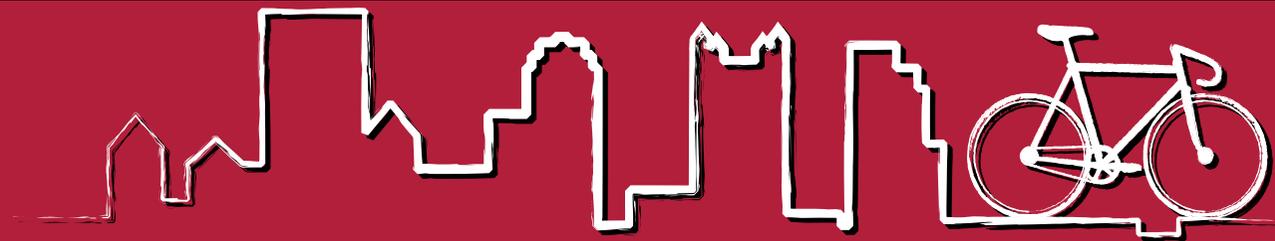


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# URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #20 • July 2010



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# URBAN VELO

Issue #20

July 2010



Brad Quartuccio

Editor

[brad@urbanvelo.org](mailto:brad@urbanvelo.org)



Jeff Guerrero

Publisher

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**On the cover:** Lexington, KY local Patrick Garnett leads a group of visiting Pittsburgh cyclists to some affordable downtown dining. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

**Co-conspirators:** David Munson, Alex Hansen, Crystal Ruiz-Mills, Bum Ariffin, Stan Engelbrecht, Nic Grobler, Eric J. Herboth, Annamarie Cabarloc, Roger Lootine, Stephen Cummings, Adriane Hairston, David Hoffman, John Cameron and Andy Singer

Urban Velo, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224

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

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# Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio



**M**y flat luck has run thin. Perhaps my luck was at an all-time high for an unusually long time, the latest batch of flat proof tires really are that good, but a couple of recent ones have put me back on guard and quelled any bravado that a relative few successful trips without a pump may have brought about. Out on a quick spin around town to test a camera from the junk bin or towards the end of the second century in as many days on a solo camp trip, they all sting.

As night fell, as a far off storm brewed, as I stood on the side of the trail an indeterminate distance from the next campsite, I broke off the valve of my remaining spare tube. I cursed myself for not properly dealing with the swapped out puncture from the day before and then watched as my second attempt at patching a tube bubbled

and hissed as my calmly shaking hands gave it a pump. I figured I was no less than a mile from camp, no more than two, and about 20 minutes from sundown and 40 from complete darkness. Riding on the rim into camp with time to heat up dinner in the twilight was a treat in itself. The storm blowing up the next ridge over but ultimately never reaching my bivy at least kept it comfortable overnight.

No rain. Even the last few days of the journey playing out of town polo under threatening forecasts proved dry. Some seven nights of camping in a month's time without more than a few hours rain, and even that while hunkered down. I'll gladly trade a few flats for the perfect weather. The camera? Junk. The lesson learned? Even being prepared for everything doesn't solve the simplest problem. Let the glue dry. 

We want your words. Send your editorial contributions to [brad@urbanvelo.org](mailto:brad@urbanvelo.org)



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# Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero



Self-portrait with the family. Photo by Crystal Ruiz-Mills, [www.cruizphotography.com](http://www.cruizphotography.com)

**T**he “I Love Riding in the City” department is my baby. In a sense it defines not only this magazine, but the entire urban bicycling culture that we’re all a part of. Because despite the vast differences between all of us—physically, mentally, culturally, spiritually—we’re bonded by the common desire to ride bikes in our urban environment.

After twenty issues, you would think that I may have grown bored of sorting through all of the submissions. The truth is, I’m still happy every time another one turns up in my inbox. And sometimes the correspondence transcends the ordinary Q&A format and deserves special attention, such is the case with the following passage sent in by Ryan Alexander of Ft. Lauderdale, FL:

*About a month ago, during our group ride my friend and coworker was hit by a motorist and broke her back. The result is unemployment, surgery, and further lessons from the city of, “This is what happens when you ride on*

*the road.”*

*There are an ever-increasing, brave few who continue to ride our streets day in and day out. A group that uses their bikes for transportation, for community, for tricking, for polo and for the fun of it. The result has been at least 12 people I see everyday heading to the local shop and picking up a bike or two.*

*The days of using your bike for solely one purpose (be it transportation or polo or one of the several others) are coming to an end. Our weather is gracious enough to let us ride our bikes year round. What a blessing!*

*If the safety of cyclists becomes an issue that is addressed, more people would ride. If the cops would stop telling cyclists to get off the road every time they pass one, more people would stay on the road. If a mother of two can safely ride around town and not have her back broken, chances are her children will do the same.*

Well said, Ryan. Well said.



Urban Velo issue #20, July 2010. Dead tree print run: 5000 copies. Issue #19 online readership: 55,000+



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Raina

**LOCATION:** Long Beach, NY

**OCCUPATION:** Student

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

I live in Long Beach. It's really fun to ride my bike. I ride it everywhere. I usually ride my bike on the boardwalk. I love looking at the ocean. When there aren't a lot of people on the boardwalk I like to ride really fast. Since everything is so close together I can ride my bike to the park or the store. Or sometimes I just ride to anywhere or anyplace that I want to go to that is nearby.

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

Long Beach is my favorite city to ride because there are many many places to go like the park, the store, or on the long boardwalk. I ride to lots of places in the city of Long Beach. It's a lot of fun.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

I love riding in my city because I like to see what other people are doing. I love to watch the surfers from the boardwalk. Sometimes when I am riding on the boardwalk I might take a break if I get tired. But most of the time I don't take a break.

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

I just love to ride my bike anywhere and get fresh air. It is so relaxing to me. I love it.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



Photo by Bum Ariffin, bum.kliqueimages.com

**NAME:** Faradian A.K

**LOCATION:** Singapore

**OCCUPATION:** Operations Manager

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

Singapura is a Mecca for food and shopping. We have all the hustle and bustle of other cities, but we're also known for fines, hence the traffic laws are pretty heavy. We're kind of micro-chipped—you hit a cyclist, you're in for time. You stay out of our way, we stay out of yours.

I ride to work 95 percent of the time. Two words to describe it—humidity battle.

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

Singapore is the city by itself. You can basically ride from one end to the other. Though my darling area would be the central business district—dodging people in suits, smooth surface tile to skid on, and little roads to navigate

like rats in the sewer.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

Riding is addictive. I love fitness—I do yoga and pilates—but riding makes me feel kind of crazy. Like in a good-girls-gone-bad kind of way. I get to work faster than taking the bus, plus it gives me a good workout.

On the other hand, riding is calming. And I feel so much freedom and independence when I pedal. Some people might find it silly to do so but I'm content with the simple pleasures in life.

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

Ride on, and beware of "door-prizes."

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# ian dowden

Upstate NY transplant living in Columbus, OH



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Michele Monti  
**LOCATION:** Forlì, Italy  
**OCCUPATION:** Sales Clerk

## Poetry anyone?

rumore.  
tutto è tradotto in rumore.  
ma io ho bisogno di qualcos'altro che non sia rumore.  
qualcosa che non abbia a che fare con il rumore.  
ci sarà qualcosa che non sia rumore?  
dal mattino alla sera rumore.  
il risveglio è rumore.  
la colazione è rumore.  
la strada è rumore.  
il lavoro è rumore.

silenzio.

La più grande rivelazione è il silenzio, dice il saggio.  
Se riavvolgo fino allo zero il nastro del mio cervello di una qualsiasi giornata. è amaramente piena di solo rumore.  
Giorno dopo giorno perdo la percezione del silenzio, e quei pochi istanti di pace sono trasformati in ansia.

Quindi, salgo sulla mia perfetta dannata bicicletta e scappo il più lontano possibile. Ma dove vado, che le strade sono solo pezzi di asfalto in mezzo a scatole di sardine andate a male a quattro ruote? Più pedalo e più m'accorgo che la mia è una fuga, non so da cosa e non so da chi, vado verso il boh! Non ha importanza, so che primo o poi troverò un posto, un angolo di pace, o una bolla di sapone dove potrò fermarmi, far riposare la mia bicicletta e le mie gambe, e provare a non sentire altro che il battito del mio cuore, unico rumore disposto ad ascoltare.



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Tommy Riemenschneider  
**LOCATION:** Long Beach, NY  
**OCCUPATION:** Electrician

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

I live in the city of Long Beach, NY. Long Beach is amazing, it's a beautiful place to live and ride. You can see people pedaling all sorts of wild rides anything from really, really tall bikes to pimped out beach cruisers. It's a lot of fun riding in my 'hood.

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

Long Beach, NY. Riding in Long Beach is a blast, we have a 2.5 mile boardwalk with a really wide bicycle lane with plenty of bike racks outside the local hangouts and for the most part the local drivers watch out/share the road and even yield to riders! Long Beach is completely flat so riding fixed is a breeze. I love ripping down the boardwalk on my track bike at night in the dead of winter, there is not a soul out around and I can pedal as hard as I can.

**Why do you love riding in the city?**

I love riding in the city because I can get anywhere I need to go really fast.

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

There is nothing in this world that I enjoy more than riding my bicycles with my two daughters. We are all crazy about our bicycles in my family. Ride on!



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Rachel Service

**LOCATION:** Wellington, New Zealand

**OCCUPATION:** PR/Creative

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

At the moment I have just returned from living in Europe back to my home city of Wellington, New Zealand. New Zealand doesn't have such a big bike culture as Europe but it is growing.

Unfortunately New Zealand doesn't have the history of cycling so much as Europe or other countries, so I sense that both drivers and riders are sometimes unsure as how to navigate the road. Certainly, we have a long way to go in terms of giving cyclists enough room and respecting them!

Wellington is known for its hills and windy weather—so just getting from A to B can be a workout in itself! The crew I ride with, Dame Truth, have shown me some neat hills to bomb and just getting up them is a work out and a half.

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

I loved riding in Berlin, Germany because they have such a rich bike culture there. The bike lanes are guarded with police-like authority by the cyclists—heaven forbid a pedestrian should walk onto a cycle lane!

One time I got hit by a car in Berlin—I wasn't looking the right way and I was completely in the wrong—but the car stopped in the middle of the motorway to check I was OK. They have the culture of giving cyclists space, which was something I had never encountered before.

Riding in Berlin in the summer is like nothing else—everyone is on bikes. And it doesn't matter what kind of ride you are rocking, if it has two wheels and is remotely functional, it's game!



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Ryan Alexander

**LOCATION:** Fort Lauderdale, FL

**OCCUPATION:** Barista, Musician

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

I live in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This place seems to be a place where culture comes, screams really loud for a year or two, and then lays down and dies. It's not that the city has no culture. Rather, it's the idea that the existing culture has had no competition for a really long time. Old money and old town industry are only getting older. Central to the idea of old money is the idea that the more money you have the nicer the car is and the bigger the house and the hotter and younger the wife.

Fort Lauderdale is an aging urban sprawl very much overrun by BMWs, Jaguars, Mercedes and the entitled owners that make their way through town in them.

Fort Lauderdale is a really dangerous town to ride in.

Pedestrians yield to vehicles ten out of ten times. Everyone is wheeling and dealing behind the wheel via texting and gabbing. So people just drive. It's easier than biking. It's more convenient. It's safer. It's not frowned upon.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

I love the challenge of riding in the city. Brakes give you the ability to race to the white lines of the intersection and stop if necessary. Not having brakes presents the challenge of riding in a state where you are constantly aware of what traffic and pedestrians are doing. Blowing yellowish/reddish lights is also a blast. I also love seeing all the guys that ride around stolen BMX bikes and beach cruisers. Makes me laugh.



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**NAME:** Shawn Soria

**LOCATION:** Salinas, CA

**OCCUPATION:** Limousine Detailer

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

I live in Salinas, California. Nothing too fancy around here except the Steinbeck Center I suppose. But riding around town is always a fun time; tons of interesting people you can see, and many of the roads here are pretty smooth. Drivers are a little on the dangerous side though (texting, eating, "California rolls").

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

I'd have to say that Santa Cruz is my favorite city to ride in. Haven't ridden in too many cities yet, but Santa Cruz has tons of hilly roads that are fun to shoot down and climb up.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

I love riding in the city because I love to just weave in and out of traffic, drafting off of cars, and passing them up. It's laughs to see some of their pissed-off faces as I pass them up while they sit in one place. Traffic is the best.

**NAME:** Raesa Sya

**LOCATION:** Subang Jaya, Malaysia

**OCCUPATION:** Graphic Designer

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

I live in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. The city of Kuala Lumpur is 40 km away. My city is really hot during the day—34 Celsius on average—and very humid. So we mostly ride at night. We have crazy traffic, no bike lanes, rude drivers and a lot of potholes.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

The culture and the things to see at night. My mum doesn't know I have a bike, so I can't ride near my house (the city is dangerous).

## **Poetry anyone?**

Kuala Lumpur the city full of desires,  
riding past fat policemen and crazy drivers,  
potholes and rude taxi cabbars,  
yet my love for this city is totally endless.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Jeffers Lennox

**LOCATION:** Montréal, Quebec

**OCCUPATION:** Student

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

I live in Montreal, which aspires to be Canada's Portland (only with more snow and fewer theme rides). Having moved here after living in Toronto, Halifax, Paris, and London, I'd say this is one of the most enjoyable cities I've ridden in. We have a decent system of downtown bicycle lanes, hundreds of kilometers of paths and trails, and a relatively comfortable balance of hipsters on fixies, business-types on hybrids, bearded men on recumbents, and tourists wobbling around on rented BIXI bikes.

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

Ottawa, hands down. It doesn't win any points for flash or speed, but it never lets me down.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

I love riding in the city because of the variety. If I want to work hard, I'll climb the mountain (it is MONTreal, after all); if I want a rush, I'll zip through some traffic; if I want to relax, I'll do the Lachine Canal route. Cities are also the great leveler, forcing cyclists of all stripes to share resources and find common ground. Of course we mock each other and engage in stereotyping—surprise, those roadies didn't acknowledge me or I hope that courier can't tell that all I've got in my messenger bag is cookies—but we also realize that, at root, anyone on a bike is doing a good thing. Riding in the city makes getting anywhere the highlight of your day, even if you're numb from the cold when you arrive.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Sarah E. Krahel  
**LOCATION:** Columbus, OH  
**OCCUPATION:** Sewer at Seagull Bags

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

I live in Clintonville, and I can get just about anywhere important on my bike in 10-20 minutes. I love being on my bike, riding the streets, I love the buildings, people, the fellow cyclists...

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

New York City is fun, always something new to see. Traffic is killer, you have to focus all the time with pedestrians, cars, everything. I like to take it all in.

### Why do you love riding in the city?

I love how riding puts my mind at ease, it can make any day better. Just finding new routes to get places, taking in the world in while flying down the street.

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**LOCATION:**

**OCCUPATION:**

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

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

**Why do you love riding in the city?**

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

*Email your responses to [jeff@urbanvelo.org](mailto:jeff@urbanvelo.org)*



# Bianchi

# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Mark Isaacson

**LOCATION:** Stockholm, Sweden

**OCCUPATION:** Manager of the 3 Stooges

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

Stockholm kicks ass. I've had the opportunity to ride in most of Europe and the United States, and Stockholm is my favorite. Everyone rides bicycles in town to the point where it is over congested in the bike lanes during the short but wonderful summers. Politicians also ride, so there is awareness from the system to increase bicycle lanes, infrastructure, public air pumps, etc. Since everyone rides or knows someone who rides, most drivers are also more conscious and considerate.

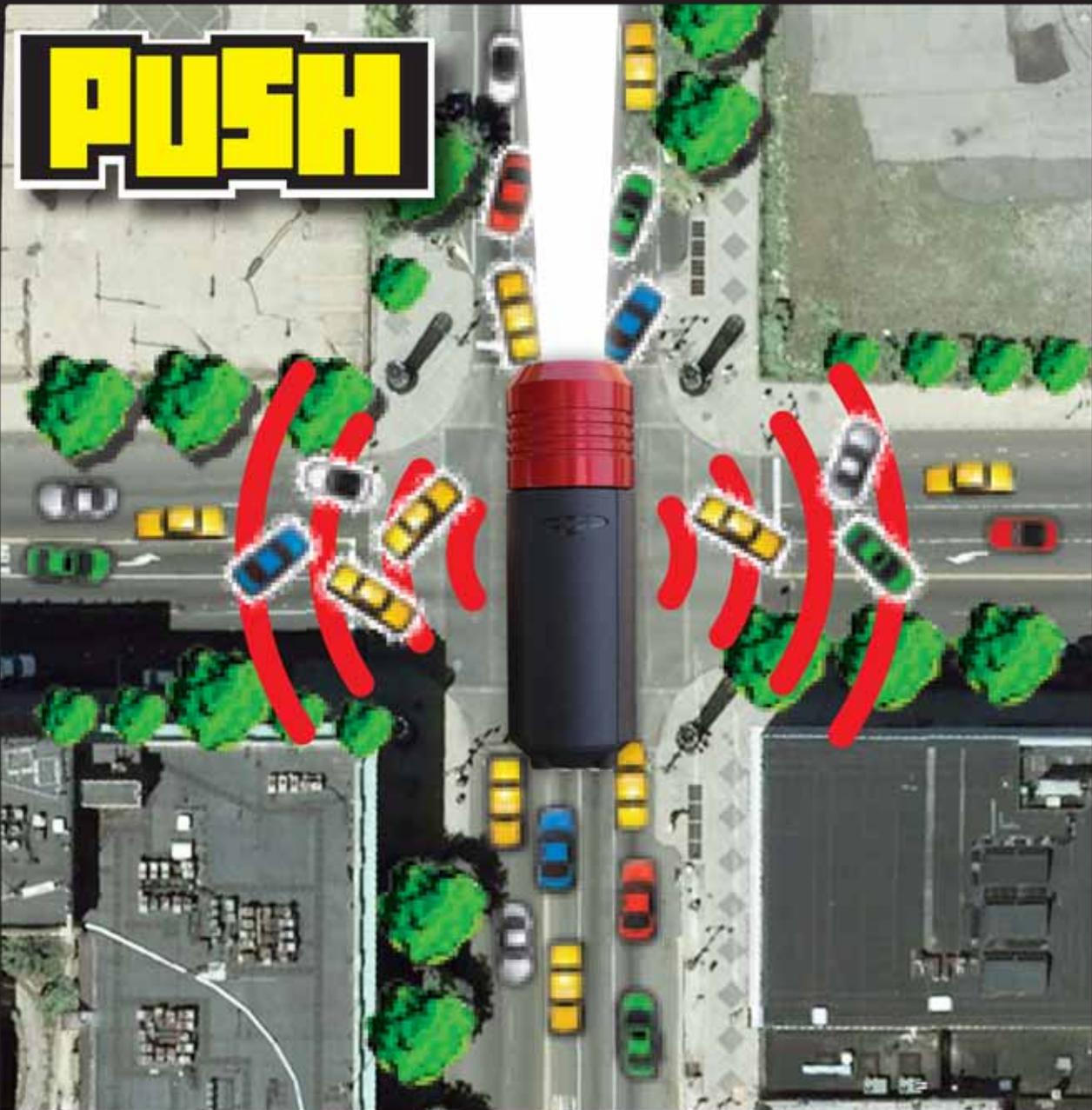
**What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?**

Stockholm, Sweden. Copenhagen, Denmark. Santa Cruz, California. These cities are similar from a bicycle perspective with a great mixture of nature and city life. Metropolitan Stockholm is similar to the structure of New York City in that it consists of seven islands all connected by bridges to keep getting around simple and efficient, and more importantly, car-free.

**Why do you love riding in the city?**

Wind in my face, bugs in my teeth, cold mornings that make my eyes tear, angry car drivers, blind bus drivers, me and my silly grin from ear to ear. In a word, freedom with the gift of captivating and focusing my mind on what is in front of my wheel.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Andy Karr

**LOCATION:** Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

**OCCUPATION:** Masters Dissertation Student

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

I live in the middle of Edinburgh, Scotland, on the edge of the medieval old town. Riding in Edinburgh is tough, pot holed streets, cobblestones, steep, steep hills, crazy taxi drivers and cold rain nearly every day. But nothing beats the feeling of freedom of the cold air on your face and dodging between the crowded streets and dirty sidewalks. You can cross the entire city on a bike faster than you could ever hope to drive.

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

I love riding in Winston Salem, NC. It's my hometown and it's nearly as hilly as Edinburgh but warmer and dryer.

The tree-lined boulevards are hard to beat visually. My favorite part of riding in Edinburgh is how easy it is to get into the countryside though, in 20 minutes you have views you would never be able to find in the States.

## **Why do you love riding in the city?**

It's a feeling of freedom that sitting in traffic or slog-ging down crowded sidewalks could never give you. And the gratification you get when you pass the car that angrily beeped at you to get out of the way only 30 seconds earlier while they are stuck in traffic is hard to beat.

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

People say I'm crazy for riding fixed gear in this town but I run front and rear brakes (too wet to rely on skip-ping) and when I go home to my Cannondale in the fall it will be like riding on air.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Bill Koonce

**LOCATION:** Seattle, WA

**OCCUPATION:** Police Officer

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

I live in Seattle. Riding here is great and getting better. There are several excellent bike paths and more on the way. There are some cool dirt trails inside the city limits and we have a ton of great bike shops. We are close to Portland and Vancouver, two other great bike towns. People in cars are pretty courteous for the most part. The rain gets some people off their bikes but I've found fenders and quality gear can make riding in the rain cool and fun.

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

I'm getting old (46). I've been biking since I was 4 or 5. I've literally ridden bicycles throughout my entire life. I don't need a field, or teammates, money, or a bunch of equipment. Just me and my bike. There aren't many things that you enjoy as a kid that you're still into as an adult. I'll probably be one of those old coots cruising around on a big wheeled trike 40 years from now... And I'll still be loving it.





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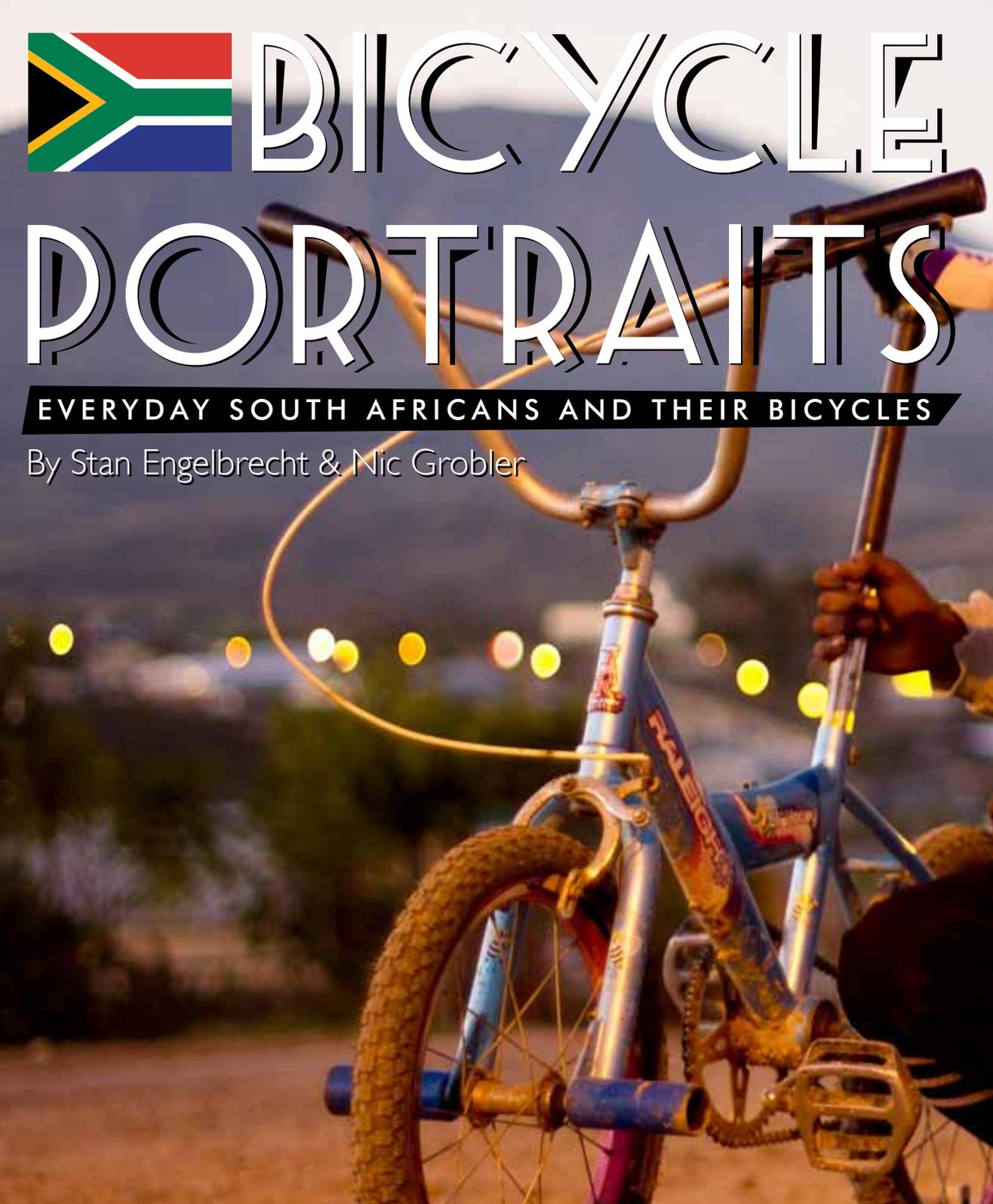


# BICYCLE

# PORTRAITS

EVERYDAY SOUTH AFRICANS AND THEIR BICYCLES

By Stan Engelbrecht & Nic Grobler





The “Bicycle Portraits” project was initiated by Stan Engelbrecht (Cape Town, South Africa) and Nic Grobler (Johannesburg, South Africa) in early in 2010. Whenever they can, together or separately, they’re on the lookout for fellow commuters and people who use bicycles as part of their everyday work, to meet and photograph. They’re finding out who rides bicycles, why they ride bicycles, if and why they love their bicycles, and of course why so few South Africans choose bicycles as a transport option. There is no specific range of questions asked, they’d rather just establish a conversation around the rider’s life and where his or her bicycle fits into it. Being avid cyclists themselves, this project is as much an investigation into South African bicycle culture as it is an excuse for them to ride their bikes and take photographs.

## REMO BAKER

Western Cape, South Africa

“Why do I cycle? Because it’s fun! Also some exercise and I mean, there is lots you can do with it. Been cycling about 5 years now. I use it to go to town now and then. I bought this bicycle there. I’ve modified the bike a little, putting in the extra pipes and different tires. It means everything to me.”



## STEPHANIE BAKER

Pretoria, South Africa

“I’m limited to about a kilometer in view of my age, and I use it, well, certainly every other day... about a kilometer uphill in Pretorius street. I keep on the pavements, they’re in a terrible state with chunks missing, but cycling is awfully good for public relations. I know the area’s cleaners at the flats on my way to church—I get a greeting from them. The security men at the forensics place always wave, and going along you sort of get to know people, often you see someone really looking quite gloomy and you sort of give a smile and say *dumelang* and get a smile back. I think it’s wonderful for public relations! I really do. I enjoy it, I’m happy on the bike. I don’t find this area hostile, I really don’t. Some people living here get a bit frightened and well, I don’t think you can go about looking over your shoulder and expecting trouble. I’ve only had one incident years ago

where my bag was snatched, out of the basket, it was a gift actually when I look back and think, but that was the only time. That was retrieved fortunately. No, I’m not going to go around being frightened of things. Most people have good will. Some people here are very scared, even to walk down to the shops. They sometimes ask me if I’m alright. If I didn’t have the bicycle, well I’m not very good at walking, I’d be more or less in retirement. At least I can get around and see the beauty of the place too. This bike suits me, it’s quite old now and I’m 82 and three quarters. I’m not sure if I’d manage with the new bike having all the gears. You know I’m from England, I often think when people see you, and you hear ‘haauw’, that it is only mad dogs and English women that ride a bicycle. People know the bike around here now.”

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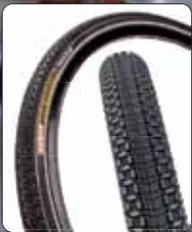
Pretoria, South Africa

“My bike is good for me, if I want to be somewhere on time I can be there on time, not using the taxi. It doesn't give me any problems. This bike was a present after my last one was stolen—my old one was too fast, an old road bike. This one is okay, but the old one was my baby. I've been in Arcadia today, just visited a friend and we went to see some chicks... you know they drive you crazy without using their license! My bicycle means

a lot to me, it's like another part of my life. You know when someone wants to borrow this bike, I just say no... because it's like giving someone a newborn baby, scared they don't take care of it. Even when I'm sleeping and I hear something I'm just thinking of my bike. I can tell all people that if they're thinking about getting a bicycle that it's a great idea, and that they shouldn't fuck with the taxis man.”

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## MORNÉ HENDRICKS

Prince Albert, South Africa

“I’m here from Prince Albert, but originally from Cape Town. I was about 5 when we moved here, and I’m 15 now. So it’s been 10 years now. I like it here but I’d rather live in the Cape—there are more amenities, sport activities. Here there isn’t much of that. I’ve had this bike for, say, two years. I’ve just been to the bank and to the chemist. I bought some aqueous cream for myself, for my body. I have some friends that also ride their bicycles. It’s so nice to ride down the road, there down the tar road. I ride about 2 or 3 kilometers outside of town. Sometimes we race each other, and sometimes we go jogging. I like sport, but chess is my favorite sport. I’m the best amongst my friends. It’s only me and my brother in our family that play chess, but we’re busy teaching my mom. She likes it

when we’re alone at home. I bought this bike second hand, from an uncle. I paid R150 (\$20 USD) for it, but it didn’t have brakes. I don’t like new bikes. This bike for me is in a good condition. I prefer this one. But I don’t ride to school—the other kids puncture my tires with scissors, or deflate them, if I do. It’s happened once, so I’d rather walk. It’s luckily very close. It happens to other kids as well, so now there are very few who ride their bicycles to school. There are over 1000 kids in my school. In my class we are 50. Next year I’m going to Cape Academy, in Cape Town. I’m going by train so I hope I can take my bike with. When I finish school I want to become a mechanical engineer, I want to go to Maties in Stellenbosch, or Potch.”



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## GRAHAM HOLMES

Cape Town, South Africa

"I've been riding bikes now for over 20 years. I'm 45. I'm a harbor forklift operator. I'm coming from work now and I'm going home to Goodwood. I ride my bike every day—rain, snow, if there was snow! But you don't get snow tires here! I ride a bike so I can save more money than other people do—and then I drink more on the weekends! I save the fuel but then I drink it out! They don't like it when I come to the bar on the bike. When you come out drunk then the people don't want you to ride. Then I walk!

But it's not far... just around the corner. My late wife picked this bike up for me and I built it up. Some people threw it away. That's how I pick my bikes up. Here in Parow, at the market, the guy sells parts there and I buy my spares there by him. Cheaper than the bicycle shops. I did the American flag paint job myself—'The home of the free...' how it's supposed to be. Nobody's got this paint scheme around here. The kids, they say, 'We like your bike...', I say, 'You can't smack the bike, it's the owner you must like!'"

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## ELLIOT MUTHETHE

Noordhoek, South Africa

“This bike belongs to my brother. He just lent it to me to go to the shop. I don’t have my own bike. I like riding bikes, but this bike is too small. My brother is a real shorty.” 

Stan Engelbrecht and Nic Grobler are turning their investigation into South African bicycle commuter culture into a full-color photographic book. They are currently on a countrywide bicycle journey to meet fellow South African cyclists, to find out who they are and where they are going. They hope that this project will lead to the kind of infrastructure development that is designed with all people in mind,

not just cars, but also wish to give people a glimpse into each other lives through a well known object of movement, practicality and joy—the bicycle. Looking at individuals through their sometimes unconscious involvement in bicycle culture, they will inadvertently touch on many charged issues like the implementation of public space, lack of infrastructure development and also social problems like class division and unequal wealth distribution, but also perhaps bring those unfamiliar to each other together in their love for a simple thing... Go to [www.bicycleportraits.co.za](http://www.bicycleportraits.co.za) to see this constantly growing, frequently updated project and discover a true profile of contemporary South African bicycle commuter culture.



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# Das Rad Ist Gut

## GERMANY'S CHANGING BICYCLE CULTURE

By Eric J. Herboth

**F**or most casual cyclists the popular visibility of German cycling does not extend far beyond Jan Ullrich's escapades at Le Tour or perhaps the Hochdorfer girls on their dance bikes. Dig deeper, however, and the rate at which Germans ride will disclose the long history of the bike in their country, a heritage of cycling with distinct icons and elements of tradition that have informed what they do today.

Though race bikes are still a mainstay in the nation's cycling industry, more and more two-wheel converts are emerging from Germany's urban centers. On some level one could argue that the surge in urban-oriented cycling, though happening everywhere at once, has in Germany been driven in part by the much-publicized downfall of the T-Mobile professional team. Beyond the disgrace of doping, the curtain call on the country's pro racing dynasty sent ripples through the lower echelons of the racing circuit and turned off many of the cross-promotional opportunities with sponsors. Mix that with the democratization of media and information, and it isn't hard to imagine fewer German kids spending July in front of the television watching the Pink Kaisers jockey with the Tour de France elite. Maybe some of those kids are digging up old VHS tapes pornographizing the exploits of mountain bike legend Hans Rey (from Kenzingen, near the country's Franco-

Swiss border) and heading into the woods, but a growing number of others are keeping the dust off their bikes by staying close to home, racing and riding with exploits in and around the cities.

To be sure, the "dismal future" that *Cycling News* said was gripping Germany about two years ago hasn't spilled out of the peloton and into the bike lane. Instead, in every city and town around the country bikes are as much a part of the culture as ever. Though they are suffering the same decline as their contemporaries in the US, many mom and pop bike shops still operate in villages with only a few hundred residents, and the country has maintained its momentum as a destination for bicycle tourism.

The news with the health of cycling in Germany is that it really isn't news. While not quite to the trademark degree of its Northwest neighbors in the Netherlands, the bicycle has always been a relative constant in German society, as much a part of daily life as a part of sport. Like most nations without great landmass, Germans take congestion seriously, but as a nation as under the influence of Americanism as any, over the years Germany has given in to some of the conveniences of sprawl. Around services-oriented cities like Cologne and Frankfurt rush-hour traffic jams turn the Autobahn into gridlock. Hence most commuter trains are packed as well, and though full-size bikes are no



A freakbike rider from Heidelberg pedals his tall ride through the streets.

problem for most regional and municipal public transportation systems, folding bikes have a strong footprint with commuters in Germany. In my years traveling the country I saw as many Dahons as I did Colnagos or even chunky Diamant track frames from the former GDR East (which may be no coincidence, as the US/Chinese Dahon opened a European Service Centre near Stuttgart this year), and the collapsibility of a quick-release folding bike can save a few scowls per day on the way to work.

Otherwise, there are generally no charges for taking bikes inside trains, trams, subways or even most buses within cities, and most regional trains include a dedicated wagon for bicycles (which often are stuffed with baby strollers). Generally speaking, while it hasn't been as internationally renown for cycling as it has for soccer or tennis, Germany entertains the velo in recreation far more than most countries.

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Rest assured that there are enough tight-jeaned youths in Germany toting elfin u-locks in their back pockets to satisfy even the most ardent coolhunter, but suffice it to say that Germans have a tradition of no-freewheel excel-

lence that peaked with 7x champion and GDR East track legend Michael Hübner.

Besides that, fixies don't just live on the track in the Fatherland. For one thing, those amazing bicycle ballerinas-slash-gymnasts, Carla and Henriette Hochdorfer, fly the black, red and gold flag. The YouTube celebrities are not only European Junior Champions of Indoorcycling (it doesn't get more urban than that) but also hold the Guinness Book of Records title for vertical gymnastics on a single bike ("Kehrsteuerrohrsteiger-Schulterstand"). Fixed gear or not, their feats are unbelievable and their passion for the bike is as infecting as Jan Ullrich's.

Another surprise pursuit in Germany is Cycle Ball, known locally as "radball" (the German word for Bike is *Rad*) and arriving at what one might argue is a more socialist appropriation for the urban cyclists. After all, isn't polo a sport of the bourgeoisie? In cycle ball the Germans (and their spirited friends across Europe) replace the stick-swinging of polo with incredible no-hand bike handling skills in a no-foot, pedal-powered two-on-two soccer match.

And who could forget Albert Einstein, the German-born, Swiss-educated, American-buried scientist who famously mugged for the camera while pedaling his cruiser in Santa Barbara and equated cycling with the essence of existence, saying "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving." Words to live by, if only cycling hadn't run full-steam into another tradition: beer. Portland may have the Hopworks rolling keg cart, but leave it to the Germans to create the BierBike, a rolling pub that combines pedaling and boozing for more than a dozen people at once.

## Berlin

For a number of outsiders the misperception is that the German bike scene begins and ends in Berlin. A forgivable offense for as William Powers wrote of his "Spontaneous Eco-Wander Through Germany" in *Slate*, bikes are the norm in the capital. Several years ago Berlin made a municipal decision to facilitate 15% of city traffic by bike a rule of city planning for 2010. The ensuing explosion of bike lanes and segregated paths had *Treehugger* calling Berlin "Bike City" and prompted Powers to note, "Amid hundreds of others bikers, I two-wheeled it through large swaths of the city in these safe, convenient lanes."

And of course Berlin has the graffitied Keirin Cycle Culture Cafe, a café and bike shop southeast of the city center that has a direct line to Tokyo and a tight pulse on the track bike scene in Europe. The space is smaller than its reputation would have you believe, but inside you

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can find just about anything related to fixed gear culture that you might desire, and if it isn't on hand they'll be sure to track it down. Newer in town is Cicli Berlinetta, the uptown shop with a hankering for Italian tradition.

Keirin Cycle Culture Cafe and its network of friends and followers are indicative of why Berlin was the logical spot to premiere *Fixed City*, a documentary on the country's fixed gear culture circa 2009 that switched "between velodrome and traffic lights, messengers and fakengers, inspiration and revolution, trick riding and speed addiction, pragmatism and passion, purism and a very own poetry." When it comes to their city, the film team of Kristian Ansand and Martin Gilluck say that "Berlin is definitely one year ahead" of most urban cycling movements in the country.

## Köln

Down toward Germany's former capital is Köln, or Cologne to Westerners, a savvy and prolific nexus of media and culture that, at under a million people but spread out over 156 square miles, is reminiscent of a more modern urbanist Seattle. Which isn't to say there's no old-world influence; the city's enormous cathedral is an international photo spot for skateboarders and, increasingly, urban bikers. On my trips through the city there were a healthy number of velos rolling about, from the iconic Dutch style bikes to fixies and even a few unicycles. Somewhat unexpected was the number of urban freeride bikes with their distinctive low saddles, fat tires and beefy suspension. Unexpected, that is, until you consider the city's mainstay WeThePeople, a freestyle brand that has made a name for itself in the world of BMX. The aforementioned BierBike sells franchises in smaller cities from its home in Cologne.

One focal point for the city's urban riding scene is Bike Syndikat, a messenger dispatch center and bike shop on one of the many geometrically skewed blocks on the west side of the city centre. Another recent highlight on Cologne's bicycle calendar was Cyclodonia, an industry trade fare in March that covered city bikes, mountain bikes, family bikes and, increasingly, e-bikes. Though it doesn't yet have the profile of Munich's Bike Expo or the Eurobike tradeshow, Cyclodonia hosts enough workshops, exhibitions and resources to deepen Cologne's dent on the German bike map.

Online, the city has had an English blog documenting the various rides, alleycats and polo matches around Cologne, from the perspective of a track racer for the RC Adler team who decided to ride to London on a 1980s era Raleigh frame that he'd found via the legendary Sheldon Brown. The velodrome veteran was perhaps lured to the

touring life with inspiration from Brian McCulloch, who rode his fixed gear the other direction, some 840 miles from Bristol to Berlin in 8 days.

## Munich

Munich, which hosts the industry focal point Bike Expo, has been a powerhouse in bike polo for the past several years. The city claimed the 3rd place team at the 2009 European championships and at the 2008 Hardcourt Showdown in Zurich the Münchener, took second and fourth (with a Berlin squad in third). The city hosted its own Bicyculture Festival last year, and this 27th of June will mark the 2nd Bavarian Super Sprints races.

## Frankfurt

Just by dint of proximity, while living in Germany I did most of my urban riding in Frankfurt, the airport-fueled business centre on the banks of the Main River. Though traditionally known as a center of commerce and finance, the city (known colloquially as Mainhattan for its plethora of skyscrapers, a rarity in Europe) is seeing the fruits of a long bender on cultural rejuvenation, and the bike has played a roll there too. On the administrative level the city has a fairly extensive network of bike lanes on major thoroughways and dedicated loops in some industrial areas, not to mention the GrünGürtel, a 75km greenbelt that takes bikers on a circular route around the entire city.

On the hipper side of things, Frankfurt just played host to the German qualifiers for the 2010 World Hardcourt Bike Polo Championship, taking place in-country in August. The prelims and finals to determine the national team for 2010 were hosted by the local cadre known as Frankfurt's Finest Messengers, and the local malleeteers of Team Polosynthese will be the only northern influence on the team. The rest of the German contingent will consist of three outfits from Karlsruhe and a squad from Munich.

Off the court, Critical Mass enjoys a cult following in Frankfurt as well, with two regular monthly rides that can number just half a dozen participants in the dead of winter but swell to several hundred when the skies clear to give glimpses of the surrounding Taunus mountains and the skyline ironically punctuated by the Europaturm, the towering space needle with its rings back-lit in the once lofty Team Telekom pink.

The core of traffic corkers from the Frankfurt's Finest Messengers and its Critical Mass group lent a strong presence to *Umsatteln* (meaning "dismount"), a massive two-wheeled protest ride cum rolling carnival that demanded "a person-friendly future" for the city, organized in response to the annual Frankfurt Auto Show.



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## Hamburg and Beyond

Oddly off the radar to most American travelers seeking excitement in Germany, Hamburg is a sprawling hub of culture that many consider a legitimate rival to the nation's capital. The city hasn't flourished in competition like teams dispatched from Munich, but Hamburg has spawned an urban bike scene of its own. Like many other cycling communities, the city has a shop at its core, and up north that shop is Suicycle. Catering to track bikes and the singlespeed culture at large, the shop stocks parts and gear to go along with a few major-brand resells and their own handcrafted Columbus Zona steel frames.

Also headquartered in Hamburg is Bergamont, who I remembered from their mid-90s mountain bike frames and who now sell a broad line of bikes for trail and tree-lined streets alike. Their lugged-steel single speed frame might make for a nice cruise along the Elbe (or maybe a sneak ride through the St. Pauli Elbe Tunnel that runs under the river not far from Suicycle), but down south in the city of Freiburg, Kai Bendixen would not be impressed with your bike. "Apart from aesthetic concerns," he states in an FAQ primer on his handiwork, "there is not much speaking to the merits of a lugged frame." For the past few years Bendixen has been TIG-welding steel bikes under his own name, using the same mix-and-match recipe with tubing from Columbus, Dedacciai, Reynolds and True Temper. Along with an early apprenticeship, Bendixen's own artistry is improved by inspecting the works of other builders, which he does when doing repairs on steel frames of other provenance so that he "can learn from the mistakes of others."

Not far from Bendixen is Fixie Inc., an online retailer and frame mark from Karlsruhe that has become one of the country's largest clearinghouses for urban bike culture. Launched in 2003 with a "velosophy" informed by "an irrepressible drive to combine unique design with innovative engineering," the company currently lists six bikes in their lineup. The majority of their wares are drawn from an assortment of "aircraft steel" tubing, with a Reynolds 953 racing tubeshet thrown into the mix. As their name implies, the company found their footing in the decade's burgeoning fixed gear renaissance, and half of their fleet rolls on symmetrically dished wheels, but where the Karlsruhe outfit really nails it is with their cyclocross setup, the Pure Blood, a frame built with an "Interchangeable Dropout System" that allows ambitious multi-class racers to switch between geared and single speed setups on the same bike.

Southerners in Germany must play bike polo like Southerners in America play the moonshine jug because

like Munich to the East, Karlsruhe has been gripped by hardcourt fever and routinely sends teams to tournaments throughout Europe. Fixie Inc. has naturally established inroads with the polo community, and to that end they've begun producing Mo's Mallet, their polo sledge.

Back up north, Hase Bikes make a wickedly-engineered three-wheeled recumbent from their home near Dortmund. Say what you will about recumbents, but anyone with the experience can attest to the potential of the Hase trikes to completely change the demographics and the pace (and height) of bike traffic. The *Fixed City* crew also points to RetroVelo in Leipzig as a tastemaker for their "retrofashioned city bikes" and noting the PONYVELO, their BMX-inspired cyclocross bike.

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By the way, that Bike Polo Championship happening at the end of summer? That goes down back in Berlin, which sure enough does seem to find its way into the center of things. The city also hosted the European Cycle Messenger Championships last year (where *Fixed City* was filmed), a return to roots for an ECMC that kicked off in the formerly divided city back in 1993. The Berlin Bike Messenger Association hosted the festivities, boasting of "the most exciting racecourse ever seen at an international event" and backing it up with a 1km+ length looping course at the famed Tempelhof Airport terminal. A stunning backdrop for bike racing, at the time of its completion the Tempelhof building was an icon of Nazi Germany's swelling ambition in the early 1940s; last spring it welcomed a new breed of brash warrior to "a once-off, staggering, spine-tingling, nerve-jangling, goose-pimpling" course that included steep ups and downs, hairpin curves and tunnels.

But before the top mallets are awarded for Polo, Berlin will be hosting yet another event, the 2010 DMFK German Bike Messenger Championships at the fabled Potsdam in July. Beyond the racecourses the ECMC and DMFK, like most urban cycling events, make a point of scheduling activities for the untrained competitor; the skids, trackstands, backward circles, foot-downs elephant-legged ballet moves of best trick throwdowns. The things that, given a positive have-fun outlook, anyone with a bike can do. And perhaps that is why bikes are doing so well in this new century in Germany, a nation that spawned and succumbed to chaos in the previous 100 years. The bicycle... *le velo... das Fahrrad...* so simple and peaceful. With the bike in hand all one needs is the Earth, and that is a basic treatise that everyone in Germany can understand, from Berlin to Leipzig, Dresden, Münster, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe and Munich.





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# San Jose Fixed

Photos by Annamarie Cabarloc





Left: San Jose Fixed holds Thursday night sprints on a weekly basis during the summer. It gives riders a chance to socialize, and it's an ideal excuse to barbeque. Meghan Luoma and Jared Mendiola met through San Jose Fixed and are now getting married. Behind them Darin Wade is about to get a push from Kevin Slavin.

Top: Four year old Aidan Mao at Thursday night sprints.

Bottom: Carl Dolatre at a monthly San Jose Fixed trick competition, which draws people from all over the Bay Area.

# San Jose Fixed

Photos by Annamarie Cabarloc



Above: Tina Tru (aka Tinaballs) at one of the San Jose Fixed alleycat races. San Jose Fixed and iMinusD throw alleycats every couple of months for the “Relationship” series. Riders from all over come to attend this race and trick competition, and compete for year-end prizes.

Left: J.P. Flores sitting on the street, enjoying his breakfast after a museum ride. San Jose Fixed holds social rides on certain days so they can meet, get to know one another, share personal interests and get everyone on their bikes.

Right: Reggie Ballasteros in front of iMinusD, a regular spot for riders to tarck and hang out.

Below: Dan Freudenblum tarcking in front of iMinusD.



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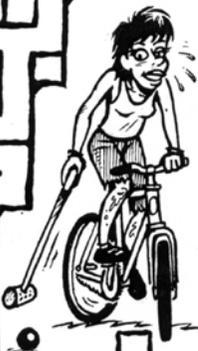
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# THE SKY is FALLING

By Stephen Cummings

Life is good. I have not worked full time in over four years, my life consists of stringing gigs together that fit into my schedule as a full time amateur bike racer. I have done everything from cleaning out a hoarder's house to wearing a hard hat like the people in the Honey Bunches of Oats commercial and handing out free samples. I pull it all off by living cheaply and having the ability to procure things (like 400 boxes of Honey Bunches of Oats) at cheap prices or free. I think most people plan on walking away from their jobs someday, but few can actually go through with it. I was forced to walk away.

On my last day of full time work, I had been earning a living as a bike messenger for about five years. The romance of the job was all but gone. The work had become routine. When each call was given, I had a good chance of correctly guessing where it was going once the pick up was announced. I could tell the dispatcher who signed for most packages without looking at the manifest. I had all of the daily, weekly and monthly scheduled runs memorized. My dispatcher always described people in my position as, "being on the verge." On the verge of what? Quitting? Killing a rude motorist? Fighting the boss? Freaking out on a client? Yes, all of them. I ended each day by turning off

my radio and riding home, rather than being dismissed or waiting until there were no calls coming in.

As a messenger, spring is the best time of the year. Most things about spring make a messenger happy for having put up with the frozen hell that is winter. In a deep freeze, Pittsburgh's three rivers can be frozen solid. The city can be gray with ice and snow. Everything seems quieter. There are no pedestrians. The city itself seems to slow down when the temperature dips below 20°F for a week straight. As spring rolls in, messengers get to wear less clothing, worry less about changing flat tires outside in freezing temperatures, and business starts to pick up as tax season hits. Early spring marks the first days where bike commuters don't have to ride home in the dark as well.

My last day was like any other sunny spring day. I was picking up a routine package, at a routine client. I got to cross the river to the north side of town, which meant more riding, and more money for me. The afternoon temperature had risen to the point where I took off my under layer shirt, exposing my pale arms for one of the first times of the year. Days like this made me appreciate my job, my health, and the fact that I was alive.

I rolled up to the office building like I had done probably a thousand times before. The building has a three story parking garage attached to it, each level adjoining the three story office building. The building itself has a hill next to it, and there are entrances to the different levels of the garage off of the hill. To get to the second story, I had to ride past the entrance to the first story and turn in before the top of the hill that leads to the third level.

I was working on autopilot. The upcoming hour looked to be so routine that one of the only variables was going to be what kind of snacks the company was going to have in their candy tray. I rode through the parking garage, dismounted my bike, and leaned it against the same wall that it had leaned against so many times before. At this point in time Pittsburgh was a safe place for bikes. I routinely went weeks without actually locking my bike. This building was as safe as it got, so I rode up, dismounted a few feet from the door and started walking.

At the time most guys wore helmets at work. Occasionally somebody would be spotted cruising around without, but it was pretty standard to have one. I liked the vibe a lot of the seasoned messengers gave. One common saying was, "Don't be a hero." Basically this was saying, "It is not worth dying to deliver a zip disk to a design firm for a deadline." Previously in the year, a veteran messenger was hit by a speeding car, and almost paid the ultimate price for it. After that, it seemed most guys at work were especially cautious.

So I dismount my bike and am walking the five steps to the door.

Then I am on the ground with people around me shouting.

The first thing that I remember hearing was, "Don't move him, his neck could be broken." Fuck. I remember hearing my dispatcher over the radio talking to somebody, and the sound of an ambulance in the background. I guess I was out for a bit of time. The clients were some of the people huddled around me. There were three of them in the office, they were always kind to us. I

felt embarrassed, but still had no idea how I ended up on the ground, what knocked me out, or how badly I was injured.

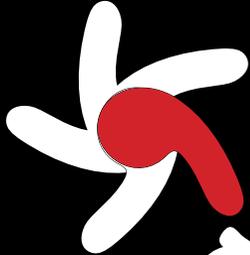
The paramedics quickly arrived. At this point I realized that I must have been unconscious long enough for somebody to call 911, and for them to be there already. I figured this to be at least a few minutes. As the EMTs stabilized me to a backboard, they asked questions that I had heard on TV before. "Can you wiggle your toes? Can you move your feet..." I fought back the tears that were building up in my eyes. I didn't want to cry in front of this crowd of people. The tears started rolling down my cheeks anyway. "Yes. Yes." I knew these were the good answers to these questions.

Then I heard somebody telling the paramedics the reason I was laying there on the ground wearing a messenger bag, bike shoes, and a bike helmet. "Somebody dropped that brick from the third story right onto his head." Fuck.

It turns out that the maintenance man for the building was moving a wall from the third story parking garage to the second. Apparently there was a giant pile of Belgian block above me that I obviously could not see from below. As the story goes, the man looked over the railing, saw nobody there, picked up a block and dropped it over the edge. In the time that he was bending over to pick up the roughly cubic foot sized block I quietly rode up on my bike and hopped off. He released the brick without ever even seeing or hearing me. Common sense says that maybe he should have put up caution tape, or a sign, or used a wheelbarrow. I had seen the maintenance man practically daily for the previous five years, and had always thought he was kind of rude. He never acknowledged me or had ever been remotely cordial. Now he dropped a fucking brick on my head.

So I am taking my first ambulance ride, with my body strapped to a backboard, including my forehead. The paramedics are asking me questions about insurance, allergies, next of kin, etc. I was so overwhelmed that I could barely answer any of

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them. Lucky for me, Pittsburgh has a ton of hospitals, and quite a few trauma centers. Straight to the CAT-scan / MRI machine thing for me, then to a room.

The bullshit begins. The social worker for the hospital comes to speak with me about a few things. First she feels that I should be on anti-anxiety medicine. This just makes me angry. The sky just fell on my head and she thinks I might have an anxiety issue? I would compare having something fall from the sky onto your head to stepping out of bed in the morning and not having the ground there. I'd imagine this would make most people anxious. I have a raging headache and am hoping for some ibuprofen, which she can't provide.

She then tells me that my company's workers compensation insurance has expired. This is a big deal. She said it had expired nine months prior. This happened to be right after the one guy at work got horribly injured. A doctor came in to inform me that I was ok. He didn't seem to care about the cuts that were exposed through my torn shirt, from where the brick rolled down my body. He did not provide me with anything for my raging headache. He just told me that the social worker would be back in a few minutes with discharge papers. Within an hour I went from thinking that I might be paralyzed to being rushed out of the hospital.

The social worker then told me that I had no insurance and would have to cover all costs myself. If I had been permanently injured, it would have been on me. My boss was committing a felony, and it seemed that nobody really cared. This was all obviously going to be a very big issue. This also meant that the hospital was not going to give me anything for my headache.

I went home from the hospital and sat on the couch taking in everything that had just happened. I was about to owe the hospital four or five thousand dollars. I had a moral decision to make as to whether I should turn my employer in for not having valid workers compensation insurance. I went to "base" a few days later to pick up

my bike and my helmet, and tell them that I was going to take some time off.

The brick hit my head and split and dented my helmet. I had not seen the damage until I picked it up that day. I would have been dead if I was not wearing it, or if I had taken it off when I got to the building. The brick then hit my shoulder and tore my shirt, and gave me what can only be described as road rash. I must have only been a foot away from my bike when it hit me, because it then hit my front wheel and completely folded it.

"Some time off" turned into never going to work as a messenger again. Because I liked one of the three owners of the company, I never told on them. They switched all of the couriers over to independent contractors, meaning that they were responsible for their own insurance. I still sometimes wonder what would have happened if the injury had been worse, or if it had been somebody not wearing a helmet. A few of the couriers would often take their helmets off before going into a building. I guess that I am kind of glad that it was me that the sky fell on.

I was also fortunate enough to have a lawyer as a good friend. He made sure that my bills were paid by my former employer. I could have pretended that I was hurt and tried to get a giant chunk of change from the building's insurance, but instead took the high road and went on to pursue road racing more seriously. My lawyer friend would constantly tell me that the insurance company could Google me, find my name in race results a few weeks after the incident, and contend that I was barely hurt. I kept it honest, got a few grand and never looked back. 

*Stephen Cummings is a frequent contributor and lives but a block from Urban Velo HQ, currently competing as a Cat 1 road and International Elite cyclocross racer and in PRO level mountain bike events as his road schedule allows. See his other contributions; Riding is My Religion in Urban Velo #7, The Million Mile Man — Danny Chew in Urban Velo #10 and Crit Racing in Urban Velo #14.*

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**BE AFRAID**

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**BY DAVID HOFFMAN**

### **THE INVASION BEGINS**

Green transportation is the new marketing Mecca, and it looks as though times are good for vendors and manufacturers of alternative transportation. To be sure, there has been a recent (relatively) surge in bikes here in the US that have car-like abilities such as cargo bikes and Dutch-style child transporters. It's a great time to expand your horizons and try a new bike that will help you to reduce your dependence on oil—either foreign or domestic. This has no doubt been brought even more sharply into focus with the explosion of, sinking and resulting environmental disaster of the BP Deep Water Horizon. This tragedy on the seas will be capitalized on by folks who want to sell you something that isn't petroleum powered. It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...

# **INVASION BIKE LANE**



**BIKE LANES ARE NOW  
BEING USED BY MORE  
THAN JUST BIKES**

**OF THE  
SNATCHERS**



Global Electric Motorcars, LLC, a Daimler Chrysler company headquartered in Fargo, N.D., is a manufacturer of neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs) such as this e4 model.



In addition to the newer, lighter, more powerful and cheaper electric bikes that are hitting the market and electric and gas-powered scooters, a new breed of light around town type of electric vehicle is being adopted by eco-conscious urban and suburbanites. All of these vehicles are ending up in the bike lanes—the catch-all for vehicles that planners and regulators deem to be too slow or too fragile to mix it up with larger, faster, heavier traffic. Of course, that’s why we ride in the bike lanes when they’re available. But should we be forced to mix it up with all of these Johnny-Come-Lately invaders?

Are these bike lane snatchers really the enemy? No, they’re not. The truth is that we’re all in this together. Many people who choose to use alternative transportation do so because it’s better for the environment, cheaper, and less impersonal—when you’re traveling at human speed you can really enjoy the world that you live in. Nevertheless, problems do arise when we start forcing all of these vehicles to use the same space.

## NEIGHBORHOOD ELECTRIC VEHICLES (NEVs) AND BIKE LANES

For the past century, the US transportation system has been largely designed to accommodate quick movement of motor vehicles, and up until the 1970’s bicyclists were forced to share the road with all types of traffic in most circumstances. While retaining a right to the roadway is important for bicyclists, transportation engineers have spent the past several decades working on ways to safely retrofit existing roads and provide designs for new roads so that bicyclists have the safest space for sharing the road with motor vehicles. Some of the engineering has resulted in the creation of bike lanes (“Class II” facilities in

places like California)—especially along roads where there is a relatively high flow of and/or fast moving traffic.

Bike lanes are treated as *protected* space for non-motorized vehicles. Mopeds, motor scooters, and small motorcycles are not allowed to use bike lanes in most places, because of safety issues associated with speed and mass. These small, motorized vehicles use the same road space as motor vehicles. Additionally, new electric mopeds and scooters are becoming commercially available; these vehicles are also to use the same portions of the roadway as motor vehicles. Typically, this category of small, motorized vehicles are not allowed on freeways or expressways, as they cannot safely move at the same speed as motor vehicles.

A new type of small electric vehicle has become popular recently, most frequently seen rolling along in retirement communities and/or planned communities in the suburbs—the Neighborhood Electric Vehicle, or “NEV”. These new vehicles are federally restricted to travel no more than 25 miles per hour, and are relatively light compared to traditional motor vehicles. NEVs can seat up to four people, and as they are gaining in popularity, so is the desire to treat them as a special class of vehicle.

Just like bicyclists, NEV users want to feel safe on the road. Some planners and transportation advocates have begun to implement community-wide plans for NEVs, including newer, wider travel lanes to be shared with bicycles. In California several pilot programs have been put in place to test these plans and new facilities. For example, in Lincoln, CA (just north of Sacramento) new 7-foot shared-use bike lanes have been installed. Bicyclists and NEVs share this space.

As of this writing, there are a handful of communities in California that are currently in, or about to embark on



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a pilot program for NEV use. Some of these communities place NEVs in shared-use bike lanes. To date, none of these communities have completed their pilot programs. Some mid-point reports are already out, and others are due to the state legislature early next year. Additionally, there are several more communities that want to institute their own pilot program.

## THE LINCOLN PILOT COMMUNITY

As noted above, Lincoln, CA is in the middle of a pilot program. A mid-point report has been submitted to the legislature. The *Neighborhood Electric Vehicle Transportation Plan Evaluation* notes that during the pilot program, no accidents or injuries were reported. This is, in fact, good news. However, it is probable that the pilot community in Lincoln does not represent all of the challenges that NEVs will face in urban environments elsewhere within California. It is important to note that I'm not attacking the City of Lincoln, or their plan. I reviewed the report, and formed the following opinions.

The number of cyclists using the roads in Lincoln was significantly lower than in urban areas, and thus is not a good sample of the true numbers of cyclists that a NEV may encounter during travel. Several years ago, Davis, CA experimented with placing NEVs in a shared lane with bikes. After a short time, Davis abandoned the experiment concluding that it was a bad idea.

A survey of bicyclists from the area indicated that they were not at all comfortable sharing the NEV/bike lanes with NEVs. Several indicated that they encountered "close calls" where the driver of the NEV failed to see the bicyclist ahead of them slowing, and as a result had to swerve out of the shared use lane.

## BUT REALLY, WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Regular readers of the advocacy articles know that I'm big on a concept called "Complete Streets" (see Urban Velo #1). In short, a complete street is one that has been designed to be used by everyone—cars, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit, etc. A good rule of thumb is to ask the question, "Would I feel comfortable putting my 8-year old child or 80-year old grandparent on this road if they weren't in a car?" If the answer is "yes", then you've probably got a complete street. Transportation advocates have lately taken to calling this the 8/80 rule. Complete streets are typically slower and more accommodating for all modes of traffic.

As a long time complete streets advocate, I personally feel that:

- *With a width of nearly five feet, NEVs cannot safely pass a bicyclist in a bike lane, as bike lanes are four feet where there is no parallel parking, and five feet where there is parallel parking.*

- *NEVs are too wide for bike lanes (55 inches on average for NEVs vs 48 inches on average for bike lanes).*

- *NEVs should share the same road space as other motorized vehicles—which is the same practice used by mopeds and motor scooters. As the maximum speed of a NEV is limited to 25 mph, they should simply be treated as any other slow moving traffic, and occupy the right-most lane on any multi-lane road with speed limits of 45 mph or less.*

- *If NEV drivers act as curb huggers rather than as operators of vehicles, then they will have the same problems faced by bicyclists, with right hooks, left crosses, turning left, driveways, etc. They should simply travel in the center of the roadway, and pull over when there are too many vehicles behind them.*

- *In a collision with a bicyclist, an NEV is much faster and heavier, so the increased risk is significant. As such NEVs should not share space in a bike lane or a shared NEV/bike lane.*

- *If operators of NEVs can drive in bike lanes, they may believe that they can also drive on shared-use paths (this has already been reported in Beaufort County, South Carolina). This creates additional conflicts as these pathways are almost always only to be used by bicyclists and pedestrians. In Marin County, CA, as in many places, electric bicycles are explicitly prohibited from use on multi-use pathways.*

- *Studies have shown that wider streets create conditions that encourage speeding. In addition, excess pavement reduces the soil surface area in a community, which is important for drainage and other environment consideration. As such, I am not in favor of separated NEV lanes—which I believe is a poor choice for land use when NEVs can simply share the regular motorized travel lane.*

As newer and more diverse forms of green transportation become available, splitting up the public space for each type of transportation is not sustainable. Complete Streets help to provide a shared space that can be used by everyone. Slower, human scale streets will help users to be and feel safer. NEVs and other alternative transportation vehicles will help us to slow our streets, reduce our national energy needs, and provide options for people who do not want to, or cannot bike. But putting them in the same dedicated space as bicycles so that automotive culture may continue to flourish is not the answer.



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# 9

# Tips for Running a Successful Bike Event

By Brad Quartuccio & Jeff Guerrero

While we've been to countless awesome races, rides, festivals, and other bike events, we've unfortunately been to more than our share of shitty events too. In addition to making magazines, we've each run our share of less-than-official bike events in the past and at risk of sounding conceited, none of them have totally sucked. We think it's fair to assume that most anyone promoting a bike event is doing so with the intention of providing a fun and safe experience for everyone involved, but some people just have more enthusiasm than experience. So it's with the purest of intentions that we present the following tips for putting on your own successful bike event. It's up to you and your local laws to determine if your gathering needs any sorts of permits, insurance or other formalities.



## 1 Promote The Damn Thing

This is probably the most obvious suggestion, but perhaps the most vital. And it's the one aspect where people tend to fail most miserably. If nobody comes to the event, the event will most likely suck. Additionally, you want to make sure the right people come to your event. A Halloween alley-cat is more fun if the outgoing members of the local bike coop show up in full costume. A bike polo tournament is more memorable if the loudmouths from across the state show up and heckle. And a trick contest just isn't going to be exciting unless you can get some of the major players to make the trip to your city to strut their stuff.

So how do you do this? First, you have to be on the scene. Believe it or not, it's even more important than the internet. Word of mouth hype is key for local events. Get the word out to all the blogs, websites, message boards and social networking sites that you can without turning it into spam. Facebook is not the only place to promote your event, so if you're not in the know, ask people for suggestions. You have to actively promote the event to your friends—don't take for granted that they'll just show up. Make flyers, put them in every shop and bike hangout, and ask people to help spread the word. Paper still works, and shows a certain commitment to things.

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## 2 Do Your Homework

A few hours of planning and preparation can save you hours of trouble on the day of the event. Not only do you want to consider logistics related to your event you want to be aware of things going on in the outside world that might affect your plans. Are you trying to run an alleycat on St. Patrick's Day in Chicago? Maybe there's a better weekend when there won't be a gigantic parade, massive traffic jams and hordes of drunken people in green infiltrating the city.

While you can neither predict nor control the weather, it's never a bad idea to consider the possibilities. Will a severe thunderstorm wipe out your polo tournament plans? And if dozens of people come to town for an outdoor event that isn't happening, can you at least entertain them until the storm passes?

Again, you can't plan for every possible situation, but a successful event promoter is going to have their bases covered, and a Plan B.

## 3 Communication is Key

There's probably nothing that makes people more upset than a lack of communication. Thankfully, most communication failures are easily avoided by simply putting forth an effort to do so. This includes not taking it for granted that people will read printed materials or listen to verbal commands. As the saying goes, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink." But it pays to consider the lowest common denominator, and make critical information as readily available as possible. An element of mystery is desirable, but participants are more likely to show up if they have some idea about the event. Alleycats can be a few miles around town full of face painting or all day affairs leaving even the best winded—as a racer it's good to know what you're getting into.

## 4 Location, Location, Location

An event's location can be as crucial as any other factor, and for a multitude of reasons. Contrary to the popular saying, familiarity breeds good attendance, not contempt. Do all of your local alleycats start at the same place? If so, it's for a good reason. And the fact that people are used to going there makes it a logical choice for your event, too. Even if the event itself can go off in foul weather, people will need somewhere to congregate at the start/end. Sometimes you can't avoid hosting an event in a bad location. It just so happens that some of the best places to hold under the radar events are in less than savory neighborhoods. When this is the case, it's a good idea to make your out of town guests aware of their surroundings, and if possible make adjustments and accommodations accordingly. For example, if bikes are likely to get stolen, remind people to use their locks. Even though it's technically not your fault, you don't want everyone's event recap to include, "and then Joey Bagadonuts' bike disappeared." If you are expecting out of town visitors few things can make their stay better than a good map and a listing of grocery stores, restaurants, bike shops and even local's contact information.



## 5 Volunteers

Few successful events happen without a small army of people pitching in behind the scenes. While doing it yourself is truly the only way to be sure it is done right, including others will spread out the work and bring enthusiasm about the event to that many more people. In some cases creative checkpoint planning can all but eliminate the need for more than a few night-of volunteers, but other events leave no way around volunteers actually on-call during the event. Keeping them dry and safe at their appointed spots is key, with some system to call them in from far off posts. It should go without saying, but you shouldn't have anything going on at checkpoints that could land someone in jail. Expect your volunteers to bail or be late, build some stand-ins and extra time into things and avoid fighting with your friends.

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## 6 Prizes

People like going home with something, but don't overburden yourself with trying to make your race the one with custom hipflasks or some other ridiculousness unless you really know what you're getting into. Spoke cards for everyone is a minimal upfront cost to absorb, and prizes can be found through local shops and direct company contact. Don't be overly ambitious in prize requests, and be sure to include an answer to the sponsor's ultimate question, "What's in it for me?" How many people are you expecting? Do you have a website that the sponsors are going to get additional exposure through? Following up after the event with thanks and photos makes your request the next time around that much easier to fill.



## 7 Bread & Water

While most event promoters tend to concern themselves with things like spoke cards, t-shirts and prizes, the most important thing people go home with is the memory of a good time. And while prizes and memorabilia are great additions to a well-run event, nothing makes people happier than taking care of their basic needs.

If your event is going to last more than a few hours, especially if it starts in the afternoon and runs into the night, it's almost essential to either provide food and water, or make it readily available. The same goes for restrooms and shelter.

Providing water is not only a courtesy, it can be a safety factor. And we all know how thirsty cyclists can get. Which brings us to our next tip...



## 8 The Ups and Downs of Booze

Let's not beat around the bush—a lot of urban cycling events are largely an excuse to host an afterparty. And there's really nothing wrong with that. But whenever you bring alcohol into an event, you have liability issues to contend with. Especially if you, the promoter, are providing the alcohol. As the organizer it's probably in everyone's best interest if you save your drinking until after the party, in the hotel lobby.

Even if your event is BYOB, you should still consider the legal ramifications and do your best to make sure nobody's going to spend the night in jail. This isn't really as difficult a task as it may seem, though you may have to awkwardly enforce underagers to take it elsewhere. For everyone else, you just need to consider the location and whether it's legal to drink there. In the case of many public spaces like parks and other outdoor gathering spots, it's customary to "bend" the laws a little, but while beer is wonderful it's not so good as to deal with the police over.

## 9 Safety First, Not Last

While it's true that we, as event promoters, have to operate under the assumption that all participants in an urban cycling event are consenting adults acting under their own volition and responsible for their own well being, it's still our responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure everyone's safety. There's nothing worse than having the memory of your event marred by the stories of someone getting sent to the hospital (or worse).

It's difficult, if not impossible, to make everyone wear a helmet and obey traffic laws, but you can at least recommend it. You can, however, typically choose locations that avoid dangerous roads and neighborhoods. And you can exercise some personal responsibility for those who can't manage to do so for themselves—by telling them when to say when.



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# Bicycle High Fives

By John Cameron

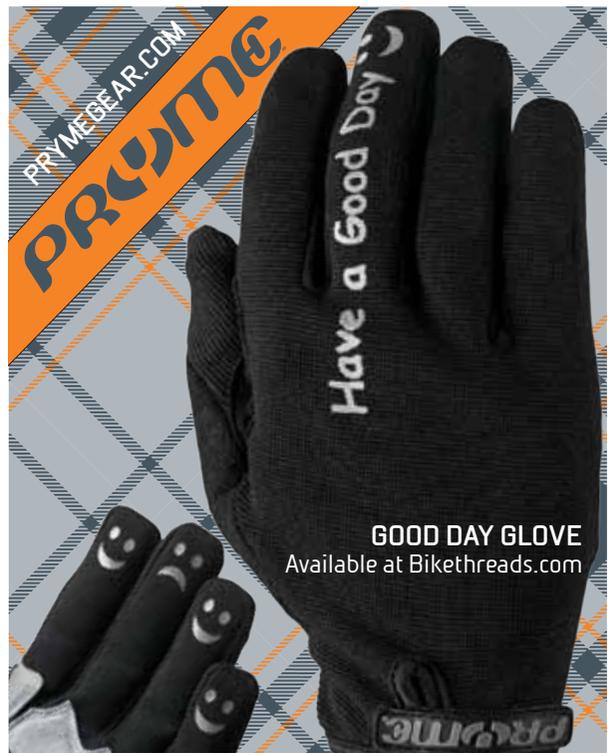
Evan glanced over and gave me a simple "yo" as we mashed our bikes across town. We had never met before but were instantly connected through a bond we had as injury defying, weather chancing, traffic dancing city cyclists. "What's happenin'?" I forced the reply between pedal strokes. We introduced ourselves, reached over at speed and clinked our fists as if to make a toast.

In 2009 Philadelphia made steps to make the city more bike-able and conducive to human power. Two major east-west roads were retrofitted with bike lanes. One car lane in each direction was converted to a bike only path. The tree-lined streets of Pine (eastbound) and Spruce (westbound) allow enough room for what has become the east-west bicycle highway. It is the fastest and easiest way to bike from one end to the other and the efforts made by the city are greatly appreciated.

Slightly to the north of the bike highway, however, through the sky scraping center of the city lies a maze of moving cars, curbs, trolleys, holes, bigger holes and steam-

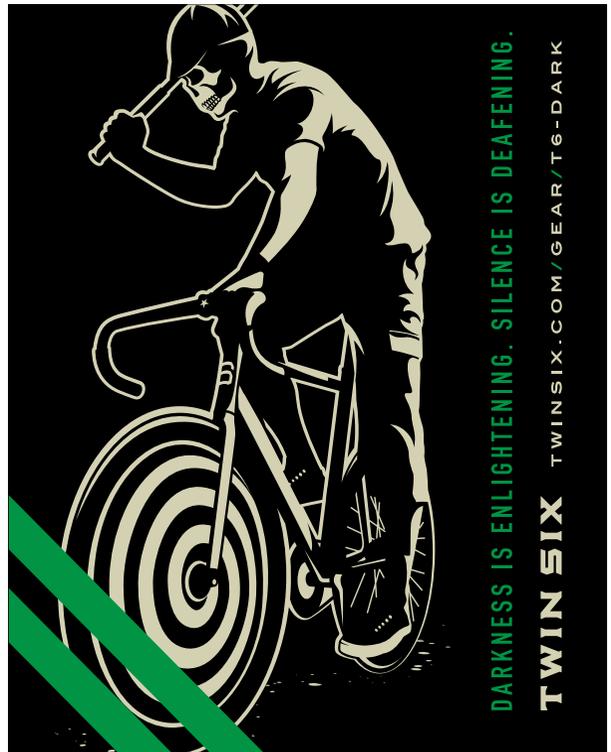
ing chaos are Chestnut street and Walnut street. They are the "king lines" for city cyclists and are equivalent to black terrain in the eyes of a skier. Lines that bikers travel are subject to the yawing and waning of traffic and a moving puzzle of route deciphering as a biker unlocks the path of least resistance within the cluttered road. The east-west routes of Chestnut and Walnut are far different than the tree lined counterparts to the south but change a ride across town from a task into a game.

It was somewhere on Walnut that Evan and I found ourselves riding side-by-side-by-back-by-front. Suddenly another cyclist was in the mix as I anticipated clogs between taxis and timed cars to beat them through lights. We swooped through, carving hard to make the tight turn through the cars. The turns a cyclist makes are tightened when a car pulls closer to the vehicle in from of them while stopped. A swoop between cars can quickly change into a series of hard right angle turns as a biker negotiates the cleanest line.



Evan and I carried on a conversation through it all while occasionally pausing as our paths digressed too far for conversation. We talked through short gasps about how we both enjoy biking, especially when it became such a mind trick and a total concentration puzzle. We squeezed through more cars and people who stepped out so close to us that our elbows brushed their coats. "Hey," Evan yelled "do you ever try to high-five people when they reach out to hail a cab?" The open hand of someone stretched out as they leaned over the curb to catch the attention of a cabbie is always too much to resist as I bike by. The unexpected high fives usually are received with mixed reaction but I've always wondered if other cyclists are as attempted as I am at the sight. "Every time!" I yelled. 

*John now writes and rides from West Philadelphia where he continues to put off getting a real job.*



# Headset & Fork Installation

By Brad Quartuccio

**H**eadsets are fairly simple—a bearing on either side of the headtube that the fork rotates within—but installation and removal require dedicated tools. Many find headset and fork installation one of the first obstacles to overcome when building up a new frameset. Starting with a blank canvas, this article covers the basics of how to install a headset and fork, using the most common 1 1/8" threadless example with conventional press-fit bearing cups.

Before you begin, you'll want to make sure you have all of the parts, and give them a quick inspection to understand how it all fits together. Inspect the headtube of the frame and base of the fork crown for excess paint or burrs, and otherwise to make sure the surfaces are clean. The importance of "facing" the headtube—grinding the opposite faces of the headtube absolutely parallel with a special facing tool—is real but debatable in most cases, few shops do it for every frame in the door and even fewer home mechanics have access to the proper tools. Besides common shop tools, you'll at least need access to a headset cup press, with both shop and consumer models available and a number of DIY versions out there. I'd suggest sticking to the purpose built models or borrowing the tools through a local collective before risking damage with a homemade press.



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**1** Loosely assemble the headset cups and press, being mindful in your selection of tool inserts to pick one that does not press directly on the bearing surface, or on the bearings themselves of integrated cartridge models. With the cups aligned properly and sitting straight, slowly start pressing the cups into the frame while making sure they enter the frame straight. If alignment is a problem it may help to push the cups in one at a time. It will take some effort to push the cups into the frame—if they slide in too easily or feel like they don't want to fit at all it is best to consult a shop for advice. Make sure the cups are seated absolutely flush with the frame.



**2** Install the crown bearing race on the fork. Another tight fit, there are tools available to make this process easy but many find that a section of pipe, an old stem or a hammer and punch can do the job. Whatever the tool of choice, be careful not to mar the surface the bearing rests on. Press the crown race flush.



**3** With a new fork you'll most likely need to trim the steerer tube. Assemble the frame/fork/headset and add the spacers and stem you plan on using on the bike. I always err on the side of too much steerer tube on new builds, trimming them and removing extra spacers later if needed. The old adage "Measure twice, cut once" applies here, as you can't make a too-short steerer any longer. Mark the steerer at the top of the stem.

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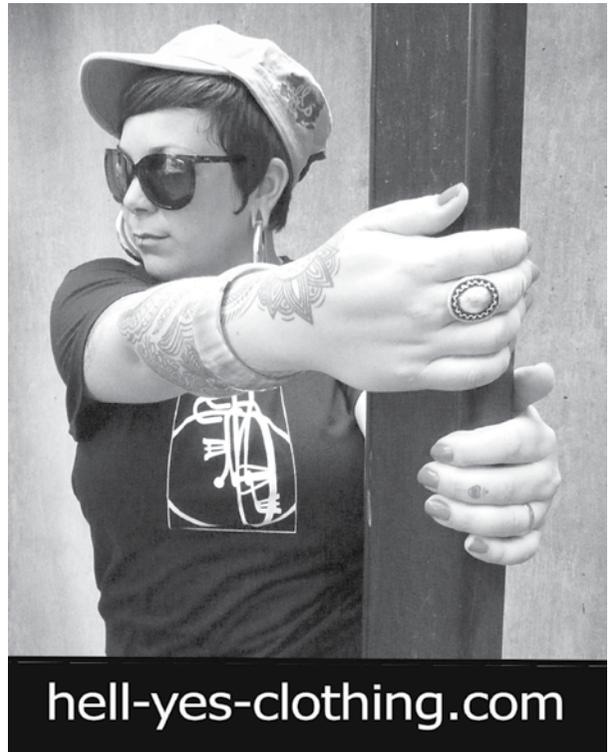
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**4** Using a sharp hacksaw blade, cut the steerer 3-5mm below the line marked by the top of the stem to account for the space needed for proper bearing adjustment. Before making the cut it is worth holding the steerer up to the frame one last time to make sure the length still makes sense. Cut it straight and clean any burrs with a sanding block or flat file. A pipe-cutter can be used and ensures a straight cut but may require more post cut clean-up.



**5** Installing the starnut of a threadless headset requires nothing more than a hammer and a straight hit, though there are tools and guides to make the process easy and the alignment straight each and every time. The trick without a guide is getting the first row of “stars” to bite into the inside of the steerer at the same time on one shot, and then slowly tapping the starnut in straight. If the first row of teeth grabs at the same time but the starnut is not perfectly straight, I’ve found that you can straighten it using a hammer and punch to push on one side or the other before engaging the second set of teeth and sealing your fate. You’ll want the starnut to sit about 15mm below the top of the steerer.

**6** Reassemble the fork/frame/headset with your chosen spacers and stem, this time finishing with the top cap threaded into the starnut. Adjust the bearing via the tension on the top cap before checking stem to fork alignment and tightening the stem clamp bolts.

There is a wide variety of headsets available beyond the design shown here. Besides the common 1” threaded and 1 1/8” threadless designs (shown), there are other steerer sizes and threading combinations out there, along with newer models with integrated bearing cups and even newer tapered steerer tube designs. When in doubt, consult a shop mechanic. 



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# Home Shop Strategy

By Brad Quartuccio



It looks daunting at first, but while there is a certainly a buy-in factor to having a completely outfitted home shop, over time the purchases pay for themselves through both direct hourly labor costs and the unquantifiable satisfaction of working on your own equipment. Beyond the basics (hammer, hacksaw, screwdrivers, etc) there are a handful of tools that are essential for basic repairs and adjustments. Purchasing what you can at the hardware store and buying one small tool per shop visit is one way to make the whole process that much less painful financially. Save the pricier purchases for opportune times of either cash on hand or a deal you can't refuse and

sooner than later you'll find that you have a pretty stocked home shop.

Even more so than in other aspects of life, you get what you pay for when it comes to tools. Money spent on quality tools is rarely wasted, whereas *cheap* tools not only wear out faster but in some cases can actually damage the parts you're trying to repair. The sky is the limit on both tool cost and depth of repairs—there is no shame in having to visit the shop from time to time for repairs as there is ultimately little reason to have the most expensive bike tools around at home, ex. thread taps and frame alignment gauges.

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## Indispensible

The following tools are what is necessary for the majority of repairs. As you start off, only buy the ones that fit your bike—there is no need for a cassette removal tool if you only ride fixed, and no need for headset wrenches if all of your bikes have threadless headsets. You should be able to outfit the applicable below tools for a single bike for \$150 or less.

- Allen Keys
- Metric Open-end Wrenches
- Chaintool
- Spoke Wrenches
- Cable Cutters
- Cone Wrenches
- Crank Puller
- Bottom Bracket Removal Tool
- Chainwhip and Lockring Tool
- Cassette/Freewheel Removal Tool
- Headset Wrenches
- Pedal Wrench
- Floor Pump
- Tire Levers
- Waterproof Marine Grease
- Chain Lube



## Next level

Beyond filling in the gaps above as your bikes change, and buying the other non-bicycle specific tools you're after (bench grinder, pipe cutter etc.) there is no getting around spending some real money on the below items. While in this second category of “next level” tools, a repair stand should be one of the first things to purchase if you are serious about maintaining your bike. They can be pricey, but they pay immediate dividends when wrenching and double as a secure place to store your bike when not in use. Keep your eye out at bike swaps and Craigslist, sometimes repair stands come up for well below market value.

- Repair Stand
- Truing Stand
- Headset Installation/Removal Tools
- Torque Wrench
- Digital Scale 

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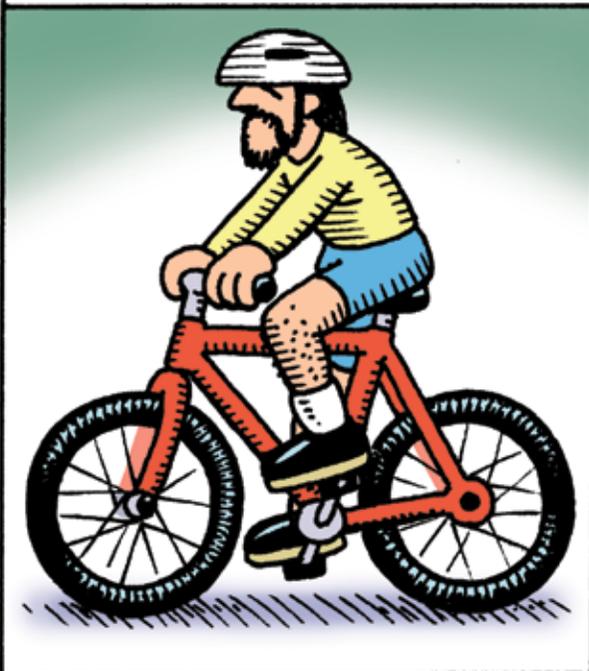
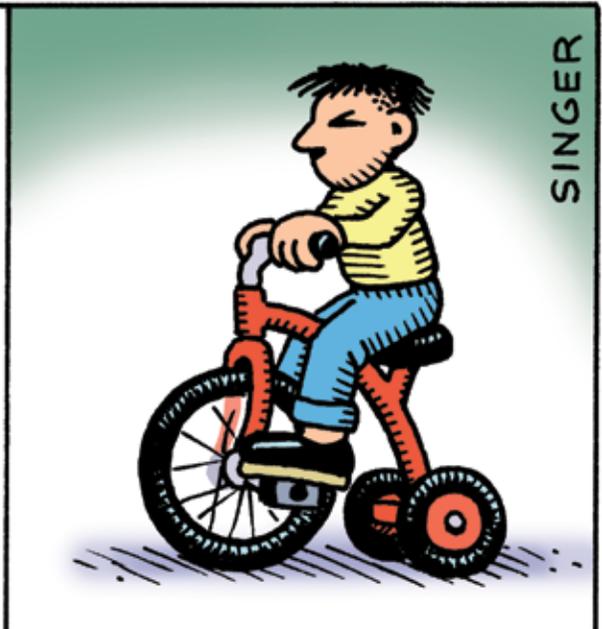
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