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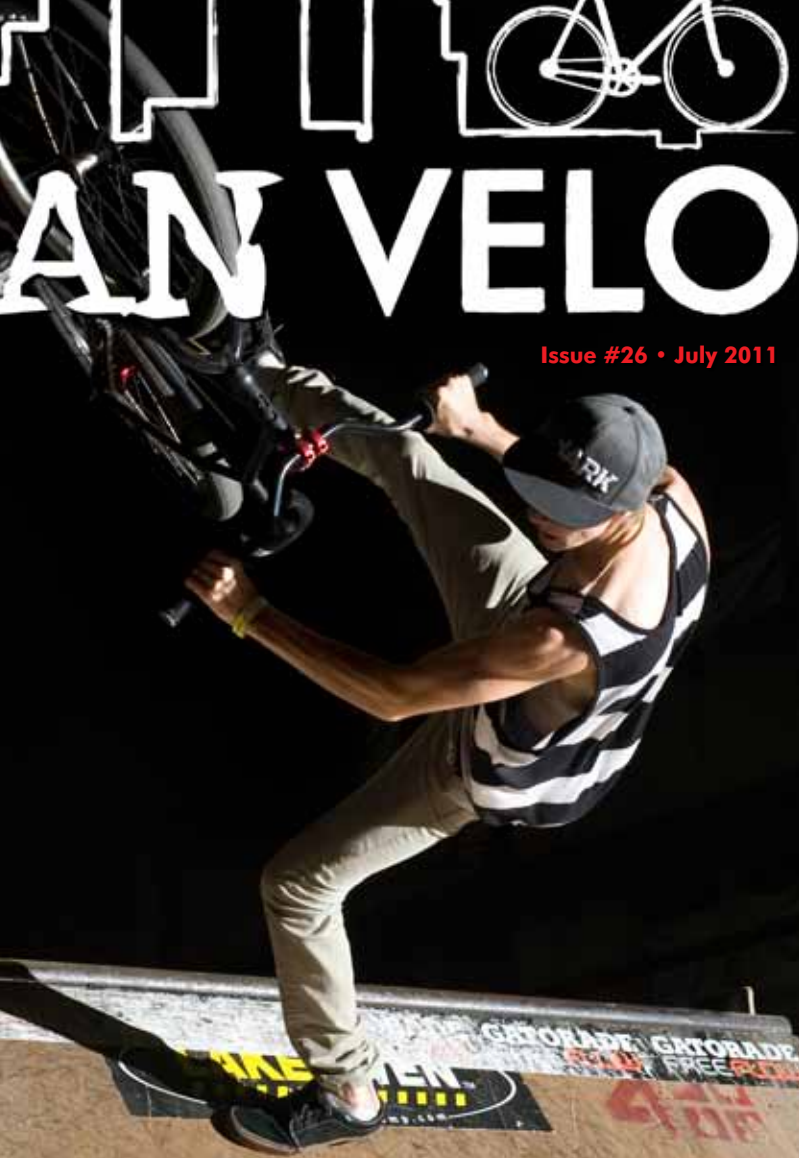


# URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #26 • July 2011

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MAYHEM  
PHOTO GALLERY**



**GRAVEL ROAD RACING IN MINNESOTA** PAGE 48

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# URBAN VELO

Issue #26 July 2011



Brad Quartuccio

Editor

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Jeff Guerrero

Publisher

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**On the cover:** Matt Reyes does a tweaked footplant on the bank at Midwest Mayhem. Photo by Kevin O'Meara. See more of Kevn's photos from Midwest Mayhem on page 56.

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**Co-conspirators:** Bruce Carver, Alex Hansen, Samer Fouad, John Harris, Leyna Krow, Lenny Maiorani, Jose Sandoval, Jeffrey Pepito, Ed Glazar, Aaron Thomas Smith, Roger Lootine, Lacar Musgrove, Robin Walker and Andy Singer

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Urban Velo, PO Box 9040, Pittsburgh, PA 15224

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

Urban Velo is published bi-monthly. That's six times per year, on the odd months. Issues are available for free download as they become available. Print copies are available online and at select bicycle retailers and coffee shops.

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Each spring, New Yorkers head to The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine for an all-inclusive ceremony that includes the anointing of bicycles and the blessing of urban cycling.



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Not only are women comfortable entering a bike shop, many of them are dedicated employees and talented mechanics. Sometimes they even own the place!



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*Aaron Thomas Smith*

It's been said that riding on gravel is like learning to ride a bike all over again. Over and over. Every year, scores of racers in rural Minnesota gather for another 100 mile lesson.

Contents: Ben Schultz of Machine Politics and Joe Burge of the Beaver Boys joust in the final game to decide the Midwestern Bike Polo Championships 9 in Bloomington IN. Photo by Bruce Carver, [www.brucecarverphoto.com](http://www.brucecarverphoto.com)

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# Editor's Statement


By Brad Quartuccio



Drying out by the fire after a wet day of Allegheny National Forest bike camping with old friends. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

I can still remember the first day that I rode on two wheels. It was in a neighbor's driveway, and for whatever reason I had decided that particular summer day was the day to remove the training wheels from my department store, 1980's bmx-like bike. With help from childhood friends that I've long since lost contact with, the training wheels came off and I turned circles in the driveway before going home and announcing my achievement to my parents. Amongst my friends at the time I was the last to learn to ride on two wheels, I've never been a particularly gifted athlete. It's crazy to think how influential that single moment has been on my life up until now—I've been seriously in love with bicycles ever since. I can't say I remember much about bicycle riding before that time, but I can't say I remember much about life that didn't involve riding a bicycle since.

For most kids the move to two wheels is just a step towards a move back to four. While I admittedly own a car and put a fair number of miles on it, my life has been shaped by the people I've met and things I've done on a bicycle, not in an automobile.

Each issue reflects at least some part of that story for many of our contributors. Some never stopped riding since they were a kid, others picked it up as an adult, and others still are truly just getting started. We've all come to it from different angles, at different times with a certain fascination with community and machine keeping each of us coming back. Not to mention, lots of fun. If going really fast on two wheels didn't feel so universally good, I doubt many of us would be as obsessed. No matter how serious it gets I try to keep in mind what first got me hooked. 

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



Lately, I can't seem to shake certain negative thoughts from my head. Although I've been riding through "the hood" for 10 years or so, the stories of cyclists getting jumped—and even shot—just a few blocks from my house is a little unsettling.

And while I managed to walk away unscathed the time I got hit by a car, I know that chances are I might not be so lucky next time. I'm constantly reminded of my own mortality as I scan the internet for cycling news. Rarely does a week go by without news of a fatal cycling accident.

The news of 16-year-old Aileen Chen's death in Brooklyn hit me especially hard. As some of you know, I teach art at an after-school program for teens. If one of my students died, on a bike or otherwise, I would be devastated.

And it's not any easier to accept the death of all the bicycle messengers who have died over the years. As Kurt Boone, The Messenger Poet, wrote in *The Last Ride*, "Life is precious for goodness sake."

I was riding home from work the other day with these thoughts in my head when the combination of warm sunshine and a cool breeze managed to remind me that riding a bicycle really is a joyous activity. One that should be savored, and remembered if possible.

And so I started thinking about all the joy that cycling has brought me. From the exhilaration of riding the city streets in London, New York or Chicago to the peaceful bike paths of Santa Cruz. Of the massive descents in Morzine. Of riding above 11,000 feet in Colorado, or along a 1500 foot sheer cliff in Utah. Of bike polo in Kentucky, ridge running in North Carolina and stump jumping in central Florida. Of pulling cactus needles out of my bike shorts in Arizona with a grin. Of dirt roads to the coast in Jamaica. Of surviving 24 hours in the woods in West Virginia. Of riding 40 miles despite a 95° heat wave in Boston, and the sweet reward of a cold beer afterward.

Yeah, bikes have been good to me so far.



Urban Velo issue #26, July 2011. Dead tree print run: 5000 copies. Issue #25 online readership: 55,000+

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## squid - kevin bolger

Iconic NYC messenger Squid Bolger worked with Bern to develop a pro model Brentwood this year. Seven percent of all Squid's Cyclehawk™ helmet sales will go to the New York Bike Messenger Foundation. The NYBMF provides grants to messengers injured while riding. Squid is the first athlete in the history of Bern, skate, snow or bike who has donated his entire signature percentage to a non-profit organization. Respect.

[nybmf.org](http://nybmf.org) [cyclehawknyc.com](http://cyclehawknyc.com)

# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Mike Schademan

**LOCATION:** Bangkok, Thailand

**OCCUPATION:** Touring

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

I left my home in Brooklyn, New York with an old 1980's Fuji racing bike on September 3rd 2009 in an attempt to cycle around the world indefinitely. I'm writing this from Bangkok, Thailand after pedaling nearly 12,000 miles across eight countries and I'm just getting warmed up! I love traveling by bike and could never picture any other means for transportation. By bike you get to really meet people and take time to notice the nuances of a place, not to mention you get to hear things and smell things, which is something that motorists can't say.

Before this trip my favorite activity was crossing into

Manhattan and cycling through insane traffic as fast as humanly possible. Now when I get to a big city like Sydney, San Francisco, Jakarta, etc. there is nothing more fun than shedding my panniers and flying around as if I actually had a purpose or a sense of where I was going.

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

New York City, those who cycle there know why...

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

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Emerson Lehmann

**LOCATION:** São Paulo, Brazil

**OCCUPATION:** Digital Planner

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

São Paulo is the biggest city in Brazil with a population of 10 million people. The city is not bike friendly, in fact it's not pedestrian friendly and is overly designed for cars.

Recently a project started connecting a lot of parks in a "Sunday bike lane" where families can ride and the general culture is changing a little bit.

The whole bicycle culture is soaring in small but vibrant groups, and we have it all—from fixies and bike polo, Critical Mass, people getting to work or using bikes for work, you name it, we have it.

The city got so filled up with cars everywhere that bikes became a very economic, fast and fun alternative to move around, since you cannot get a break from traffic not even on weekends.

I am a commuter myself and I love to ride every time I can. There's another São Paulo for riders. In a car you can only have a framed view of the magnificent urban murals, but on a bike you can appreciate it, and still get to your destination before a driver.

I surely hope for a better structure for all riders, but so far I can live with just a shower at the office.



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FOFFA

# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Bina Bilenky

**LOCATION:** Philadelphia, PA

**OCCUPATION:** Marketing and Events Director

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

I live in the City of Brotherly Love, and I know that it's based on Greek words (Philos = love and adelphos = brother) but I'm still not sure how or why Philly got to be called that. Certainly William Penn couldn't have known that this town would evolve (or should I say devolve?) into one of the most aggressive cities in the nation. From the attitude of motorists to the skinny cobblestone streets, from the random trolley tracks to the no-bikes-allowed tunnel that sends you careening into Kelly Drive, riding in Philly is always an adventure. Am I coming off negative? I don't mean to be. We have a thriving bicycle community with strong advocacy. Bicycle commuting has increased tremendously in recent years and cross-town bike lanes have been added. Bike messengers have always been a common sight. With its universities, arts and culture,

shopping, and history, there's so much to see and do in Philadelphia by bike.

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

Do places with 50,000 people count as a city? I really enjoy riding in Lancaster, PA. What's not to love about the rolling hills, the "clip clop" of horse's hooves and freshly made whoopie pies and root beer? I'm hoping to do some riding in Madison, WI during the next show I'm planning. I keep hearing what an awesome bike town it is!

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

It's always exciting while bordering on scary. And it's a heck of a lot faster than sitting in traffic... for most cyclists anyway. With my speed, or lack of, it's debatable if I'm faster than sitting in traffic.

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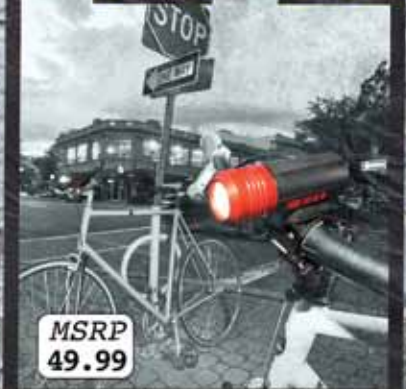
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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Diego Vegetales

**LOCATION:** Barcelona, Spain

**OCCUPATION:** Vegan Food Delivery

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

I live in Barcelona and it's a really good place to ride if you want to enjoy the landscape, you have the sea and the mountains close by.

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

My favorite place is still Barcelona because I live here and the weather is good if you compare it to the northern countries. It is always raining there!

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

Riding my bike makes me feel great when I'm passing through the cars. Hearing angry taxi-drivers yelling at you for silly reasons makes me stronger and faster, they have to wait till the next light turns green and I do whatever I want with my two wheels. I'm free when I ride!

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*Do you love riding in the city?*

*Can you answer a few simple questions and find someone to take your photo?*

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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)*



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Tran Thu Hang

**LOCATION:** Ha Noi, Vietnam

**OCCUPATION:** Freelance Doll Artist

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

I live in Ha Noi. My country's capital is crowded and most people ride motorbikes, so our traffic is dangerous and there are a lot of accidents. However, some streets are very quiet, so I choose them.

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

I don't know... Anywhere that it's quiet and spacious and the main mode of transport is by bicycle.

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

I can move easily in the crowd. Plus it makes me stronger and helps me to relax.

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

I hope that more and more people will begin to ride bicycles in my city (especially for short trips) because it will help reduce pollution and accidents.



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**NAME:** Jason and Kellie Cyr  
**LOCATION:** Tampa, FL  
**OCCUPATION:** Bike Shop Owners

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

We live in downtown Tampa and own a bicycle shop here (City Bike Tampa). Riding here is excellent because the weather is very predictable and there are lots of great places like restaurants, parks and museums to visit on two wheels.

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

Before Tampa it was Boston... anywhere along the Charles River would do, rain or shine.

## Why do you love riding in the city?

What could be more fun than cruising past cars stalled in traffic on a sunny Friday afternoon on your way to share a few post-workday cold ones with other fellow urban cyclists who share the same passion? No stuffy attitudes, just love for the Bay area and leaving the SUVs at home.

Check out [www.citybiketampa.com](http://www.citybiketampa.com)



**NAME:** Fabrizio Cercatore and Andrea Lepore  
**LOCATION:** LaSpezia, Italy and Sacramento, CA  
**OCCUPATION:** Founders of HOT ITALIAN

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

Fabrizio: I am from LaSpezia but live in Sacramento part time. I love riding in Sacramento because the streets are flat and the weather is sunny most of the year.

Andrea: One of my best memories of Italy was riding bikes through LaSpezia—around cars, scooters, pedestrians—but feeling safe and inspired.

## Why do you love riding in the city?

Fabrizio: I like to go out at night with friends and I love riding my bike home at night when the streets are empty and quiet.

Andrea: When I'm riding, there's nothing else I want to be doing.

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**NAME:** Joshua Knoblick and Zoe Baldwin

**LOCATION:** Newark, NJ

**OCCUPATION:** Director of Operations and Board Chair at Brick City Bicycles

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

We live, ride and work in Newark, NJ. During the day, it can be a challenge to fight through aggressive commuter traffic, but that's half the fun! At night, the streets are ours; the city empties out and every lane feels like a bike lane. Night riding in the Brick City is definitely our favorite, whether headed to a black-tie affair or just over to the gallery.

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

We both love NYC—the energy and their bike lane network. The fact that you can ride from the Hudson River front all the way to Brooklyn in a bike lane the whole way is still a little astounding. Toronto is a very close second for Josh, but Zoe prefers trolling for Italian ice around Asbury Park.

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

Interacting with urban environs on a bike is the best way to get to know any city. We feel more connected to a city on a bike than on foot, and 1000 times more than in a car.



Rider: Wizard ★ Photo: Lingo

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Chris Brady  
**LOCATION:** Heber City, UT  
**OCCUPATION:** Aquatics Director

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

I have been living in Heber City, UT for two years now. It's more of a town than a city, really. Heber City is located about 15 minutes from Park City and 40 minutes from Salt Lake City. My small "city" of 9,715 people, at 5,600 feet of elevation and with a 3.5 sq mi area is totally flat. Only Main St. has stoplights and most of the town relies on driver courtesy at all other crossroads because we have very few stop signs too. Drivers are good at yielding to bikes. There are a few of us regular city cyclists here, a small community though. Most of us are avid road and mountain bikers too—Utah has some amazing mountain, road, and trail rides! It is sunny almost all of the time; it rains a little before the snow comes. We can cycle all year round as long as you dress for it.

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

My hometown, Washington DC of course! Washington is super easy to get around—the roads are wide, the city is pretty flat. Amazing sights, shops, bars and restaurants everywhere! DC is a top pick visit for anyone wanting a bike friendly, flavorful urban adventure.

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

City riding is fast and easy! Finding bike parking is a cinch; I always get a spot in front. I go where and when I want, no need to worry about traffic congestion, one-ways, stoplights or road signs.



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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Tanaya Widigda

**LOCATION:** Jakarta, Indonesia

**OCCUPATION:** Event Organizer

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

I live in Jakarta, Indonesia. In west Jakarta, to be precise. The traffic here is very crowded. And it's different in every part of Jakarta. In the west especially, cars and motorcycles are everywhere and traffic jams every morning until 10 pm. Everybody spends hours in the street just to reach their destination. Riding a bicycle here in Jakarta is the best way to kill the traffic jam.

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

Definitely Jakarta. Where the streets are the jungle.

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

The thrills. In Jakarta street jungle law, motorcycles

beat cars, bicycles and even pedestrians on the sidewalk. It's crazy! They're everywhere and very rude. I ride a track bike and brakeless in Jakarta, I love riding my bike here, it gives me the most thrills I have ever had because when riding in Jakarta you never know what will happen in front of you. The motorcycle, the busses, the Bajajs (the orange three wheel vehicle) only God knows when will they make a turn.

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

Ride your bike wise and ride safe with helmets and maybe a brake.

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# i ♥ riding in the city



**NAME:** Andhika Rizky

**LOCATION:** Jakarta, Indonesia

**OCCUPATION:** Bicycle Store Manager, Mechanic and Graphic Designer

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

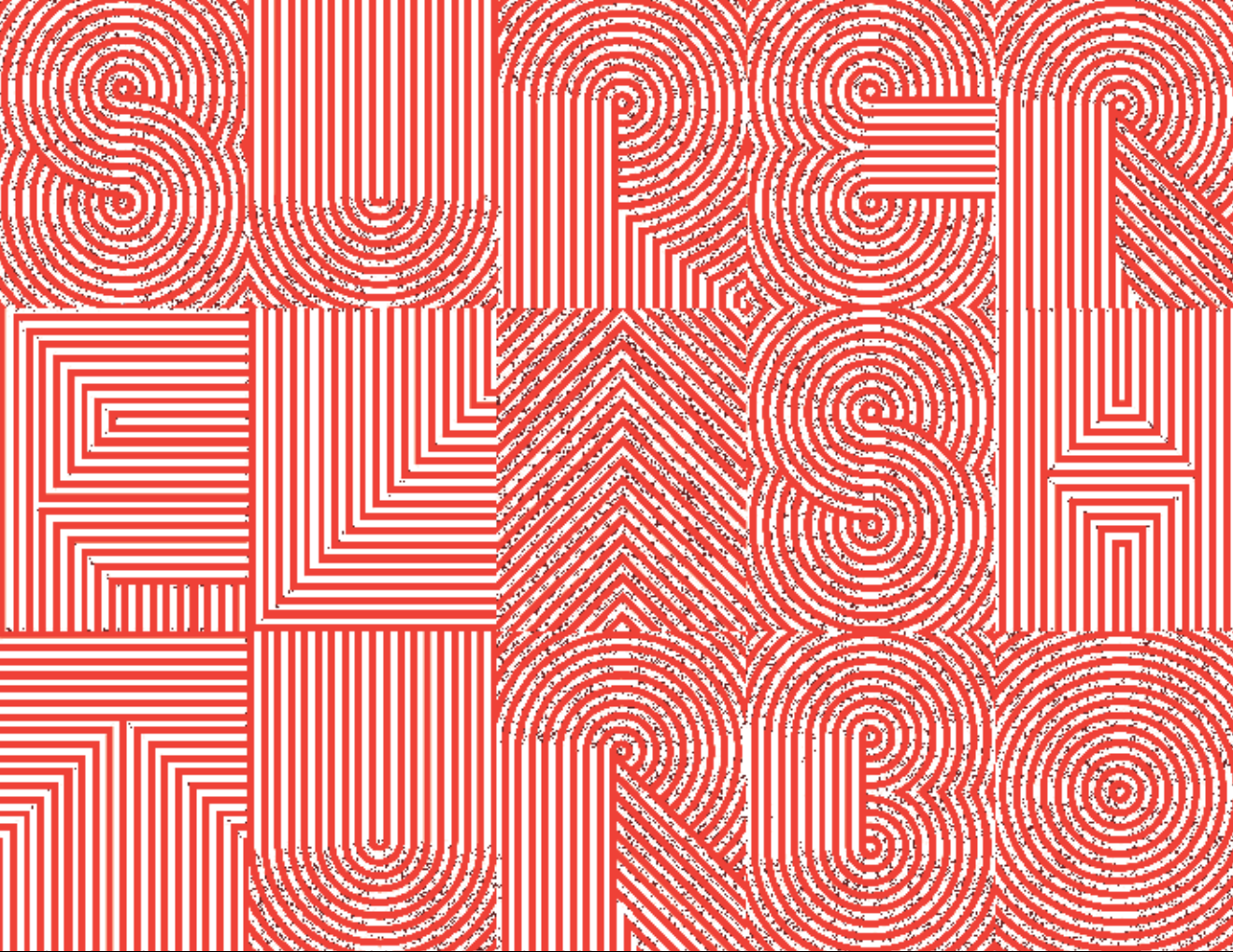
Riding in Jakarta is like riding in an industrial area where the black smoke and pollution are the main air we breathe. All the cars, busses and diesel engines spew just like an octopus with the black ink.

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

I haven't found the best city to ride yet but Bali seems fun.

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

Because I live in Jakarta and I got all my friends ride here too, so we have fun riding together. The best time to ride in Jakarta is at the peak hour when the traffic jams are the worst.



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# BLESSING *of the* BIKES

Words and photos by John Harris



***“We bless what is good and what you do is good.”***

With these simple words, The Reverend Canon Thomas Miller began services for the 13th annual Blessing of the Bikes at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine in Manhattan’s Morningside Heights.

The cathedral, known for its dedication to civil rights, all-night Ravi Shankar ragas, animal blessings and the first female cathedral canon in the history of Christianity, also sets aside one Saturday morning each spring to anoint bikes and bless the idea of urban cycling. This year’s service was brief, at times humorous, at times solemn and punctuated with the harmony of hundreds of ringing bike bells rising through the massive cathedral space. The event bestowed a brief but sincere moment of community and reflection upon our loose and roving alliance, before we split in different directions for breakfast or a Saturday ride.



Blessing founder and organizer Glen Goldstein characterizes the welcome he received when he first approached the pastor with the idea for a bike blessing: “You have a home here.” And over the years, the service has grown to include as many as 500 cyclists and is one of the few events for which the cathedral’s giant bronze doors have opened. Glen’s brain-child actually came from a newspaper article his mom had mailed him about motorcyclists holding a similar event. He summarizes the blessings conception as, “Cool things happen if you ask,” and tells how the bishop, who would jog the cathedral on rainy days, suggested they bring the bikes right up the front stairs and inside the main cathedral for the anointment. Finally, some respect!

Tourists of every flag wander and mingle during the ceremony and a choir was rehearsing in the chapel, but for the moment, the mighty Cathedral is given over to urban biking and the risks and rewards that come with it. Bike bells ring again and serve as hosanna for this highly non-denominational, non-traditional service. Actually, if you’re patient, you can ride around no-handed inside the largest church building in the U.S.

Saturday April 30th was not particularly warm, but it was also the day before the Five Boro Bike Tour and the unofficial beginning of Bike Month, so a good crowd was expected. Around 9 am, the “tribes” began to gather on the cathedral steps. Baskets of croissants and danishes were passed around. Parents with kids in their childseats, tattooed fixies, and lots of lycra filled the steps by 9:30, about 300 helmeted pilgrims

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in all. The gathering was upbeat with many friends catching up after a long winter. All ages and biking styles were represented, but the crowd definitely skewed middle class, racing and graying.

The blessing itself was offered with the simplicity and respect befitting the informal yet dedicated crowd. The canon read from Psalms, petitioning God for protection and then walked through the people asperging our bikes (and us) with Holy Water as cameras and cell phones clicked away. After the blessing, Leah Todd of the Ghost Bike Project read the names of New York cyclists killed in traffic this past year and, with bagpipes playing, a rider-less bike was rolled from the back of the cathedral to the alter. In the morning's most somber moment, the canon read in memory of those too young and beautiful to have left this world through the violence of an avoidable traffic death: "Go forth journeying souls on your travels from this world, in the name of God who is guiding you home." More tinkling bells, this time echoing with grief.

Goldstein concluded the event by urging us to retain our togetherness throughout the year and wished us well. Off we went, a short procession around the cathedral and out the backdoor toward the streets, chatting and laughing, feeling safer, feeling better for having even made the event. "Maybe not totally protected, but definitely cared for." A perfect way to start Bike Month in the long-awaited spring of New York City, 2011. 

For more information, check out [www.theblessingofthebikes.com](http://www.theblessingofthebikes.com)



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SS-L124W

## VEGA 1W Headlight



- Pass German STVZO TA23 20 Lux Laws
- Low battery indicator / IC control (Low Dropout, Constant-Current IC) / Rainproof / Tool free / No EMI (Electro-Magnetic Interference)
- Quick release bracket (ø22.2, ø25.4, ø31.8mm), LR03 (AAA) alkaline battery x 4pcs,
- Colors: Black / Silver / Silver lamp case + black body.

SL325



# A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE BIKE SHOP

BY LEYNA KROW



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I spent last summer working at one of the largest bike shops in Seattle. On the first day of my training, my manager sat me and two other new hires down to watch a video on sales and customer service. The video showed two shop workers—one male, one female—acting out different situations one might encounter when trying to sell a bicycle. Then, after each scene, they would review with one another the technique they had just implemented. In one such scene, the male employee was working with a female customer who admitted she knew little about bikes and asked if maybe a female staff person could help her instead, as she'd feel more comfortable working with another woman. The employee agreed. Afterward, he asked his colleague to explain why the customer didn't want to work with him. She told him, "When a woman goes into a bike shop, she feels the same way you would if you went into a fabric store—pretty out of place."

When I heard the woman say this, I thought it totally absurd and totally backwards. And I laughed out loud. But I quickly realized no one else in the room was laughing with me.

I share this story for two reasons. First, because it illustrates a misconception that is so wrong, it's laughable. To suggest that women feel the same way about riding bikes that men feel about sewing plays to the most base kind of gender stereotyping—that bikes are boy's toys and therefore something women don't have knowledge of. This is to say nothing of the equally offensive implication that a man has no place choosing fabrics and stitching himself up a dapper outfit.

In recent years, cycling has become an incredibly popular sport for women, so much so that here in the Pacific Northwest, it seems like of every two people I see on a bike, one is female. There are women's cycling clubs all across the country and women's racing teams at numerous universities. Basically, there are a lot of women out there who take riding seriously. As one such woman, I know way more about bikes than I do about fabric.

Another reason I share this story is that as funny and wrong-headed as the employee in the video's fabric store comparison is, there's a little bit of sideways truth to it. Unfortunately many female cyclists, including those knowledgeable about the sport and its equipment, do feel uncomfortable in bike shops. Even though cycling is as much a woman's sport as it is a man's, the bike shop is still very much a man's world.



**Name:** Jen Featheringill  
**City:** Portland, OR  
**Shop Name:** Bike Central  
**Experience:** 10+ years

After college I moved to Portland from Birmingham AL. One of my roommates was a bike messenger and I wanted to ride too so I had my old mountain bike shipped to me. I used it to commute around town and then got a job as a bike messenger for three years. I did some crits around the same time but really liked track racing. I started working part-time at the shop and eventually went full-time and quit being a messenger. Making the transition from messenger to bike shop was easy. I started going faster when I stopped being a messenger.

I think that having a female working behind the counter is good because customers, men and women, are less intimidated by women than men. Sometimes girls just want another girl to show them a cycling outfit.

There is an element of macho attitude in bike shops, but we don't see it here much because it's a smaller shop. Customers will sometimes call and ask for the service manager when they hear my voice. People that come in the shop that don't know me will gravitate to my coworker Dean for help—it's okay, I don't let it bother me. If something is beyond my ability or knowledge, I have no problem letting him handle it.

PHOTO BY JOSE SANDOVAL



**Name:** Hannah Drake  
**City:** Denver, CO  
**Shop:** Salvagetti Bicycle Workshop  
**Experience:** 4+ years

Gender does play a role with certain customers. I have had men not let me help them because as a woman, how could I possibly know more than them about bikes? This has been a rare occurrence and seems to be almost exclusively limited to older men. I have also run into a few women who feel like they need a man to help them and have trouble accepting the fact that I am perfectly capable, if not more knowledgeable, about certain bike related things.

I think that being friendly, knowledgeable, and having confidence in your abilities can go a long way. I have been able to make friends with most male coworkers and then work as a team, each of us working with each other's strengths. As a woman you just have to work a little bit harder at first to get past the stereotypes, and once you do everything runs smoothly. I have never let being a woman deter me from being a valuable part of my bike shop.

Women bring a new element to the shop that men cannot. How many women do you know that have a man pick their clothing out for them? So, why would you want a male bike shop employee to pick out all the women cycling clothing? Bike shops with women employees are better suited to meet the needs of other women and this will help grow the female cycling market. The more people we can get to fall in love with riding bikes the better.

PHOTO BY LENNY MAIORANI

When I was hired at the shop in Seattle, I became one of two girls out of a sales team of fifteen. At the time, I thought myself pretty bike-savvy. I was riding everyday and doing most of my own repairs. But my male colleagues were playing in a different league. These guys were building their own wheel sets for fun. They were competitive polo players and cyclocross racers. They took pride in passing one another on the road into work.

It quickly became clear that I'd been hired to correct an imbalance. Were I a man, my resume would have never passed muster.

I never felt like the guys at the shop treated me with a lack of respect because I was a woman. But I did feel they treated me with a lack of respect because I was so far behind them in terms of bike experience. Admitting ignorance about something that in all honesty a bike shop employee should know, inevitably earned me eye-rolls and snarky remarks. Often being the only woman in the room compounded my feelings of incompetence and inadequacy. Even though my gender likely had nothing to do with the way I was received—in fact, it may very well have saved me from worse treatment—it did have something to do with the way I regarded my own work performance. It's impossible not to feel like a representative of your gender when you're the only member present. And I felt like I was doing a crappy job of proving that girls do have a place in the shop.

Eventually I caught up. I never reached the level of expertise of my male colleagues, but I leaned enough to get by and made a few friends on the sales floor. Still, the



**Name: Katlyn Hershman**  
**City: New York, NY**  
**Shop: Bike Works NYC**  
**Experience: 4 years**

I think that a “macho” attitude is in most environments, it’s really not just subject to bike shops. I come from a background in metal work and machining where a lot of that attitude is present. I suppose I don’t really waste my time in dwelling over it. When I come across that type of personality, I realize it is mostly coming from a territorial place.

I am just grateful to work at a bicycle shop where everyone is pretty honest and genuine about their work and interactions with people. In the end, it’s just a bicycle. There’s no reason to be pretentious about knowing how it functions. Maintaining your bike is a learnable skill and there shouldn’t be anyone in any shop making you uncomfortable enough that you wouldn’t want to acquire that information.

All in all, I know our regular customers in the shop and all of them treat me with the utmost respect and gratitude. There are instances that are a little strange to me though. For instance, people automatically assume you aren’t a mechanic since you are female. This happens a lot over the phone when people call for advice but sometimes you do get the rare occasion where it happens in person. I’m pretty forgiving about it—I just correct them and say I can help.

PHOTO BY ED GLAZAR

**Name: Annamarie Cabarloc**  
**City San Jose, CA**  
**Shop: iMiNUSD**  
**Experience: 2+ years**

Ninety percent of the customers that enter our store are guys. Approaching new customers is always hilarious to me because their reactions are usually total surprise that a girl works here, that I actually know what I’m talking about, and that along with my fiancé I own the shop.

What guy wouldn’t want to talk to a girl out of a shop full of guys? It doesn’t bother me at all how people come in here and are surprised to see a girl working at iMiNUSD. It takes a little bit more coaxing on my part to earn their respect or for them to even approach me because this industry is saturated with male riders, especially the fixed gear scene, but I’ve noticed more and more ladies are coming in and showing interest in the sport. This is when it really helps that I’m here because they don’t feel intimidated and can ask all the questions they want.

Everyone who works at iMiNUSD are good guys, good friends, with good hearts, and when I don’t know how to do something or if I can’t answer a question they help rather than discourage me. The guys always tell me that they love that I’m here because with a shop full of testosterone, it’s nice to have a hint of estrogen in the air.

PHOTO BY JEFFREY PEPITO





**Name:** Amanda Sundvor  
**City:** Portland, OR  
**Shop:** 21st Ave Bicycles  
**Experience:** 4 years

I prefer working on bikes, I'm not much of a salesperson. I like to get dirty. I got into this in my twenties, kind of late. A friend of mine gave me a bike, I never had a bike as a kid. I got instantly obsessed and have never stopped. I started working for a Kozy's Cyclery in Chicago before moving to Portland. They were hiring for a bike builder. I was honest with them and told them I didn't know how to do stuff on bikes but I knew what a derailleur was. They were like, "Cool, you know what a derailleur is!" and hired me. I think it helped that I was girl, and they were willing to help me learn. I built twenty bikes a day for a while before becoming a mechanic. I just knew I wanted to be a bike mechanic even before I started working on bikes.

I think there was a lot more macho attitude in Chicago. I'd see it everyday I worked out there, not so much in Portland. When guys would come for help and speak to me they'd act like they knew what they were talking about, especially when they came in with their girlfriends. There is a big difference between the two cities.

PHOTO BY JOSE SANDOVAL

experience was something of a wake up call for me. Before I was hired, I'd certainly given at least passing consideration to gender politics in the cycling world. But I'd never really thought about the ways in which the experience of female customers in bike shops is linked to the presence of female shop staff, and how that impacts to way shops hire and train their employees.

For many women, no matter how comfortable they are on a bike, a shop with an all male staff might not be the most comfortable environment. Those male employees can be the nicest, most helpful guys on Earth, but they're still going to look like a roomful of bros at first glance.

Of course, this isn't a fair judgment. But gender stereotyping is a two-way street. Just as male shop workers often still hold onto false assumptions about female customers, so too do female customers hold false assumptions about male shop workers. As a result, many women worry that they won't be taken seriously at a bike shop staffed entirely by men.

To have women on staff is an easy way for a shop to dispel the image of the No Girls Club. And so the token girl at the register or on the sales floor has become a staple at many shops. This isn't to say that all female shop workers have only been hired as some part of bike industry affirmative action. There's no shortage of women who are knowledgeable and excited about bikes working in the retail side of the industry. I think it is important to acknowledge that these women are often playing a dual role in shops—both the job they were hired for and the job of girl-ambassador, proving to other female cyclists that the shop is a welcoming place for women.

This puts a certain amount of unwanted pressure on female shop employees, but ultimately I think it's a good thing. Instead of fighting tooth and nail for the right to work alongside men as mechanics, sales persons, etc., as women have had to do in so many arenas, the doors to the bike shop are being opened for us. That doesn't mean it's always easy for those who choose to go inside. Misogyny and gender-based misconceptions still thrive in many bike shops. For women who are up for the challenge, it's a golden opportunity.



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RIDER: TAMARA

# ALMANZO 100 GRAVEL ROAD RACING IN MINNESOTA

Words and Images by Aaron Thomas Smith

**T**here's something to be said for a gravel road. They are simple yet different, a departure from the safe confines of asphalt and concrete that most of us cut our teeth on. It's a visceral experience. No longer will you simply glide along at speed—momentum and balance are in a constant battle between you, the bike and the scattered matter beneath. It awakens a part of you not felt since you first started to ride.

Riding on gravel is learning to ride the bike again. Over and over.

Chris Skogen, founder and operator of the Almanzo 100 has been taken by this experience. So much so, that he's created what may be the gravel racing experience. Accessible to anyone with a bike and desire (there is no entry fee) you simply send in your post card come Janu-

ary to register. The event betrays it's simple entry. The roads, climbs, views and twisted routes will leave you wondering what you've got yourself into more than once. You'll never feel regret, it's far too beautiful to allow for that.

Set in Spring Valley, MN it's out of the way even for us Minneapolis locals. A small town whos most frequented business could be it's A&W Rootbeer, it has taken the Almanzo in with open arms. The roads surrounding Spring Valley are a maze of mostly gravel. They wind their way through farmland and the surrounding small townships in meandering trails established more by the farmers who first settled here than a cubicle jockey at the Minnesotan Department of Transportation.

Perfect.







We've sent in our postcards, trained through a horrendous spring, and waited patiently. Finally, we've made it. All of the 450+ starters are standing, shivering in the rain and now are singing happy birthday to Skogen's son. A tradition from years past, it helps calm the group and establish a sense of camaraderie. I've arrived with three teammates who've lined up in their rain jackets and knee warmers at the front of the group. The rain, which has thoroughly soaked the ground from storms moving in the evening before, continues to come down softly. The temperature and windchill will be the worst factor of the day. Most seem woefully ill prepared, myself included. As we say in Minnesota—*uffda*.

We start out and the front group takes off. I allow myself to slip back into the pack and settle in. Finishing today will be a challenge enough, no need to push it. My road tires sink into the wet slop and even though we're only four miles in I'm caked from head to toe. My glasses are of no use anymore. I look around expecting to see depression, broken spirits—but there are none. Grin and bear it, my companions' body language demands, and so I do the same. Once you look up, it's hard not to want to continue. The farmland and forests the route cuts through are gorgeous in their own humble way. The local "wild-life" although doesn't think much of the long chain of cyclists passing by, most of the cows take a quick glance and then get back to chewing their grasses. I can't imagine that the trucks passing by think much more of us.

The first major climb approaches and it's breaking wills left and right. Some are trudging up on the right side while others grind up with the occasional slip of the rear wheel. Up the bluff the road winds, groups gathered at varied heights. Some for a quick break, others a bite to eat. I manage to make it up entirely in the saddle, but I can tell I've burned a few major matches by doing so. At the top I stop and meet up with a group who will be dubbed the "Pugsley Brigade." Astride their fat tired winter rigs they speed on top of the wet slop while others sink lower into it. With them blocking the wind and their jovial spirits we make quick work and get motoring. We pass a gentleman riding an old restored three speed and sporting a fine vest/knickers/shirt and tie ensemble. Later, he'll come in somewhere in the top ten. I'm certain I did not see him loosen that tie of his either. I have nothing but the utmost respect for that fellow.

Eventually the bearded, fat tired train rumbles by my teammates at the side of the road. Having gone up with the front group they've now found themselves sidelined with a flat. Joy is a word I have a hard time using to describe my emotions—this was far better than joy. Forget trust falls, spend ten plus hours in wet limestone gravel on two wheels and you'll learn who you can trust fast. An Oreo or two are shared. At this point, an Oreo is the most wonderful thing in the world and I share them with my teammates as a conquering hero might divvy up his newly acquired lands. The flat fixed, we start to fly and soon we're thirty miles in. I push the pace but it proves too much. An opportunity for photos and I'm off the bike letting them press on. Another Oreo, but now I'm out. Bitter sweetness takes hold in a way I've never known. I savor every last morsel. I don't realize it at the time, but I'm already way past bonk and into unknown food deprivation territory. Distracted by the taste of gravel and the wet rain having soaked every inch of me I would soon pay for this mistake.

Photos taken, I run into two other friendly faces and press on. The next ten miles are arduous work. Where once we were chatty, the conversation

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*Scrambler*



**Aaron Smith: How did the Almanzo 100 get started?**

Chris Skogen: There was a group of us in Rochester that were riding kind of regularly, doing a couple of local events around the area. A friend of ours moved to Mankato to attend school and I figured we should ride over and if we were going to ride over we should invite people. If we invite people we should race and if we race, we should race on gravel because it would be a lot harder and so it was born. [May] 2007 was the first one. Twenty people signed up, thirteen showed up and four finished.

**AS: Started in 2007 and then?**

CS: Did it again [in 2008] and 65 people registered in the second year, that's when the Ragnarok started up. The pulse was starting to come about, just kind of word of mouth. Jeremy Kershaw came down to the race in 2009, he was from Duluth. He went back and started up the Heck of the North.

**AS: And then that became the All Gravel Race Series (AGRS)?**

CS: [The AGRS] came out of my desire to kind of unify these things. They're happening in the same way, they're all free, they're all gravel and they're all about 100 miles. It made sense to me to try and tie

focused on the absurdity of our situation, now we are silent. Faces caked with mud and pain grimace through every pedal stroke. Still, every hill is a race won and every decent as thrilling as anything you'd find in the Alps. The rain, for all its soaked horribleness, actually increases the traction and allows us to zip down into the valleys. A worthy reward for the arduous climbs.

One descent goes down into a quick 180 at the bottom leading up a soul shattering hill. With no momentum, you must start at the bottom with nothing and work your way up. Many are walking, few are riding and on the side there appears to be a truck. As I bike up their cheering and jeering distracts my two friends and myself and we find ourselves in the care of the 29nSINGL crew. These dedicated hard men have made themselves a beer stop and graciously offer up a cold one. Usually I'm not one for beer during centuries, but I make an exception and take a swig. Most likely my best decision of the day as the beer somehow numbs the pain and emboldens the spirit. I wish them well and take off on my own.

Finally we pull into the first stop, Preston. At this point we're just about as far as we'll get away from Spring Valley. Highway 16 connects the two small towns and provides an easy route back for those who are looking for a way out of the next 60 miles or so of the glorious gravel. As soon as I pulled in, Preston is lined with well wishers (clean) and riders (mucked) all figuring out rides, food and support. Those who have the will to press on head right over the bridge and to the checkpoint. They rarely spend more than a few minutes in the town. I head left towards the local grocery store where I hear there's hot food and many participants gathering to ride back via 16. As soon as I step into the cyclist crowded small town store I spot the fried chicken in the deli to my left. The bonk has made itself fully known and with wild abandon I attack a thigh, a drumstick and hotdish. Unfortunately, the hot food, warm store and good company do nothing for my body temperature. Now having stopped moving it plummets uncontrollably and I shake while pouring the warm water into my mug full of powdered mix for hot chocolate. My race is over.

Having run into my friend Greg and his lady at the store we decide that the



Big Block  
baby, you're much too fast



them together in a way that would encourage more people to come out. I was seeing more and more riders coming out to the race who otherwise wouldn't. None of these are novel ideas really, the gravel racing is something unique to this part of the country, but it's been around forever. The people are coming out for a race that's completely free from fees and licenses. The only thing that we ask is that you are self-supported and that you don't take help from any outside source. Basically it's, "Here are your directions, I'll see you at the finish line."

**AS: What is spirit of the Almanzo? Not necessarily just the Almanzo, but all of the AGRS races—what makes them so special?**

CS: I don't know what it is, honestly. Having been to other [more formal] races I think when you can take away the expectations from anything in life it allows everyone to enter in the same place and find common ground.

**AS: What do you think the impact of an event like the Almanzo is?**


CS: Part of me likes to believe that we're changing the way people race bicycles, but the other part realizes that people have been racing in the more traditional way for a long time and that's not going anywhere. I tell you what—there's a lot of money in promotion, and a lot of money is paid to people who promote events, but I don't think you get with those events what you can get at Almanzo. I'd love to make money at it, but I will make my money any way I have to so that I can get more people on bikes and experiencing that thrill of being apart of something that's, fucking, pretty amazing.



fifteen miles back to Spring Valley would be best with company instead of trying to go it alone. Although the gravel has been left behind, it's still been a long day and we frequently find ourselves slowing up to catch our breath or ease our aches. We pass a few others bravely making their way back solo or with other small groups. Disappointment crosses the faces of a few, but only for a moment. Like throwing yourself headlong into any new endeavor, you might not make it but you can be proud of how far you did go. We three pull into town and head straight to the showers. I meet back up with two of my teammates who tell me that our last, Ben has found his second wind and is finishing. After a recovery meal of A&W, I take the Subaru and go to pick him up. His bike sits outside the high school gymnasium, the exact color of the roads he's just spent the last nine hours on. We get him cleaned up and check out the Almanzo Market. Unfortunately, it's long past the time most were through to have completed and so the vendors have almost all cleared out. Skogen and his army of volunteers, though, are still milling around waiting for riders to come in. Each and every one gets a handshake and a pat on the back from Skogen himself. He'll end up waiting there for the last few riders till late into the evening. One of the classiest promoters I've ever met, and his actions back it up.

It's the Tuesday after and I've finally gotten the time to clean out the bike. A bottom bracket has been sacrificed, as well as a few other small items. The gravel dust seeps into every crevice and takes time to evacuate properly. As I clean it off the only thought on my mind is the beauty of the route. It's a side of my home I've never seen before—a side that was worth discovering. I look down at my phone and see I've received a text from one of my teammates replying to my insistence that we go down and ride those same roads to enjoy them with less epic conditions. He agrees wholeheartedly.

I take the fork off and find a good amount of gravel dust in the headtube. Another bearing shot.

Uffda. 

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# Midwest Mayhem Gallery

Photos by Kevin O'Meara



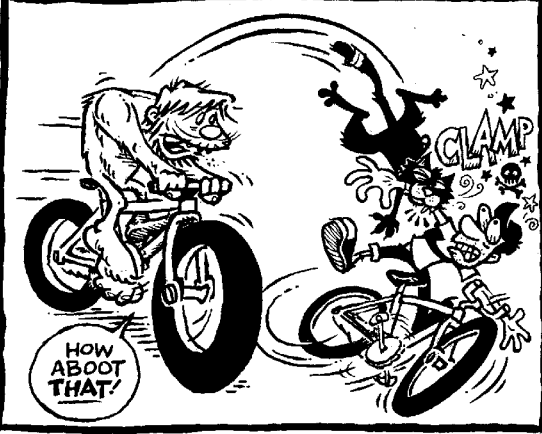
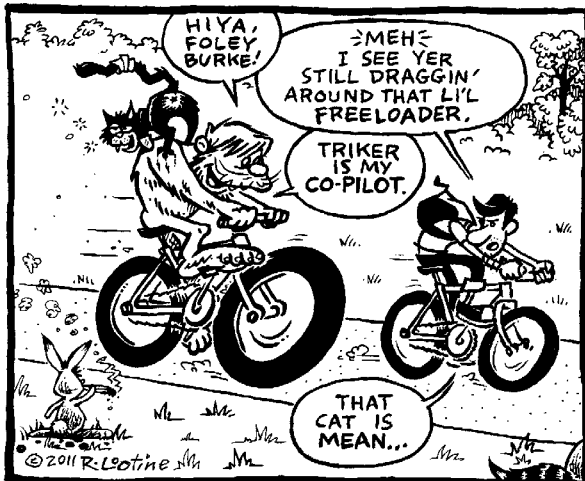


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## Torker InterUrban

When most bike companies develop their line of commuter bikes, they assume that most people want a single speed or an upright bike with an internally geared hub. And while that may not be entirely untrue, there's a significant portion of the community that appreciate a traditional road bike. I'm talking about an affordable, steel-framed bike with drop bars and gears.

Enter the Torker InterUrban. At just \$569 retail, the InterUrban is one of the most affordable road bikes on the market. And unlike a bike purchased from an online retailer, a Torker bought from a brick and mortar bike shop comes with an added level of service and security.

Appearance wise, the chromoly frame is attractive yet subdued. The graphics are simple and tasteful and the one-color metallic blue paint job is rather elegant. The welds are reasonably clean and the straight blade steel fork makes the bike look sleek and contemporary.

The bike ships with entry-level Shimano components, but I'm pleasantly impressed with how well they work. And the frame is certainly worthy of upgrading with better parts as the original equipment eventually wears out.

I'm also pleasantly surprised at the quality of the rest

of the components—Tektro dual-pivot brakes, Alex rims, Kenda tires, FSA cranks and house brand stem, bar, seatpost, saddle and hubs. Everything on the bike is perfectly functional, and in the case of the saddle, especially nice for the price.

One thing that may throw some people for a loop is Torker's geometry. Essentially, their bikes are long and low, meaning you'll ride a much smaller labeled frame than normal. For example, the 44 cm frame I'm riding has a 527 mm top tube, which is comparable to a 48 or 50. In fact, I ended up swapping the stock stem for a stubby 70mm.

So, how does it ride? Like a bike. Thank you and good night...

Seriously, though, it's really kind of unremarkable, but in a good way. The steering isn't twitchy like a racing bike, and it's not overly flexible like a lightweight steel bike. The 28mm tires smooth out rough pavement nicely, and the steel frame, cushy cork bar tape and perfectly padded saddle take care of the rest. The bike isn't a featherweight, but it doesn't feel heavy on the climbs, or carrying it up and down the stairs.

Check out [www.torkerusa.com](http://www.torkerusa.com)



## Planet Bike Grasshopper Bamboo Fenders

There is no doubt about it—wooden fenders look classy on just about any townie or touring build. Up until now they've largely been a small manufacturer game, and mainly a one of fashion since most wood fenders have had a flat profile less than ideal for actually keeping water off of your bike and body. This past year Planet Bike introduced the Grasshopper Fenders, an upscale \$135 per pair offering that is as functional as it is stylish.

The fenders themselves are made from a three ply bamboo laminate with a marine grade finish applied to make sure riding them hard and putting them away wet doesn't sink in and cause them to crack or rot. I'm not certain how it's done, but the fenders feature a curved profile like every plastic and metal fender out there. All the mounting hardware is stainless steel and pre-installed, with a variety of bolts and spacers to make it possible to mount on most "standard" 700c configurations with or without racks and disc brakes. While not required by law stateside, the front fender features Euro-style release tabs for

those occasions that your front tires picks up an errant stick or you really stick your toe under the fender, saving you from a faceplant or busted hardware. The fenders themselves are 45 mm wide and provide coverage up to about a 700c x 35 tire.

Installation is as easy as it gets thanks to the pre-installed hardware and independently adjustable v-stays on each fender, though the fenders themselves can't handle total hamfist installations as well as plastic ones can—you should not force fit these fenders like you can other varieties. After some town use and particularly rough forest road and trail touring the fenders are no worse for wear, even if I've managed to lay the bike down a few times and made use of the front release tabs on an occasion or two. I wouldn't expect the fenders to be as durable in the face of abuse as plastic or metal versions, but style comes at a price both to the pocketbook and to practicality. Some may be critical that the fenders do not wrap further down the tire and need a flap to fully protect your feet and any followers from road spray, but personally I didn't find the coverage a problem though my opinion may differ if I was regularly spending hours in the saddle in the rain.

Are bamboo fenders for you? That is for each user to decide. They are certainly no more practical than other materials, especially given the price premium, but then again few things that look as good are. No doubt, these get noticed on the bike. People are drawn to them, and they can turn an otherwise ho-hum build into one that looks like a million bucks.

Check out [www.planetbike.com](http://www.planetbike.com)

# Bianchi

[bianchiusa.com](http://bianchiusa.com)





## DZR Strasse Shoes

I first encountered DZR shoes this past fall at Inter-bike. The owners, Shane and Fabio, are two of the nicest people I've met in the bike industry, and they invited me to try a pair of their clipless cycling shoes out. The Strasse shoes are designed to be comfortable and stylish while providing the pedaling benefits associated with clipless pedals.

Right out of the box, these shoes were comfortable enough to wear all day. I spent more than eight hours on my feet the first day, and was no worse for wear. The soles, while slightly stiffer than most casual shoes, are flexible enough for walking and grippy enough for use with platform pedals.

As far as pedaling performance goes, these shoes aren't in the same league as carbon fiber soled racing shoes. They do work quite well, however. The real benefit is that they look and feel much like a casual shoe when you

step off your bike. The cleat is recessed enough that you shouldn't sound like you're wearing tap shoes—at least while they're new.

As for durability, I've had absolutely no problems with mine—no stitches popped, no glued rubber parts pulling apart, etc. Your mileage may vary, however, as some of my friends from the bike polo scene have reported some damage. This is no surprise, though, as I've seen just about every manner of bike, clothing and accessory chewed up and spit out on the polo court.

A few nice touches are the recessed reflectors on the back, and the elastic loop on the tongue for keeping the laces out of your drivetrain.

The Strasse shoes retail for \$110 and come in US men's sizes 8-13. A similar model, the Tosca, is available in US women's sizes 6-10.

Check out [www.dzrshoes.com](http://www.dzrshoes.com)

A man with a beard, wearing a green t-shirt and khaki shorts, is captured in mid-air while performing a wheelie on a black mountain bike. The bike is tilted upwards, with the front wheel high and the back wheel on the ground. The background features a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds and a dense line of green bushes and trees. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

AJ Austin

Photo: Jake Marx

*[milwaukeebicycle.com](http://milwaukeebicycle.com)*

## Vetta V5 Rear Blinky

In the days of ever higher powered and more complicated (and expensive) lights out there, it's refreshing to see an \$18 blinkie light like the Vetta V5. None of those fancy high powered LEDs with erratic blinking modes here, just a 5 LED V-formation of lights with a single easy to find button and two modes—blink and off. The LEDs are bright enough to be seen but not painful to look at, these are not the new-school ultra bright LEDs that can be seen from 2 miles away. The V5 takes a pair of AAA batteries making rechargeable models for late night commuters a reality, and runs a reported 80 hours on a pair of alkaline batteries. In a nice design touch, the V5 acts as a reflector when off further adding to your night-time visibility even if you forget to turn it on or run out of juice unexpectedly.

The V5 ships with a thumbscrew seatpost mount and the shims to make it fit just about any bike out there, and the battery cover has a plastic clip if you prefer to mount it on your belt or bag. For those who prefer a steady mode on the light you'll have to look elsewhere, but I find I never use anything but blink and off anyway and wish all of my lights had just the two choices. Even if I really like the higher powered super-blinkies out there, the V5 has its place. It seemingly lasts forever as compared to brighter versions, and you can't argue with the price. Check your local shop—just about anyone can get Vetta products in for you if they don't already carry them.

Check out [www.vetta.com](http://www.vetta.com)



## Timbuk2 Light Brite Swig Backpack

Although the name Timbuk2 is virtually synonymous with messenger bag, these days they make a variety of bags including tote and travel bags, accessory holders, bicycle seat packs and backpacks.

This bag's main design features are its highly reflective stripe, its water-resistance and its laptop compartment. As promised, the reflective material is industrial strength, and the bag's water resistance is excellent. The main flap has gussets that help keep water from entering from the side. This works impressively well, as does the sealed side zipper.

At just 12" x 5" x 17" the Light Brite Swig isn't a giant among backpacks. However it will hold a 17" laptop for point of reference. I've found it to be perfect for regular commuting and running errands. It's a very comfortable bag, with just enough padding and ergonomically cut shoulder straps. It's also got a nice big tab for attaching a blinkie light, and a built in bottle opener on the shoulder strap. The latter I could live without, but it seems to impress other people.

The Light Bright Swig Backpack comes in black with red or blue accents, retails for \$120 and comes with a lifetime guarantee.

Check out [www.timbuk2.com](http://www.timbuk2.com)

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## Princeton Tec Push

The Princeton Tec Push is a serious, self-contained commuter headlight that both looks the part, and performs accordingly. The Maxbright LED lamp delivers 100 lumens, and the red “side pipe lighting” provides some element of 260° of visibility, or can be turned off if you prefer to do so.

The mounting bracket is simple and effective. While it’s nothing to write home about, it’s reassuring to note that the design has been tested not only on the streets, but on the mountain bike endurance racing circuit.

The Push uses three AAA batteries. Of course built-in rechargeable battery packs are nice, but the nice thing about using standard batteries is that a fresh set is commonly available at the corner store. The claimed burn times are 4 hours on high, 14 on low and 63 on flashing mode. Your results will vary depending on which batteries you’re using.

Available in red, blue or titanium, the Push retails for \$50.

Check out [www.princetonotec.com](http://www.princetonotec.com)

## Nutcase Classic Helmet

Regular readers of the magazine are most likely familiar with Nutcase helmets, as they’ve been advertising for a couple years now. But it’s only been recently that a box of their helmets arrived on our doorstep. The first on the chopping block was this Union Jack themed classic helmet from their street collection.

Minus the graphics, the classic helmet looks very much like a standard skate/bmx helmet. And that’s not terribly far off the mark, as it features the industry standard ABS shell and EPS foam liner. It has eleven small vents in the traditional skate/bmx helmet pattern, and meets US and European government standards for helmet safety.

The quality of the construction is above average for this style of helmet, and the straps are notably nice. The thing that really sets Nutcase helmets apart from the competition is the unique magnetic buckle. It’s a bit hard to explain, but essentially the clasps slide together sideways, and the magnet keeps them in place. Rest assured, once the buckle is secured, it isn’t coming open accidentally. The nice things about this system are that it’s easy to operate, even with gloves on, and you’ll never pinch your skin closing the buckle.

The S/M size helmet fits 52 cm – 60 cm heads, and the L/XL fits 61 cm – 64 cm. Each helmet comes with four sets of pads to help customize the fit.

The Classic helmet retails for \$50 and comes in an array of styles and colors.

Check out [www.nutcasehelmets.com](http://www.nutcasehelmets.com)





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The **Custom Road Bike** is perhaps the most comprehensive book on the modern road bicycle we've seen. Chapter by chapter it covers a given part—forks, hubs, headsets, spokes, tires, etc.—with crisp studio photography, history and parts advice. The 224 page hardcover edition is available for \$50. [www.rouleur.cc](http://www.rouleur.cc)

The **Harlot** Scarlet-X Tech Knicker is made to fit, and designed by, a woman. Comfortable, stylish and functional, they leave very little to be desired. They are made of breathable nylon and spandex with a water resistant coating and retail for \$85. [www.harlotwear.com](http://www.harlotwear.com)



The Bishop wallet is **Chrome's** take on the urban cyclist's billfold. It's made from the same stuff as their venerable messenger bags, with four card slots, a full-length billfold compartment and a change pocket that snaps shut. Retail price is \$35. [www.chromebagsstore.com](http://www.chromebagsstore.com)

The **Bolle** Tetra are classic black shades from a company that specializes in high-performance eyewear. They feature premium, coated polycarbonate lenses, durable nylon frames and moisture absorbing rubberized contact points that keep the glasses in place. Starting at \$69, the polarized version retails for \$99. [www.bolle.com](http://www.bolle.com)



**Fixcraft** has recently introduced their version of a modified Bern Watts helmet drilled to accept a baseball face cage. You can of course DIY your own, or just purchase the package outright from Fixcraft for \$73. [www.fixcraft.net](http://www.fixcraft.net)

Baskets are awesome for around town shopping trips, but can be anywhere between pain-in-the-ass and impossible to mount on many bikes. The **Origin-8** Cargo Unit Handlebar solves these problems with a one-piece bar/basket combo that will fit nearly any bike with a 25.4 mm stem clamp. [www.origin-8.com](http://www.origin-8.com)



The **All-City** Fuzzy Bars are cromoly steel with a full 3" rise, 10.5° of sweep and a 22.2 mm "bmx standard" clamp diameter. You get what you pay for—the MSRP on these bars is \$50, but you only need to see one or two bars break before a few extra dollars starts looking like cheap dental insurance. [www.allcitycycles.com](http://www.allcitycycles.com)

The **Soma** Anti-Jack mini u-lock features a 3" wide hardened cromoly shackle and comes in three lengths. Available in black or white, MSRP ranges from \$36 to \$40. [www.somafab.com](http://www.somafab.com)



**Fyxation** relaunched their online store, and with it



introduced the pictured pedal/strap combo kit. \$55 gets you a pair of Fyxation Gates nylon bodied pedals and a matched set of Velo City Bags pedal straps, with a savings of a few dollars over if you purchased them each separately. [www.fyxation.com](http://www.fyxation.com)

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# OUT IN THE STREET

## The Biking Community Gains Ground in New Orleans

By Lacar Musgrove

**W**hen a bicycle tourist known as Mr. Drew arrived to New Orleans in 1881, he declared the city streets the best in the country for bicycling. He was probably speaking of the condition of the pavement, more than anything. But even if the pavement of the streets has fallen into disrepair, New Orleans remains in many ways very bicycle friendly. The city is flat and compact, dense with small, bikeable streets. Many grumble over bike riding conditions—rough roads and a lack of dedicated bike paths—but the recent marking off of bike lanes on the larger boulevards represents some effort by the city to accommodate and encourage cyclists. And a proposed greenway through the heart of the city would include a three-mile bike path. The parks service has already built a bike path along Bayou St. John, the old route of the New Orleans Bicycle Club which, in the 1880s, made weekly rides from what is now the Central Business District to Spanish Fort, near Lake Pontchartrain, to promote bicycle riding and the improvement of the roads.

Bicycling is popular all over New Orleans, but there is one neighborhood in particular where the bicycle seems most entwined with the lifestyle. The Bywater and the Faubourg Marigny, historical downriver suburbs of the French Quarter, were built mostly in the nineteenth century when the invention of the streetcar made it possible to live beyond walkable distance. As in many other cities, the advent of the automobile doomed the streetcar tracks. The neighborhood now stands as a collection of freestanding houses, mainly Creole cottages and Victorian shotguns, built on small blocks. When rents began to rise in the French Quarter in the 1980s, first the Marigny and then the Bywater became popular with artists, musicians, and bohemians who moved into the troubled neighborhoods, put down roots, and formed tight-knit communities. Being further downriver, the Bywater especially remains a place where those with fixing-up ambitions can become homeowners relatively cheaply and still live in the city. The density of houses makes for conditions close but not cramped. The lifestyle is urban but almost everyone has a backyard in which to keep dogs, grow vegetables, or even raise chickens. Public transportation in New Orleans, and especially downriver from the Quarter, is scarce, and distances around the neighborhood and from the French Quarter are a little too far to make walking entirely practical. But owning a car isn't necessary if you have a bike. Bike riding in the neighborhood is not only a matter of convenience but a part of the culture. Like growing backyard gardens, the bicycle stands as measure of independence and resistance to the excesses of consumerism. This is a neighborhood where people proudly shop for furniture on the side of the road. To not own a car is to be freed from a major expense, and freedom from expense is important to people who'd rather spend their time making beauty than money.

Much of the Zeitgeist of the Marigny/Bywater neighborhood rests on a do-it-yourself attitude. In the Marigny, a warehouse of copper-colored brick houses the Plan B Community Bike Project. Besides the bike shop the warehouse, known as the Ark, houses a book collective called the Iron Rail and artist studios on the upper floors. The idea of the bike shop, which is run by a loose collective, is that they provide a space, tools, parts—mainly reused—and assistance for people to fix their bikes. Use of the shop is free; it's expected that you pay something for the donated parts. Volunteers spend time repairing bikes, so if you need one you might be able to just go in and buy one. Or, you can choose from the stacks of broken frames in the back and rebuild one yourself. You can leave the bike in storage while you're working on it and, when you're

finished and ready to ride off, what you pay for it becomes a matter of negotiation with a volunteer. You cannot, however, pay them to fix your bike for you. Missionaries of self-sufficiency, they want people to learn to do the work themselves. The money they make selling bikes and parts covers rent and other overhead costs, which total about \$1500 a month.

In the exposed brick of the front wall three windows, several panes either broken or sooted, stretch halfway from the high ceiling. The room is lit by those and one strip of fluorescent lights suspended from the ceiling across the length of the shop. There is no air-conditioning, and a rusty box fan squeaks in one of the windows. Four bike stands hold two bikes each. Tools clink against dusty, grease-stained linoleum. On the far wall are two work-tables and bins of parts. Wheels dangle from racks on the ceiling, fenders in varying states of rust and dent are arranged on a rack in the corner. Besides parts and people who know how to help you, the shop has specialty bike tools and stands. In exchange for an ID or whatever other collateral they trust you won't willingly leave without (your shoe, for example), you can borrow a greasy canvas roll of basic tools.

Despite seeming to be an overwhelmingly positive entity in the neighborhood, the collective recently had some trouble with the local police. On April 9th, Ash Wednesday, officers from the 5th District of the New Orleans Police Department arrived at the Ark and told the volunteers they had to leave or face arrest. The shop had been closed for two weeks for the Carnival season, and the volunteers were cleaning and organizing in preparation to open the next day. The police claimed they were responding to a complaint that the shop was operating without the proper permits. The officers were unable, however, to specify which permits were lacking. This was the first difficulty the shop had had with police in its eleven years of existence. Although the 5th District continues to deny as much, the broad assumption is that the shutdown was a retaliation move following an incident a few days earlier, on the Sunday before Mardi Gras.

On that Sunday, as the building shivaree of Carnival was filling the streets of downtown New Orleans with costumers and brass bands, the 5th District Police clashed with an unpermitted costuming parade, the Krewe of Eris. Earlier in the evening, as Eris entered the French Quarter, some people associating themselves with the parade had damaged property, and the revelers were driven out of the Quarter and back into the Marigny by patrol cars from the 3rd District. There officers from the 5th District surrounded the group, attacking and arresting several peace-



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ful paraders. The incident got play in the media, and a video of a police officer swatting a smart phone out of the hands of someone trying to document the melee led to that officer's suspension and an official investigation of the incident. The Krewe of Eris parade is associated in local perception and largely in reality with the entire bohemian/artist/punk/anarchist population of the Marigny/Bywater of which Plan B is a staple institution. So when police showed up at the shop five days after the Eris incident, people naturally assumed the move was retaliation. Police told the media it had been a "voluntary shutdown," neglecting to say that they threatened to arrest anyone who didn't "volunteer" to leave. They also failed to mention that when a business's permits are in question, they must be given two to ten days notice to vacate or show permits. The volunteers of the collective were given two to ten minutes. According to the representative from the Louisiana office of the American Civil Liberties Union, the shut down was illegal.

Not to be defeated, the bike collective took the shop to the streets, setting up a "Mobile Plan B" on St. Roch Avenue, just a few blocks from the Ark. They brought out one of the bike stands, some tools, patches and tubes, an air pump, and a few bins of hardware and set up shop in the "neutral ground," as the locals call the median. In March, New Orleans weather is mild, warm air stirred by a cool breeze, and the neutral ground of St. Roch Avenue, flanked by old Victorian shotguns and shaded by oak trees, is a pleasant place to hang out. On the first Mobile Plan B day a girl lounged on the sidewalk waiting for a friend to fix her bike. With her greasy yellow locks, lip piercing, black jean shorts and patch-adorned vest, Emily was emblematic of the punk scene that frequents the nearby St. Roch Tavern. The other two girls with her looked more like any normal girl you'd find on a college campus. Emily introduced herself to me and asked what had happened to Plan B and if there was a used bookshop nearby. She and her friends were visiting from Richmond VA, having brought their bikes along with them. She was disappointed about missing Plan B's ladies' night on Tuesday evening, the shop night reserved for women and transgendered persons. The collective offers not just bike maintenance but the opportunity to learn a valuable skill set.

Local television stations in their coverage of the shut-down repeatedly referred to Plan B and the Iron Rail as businesses catering to "young transients." Never mind that these are not businesses. If you live in New Orleans, "young transients" is code for gutter punks, aka unwanted troublemakers. The media therefore, probably by getting their information from the police, managed to stigmatize Plan B and the people who use it. Just as in 1881, cyclists

pass through New Orleans on cross-country bicycling tours. Hanging out at Plan B I've noticed that the place is a stop for such people, who could be called "transients." They could also be called visitors. The shop, however, is a resource used by and important to the permanent community, including both renters and homeowners.

I spoke with Victor, a volunteer who's been active with the Plan B collective since 2005, the year that multiple levee failures allowed the force of the hurricane Katrina to flood New Orleans. He told me how Plan B, with the help of donations from all over the country, was able to resupply the city's flooded biking population, selling used bikes for ten or even five dollars to people who desperately needed them. Victor attended the March 21st meeting of the Faubourg Marigny Improvement Association. In a tone conveying the indignation of a great many, he told the Association, "I am absolutely disgusted, disgusted that a city that is so lacking in free social services would willfully and illegally... shut down legal operations that are benefiting this neighborhood because certain people don't like the way that certain people look." Sitting in the grass on St. Roch Avenue I saw all kinds of people rolling by on bicycles, including older African Americans and a group of three middle-aged white men who smiled and waved as they passed—a reminder that while Plan B may be an organization of young white punks, they are not the only people who need and use it.

The new mayoral administration of Mitch Landrieu has recognized that. The Mayor's Office sent the Mayor's Attaché for Cultural Economy, a new office, to meet with representatives of the collective. Scott Hutcheson was friendly and sympathetic. In a city that runs low on public services, the police had illegally shut down a volunteer-based, completely self-funded community resource. Hutcheson assured the collective that he'd get them whatever permits they needed, although exactly which permits was still something of a mystery, and gave Victor his business card in case the police come back. The shop opened again on April 9th, exactly a month after the Ash Wednesday closure. The commander of the 5th District Police who ordered the shut down action has been replaced.

The positive outcome in all this is that due to all the attention, Plan B now has not only several hundred more Facebook friends to ask for donations and volunteer labor, but the official backing of the Mayor's Office, a kind of legitimacy these self-described anarchists weren't looking for but are happy to accept. And City Hall's recognition of the importance of bicycling to the culture of New Orleans is a very good sign for cyclists, from young punks to yuppies, all over the city.





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# Vintage: Love It or Leave It?

By Brad Quartuccio



As urban cycling continues to grow, so do the numbers of people looking for a deal on an older used bike. There is no shortage of people encouraging new and seasoned riders alike to check the used market for vintage road bikes, and it's honestly not a bad idea if you know what to look for. There are a lot of steel road bikes out there worth a couple of hundred dollars and some fresh components, making for a quality and economical ride. But for every frame worth purchasing there are countless others best left to the scrap heap, or at best not worth more than fresh tires and cables for a casual, around town rider. Manufacturing in general and bicycle technology in particular has made serious advancements over the past 30 years—unless the used bike you're looking at was relatively “serious” in its day, even the most entry level bike available in a bike shop today is leaps and bounds ahead of it in quality. Despite what well-meaning but less-than-knowledgeable friends and unscrupulous Craigslist sellers may say, simply being old and labeled as “vintage” does not a quality bicycle make.

Judging the relative quality of a bicycle at a glance is fairly easy with a few pointers in mind. This is by no means the complete handbook on bicycle quality, but a good starting point for anyone entering the used market.

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[ifbikes.com](http://ifbikes.com)



The blue dropouts on the left are a mark of quality. The red dropouts on the right are stamped and should be avoided.



One piece and cotted cranks... Buyer beware!

**Wheel Size** - Look for wheels and tires labeled as 700c rather than 27" or any of the oddball Schwinn 26" sizes. There are few quality tires available, and switching to the much more common 700c from 27" size is possible but requires not only new wheels and tires, but likely new brake calipers to make up for the difference in diameter.

**Dropouts** - Rear dropouts that look like they are cut or stamped from a piece of sheet steel are a telltale sign of a low quality frame worth passing on. Look for cast or forged dropouts. If the dropouts themselves are lugged you are most likely looking at a very high end frame in its day, and one that should not be passed up.

**Cranks and Bottom Bracket** - It should almost go without saying, but one-piece cranks with an oversized bmx-style bottom bracket shell and cotted cranks that sport a press-fit pin to keep them in place are best left in favor of a square taper design.



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Tire choices are limited for bikes with 27" wheels.



Although most vintage bike frames use a 1" threaded headset, be wary of bikes with a knurled adjustable nut like the one pictured here.



Bulky, straight cut lugs can be a sign of a low end frame.

**Lugs** - These days just about any lugs are a sign of a decent frame, but in the past there were plenty of low quality lugged frames on the market. Bulky, straight cut lugs are many times found on inexpensive frames not worth a high asking price—pointed lugs are more commonly (but not exclusively) found on quality frames worth bringing back to life.

**Headset** - Just about any vintage bike will have a 1" threaded headset. Avoid bikes that have a knurled adjustable nut, as they weren't quality bike when new and are certainly not worth more than a few of today's dollars.

**Rims** - Steel rims are bad news. Not only do they not stay in true as well as aluminum rims, they have very low braking power especially when wet. Bring a magnet with you when in doubt—if it sticks leave the bike, or at least budget for new wheels.



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# DIY Nipple Driver

By Brad Quartuccio

Using spoke nipples in the rim during a wheel build or spoke replacement can be a frustrating experience. Deep section rims popular on urban builds make it even that much more likely, as the spoke bed rests a thumb's width away from the inner wall where the tire sits, and where you have to fish the nipple through to meet the end of the spoke. Commercially available nipple drivers are available that hold the nipple and allow you to thread it onto the end of the spoke without dropping it inside the rim, but they remain pricey and out of reach of most home mechanics and even small shops.

For a number of years now I've been using a simple,

DIY nipple driver to hold each nipple as I lace up a wheel. Using an old spoke with the elbow end cut off, I bend it to have a T-shaped handle, add a few rounds of tape for a grip and thread a nipple onto the spoke as far as it will go, snugging it up as tight as can be with a spoke wrench. The short length of remaining threads is just enough to catch on the backside of the nipple you're lacing up, allowing you to easily place it through the rim wall and start threading it onto the spoke you're working on. Once the nipple catches, a simple quarter turn back releases the tool for the next spoke. Load, thread, release. Never lose a nipple inside of the rim again.







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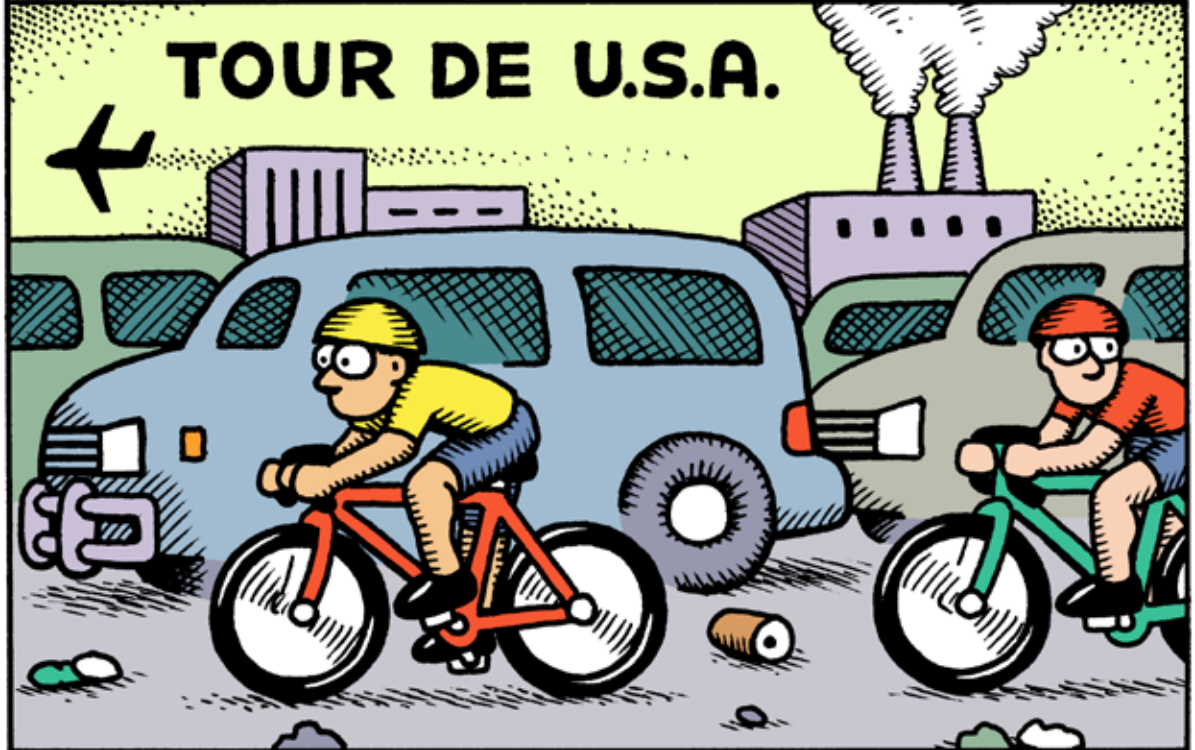
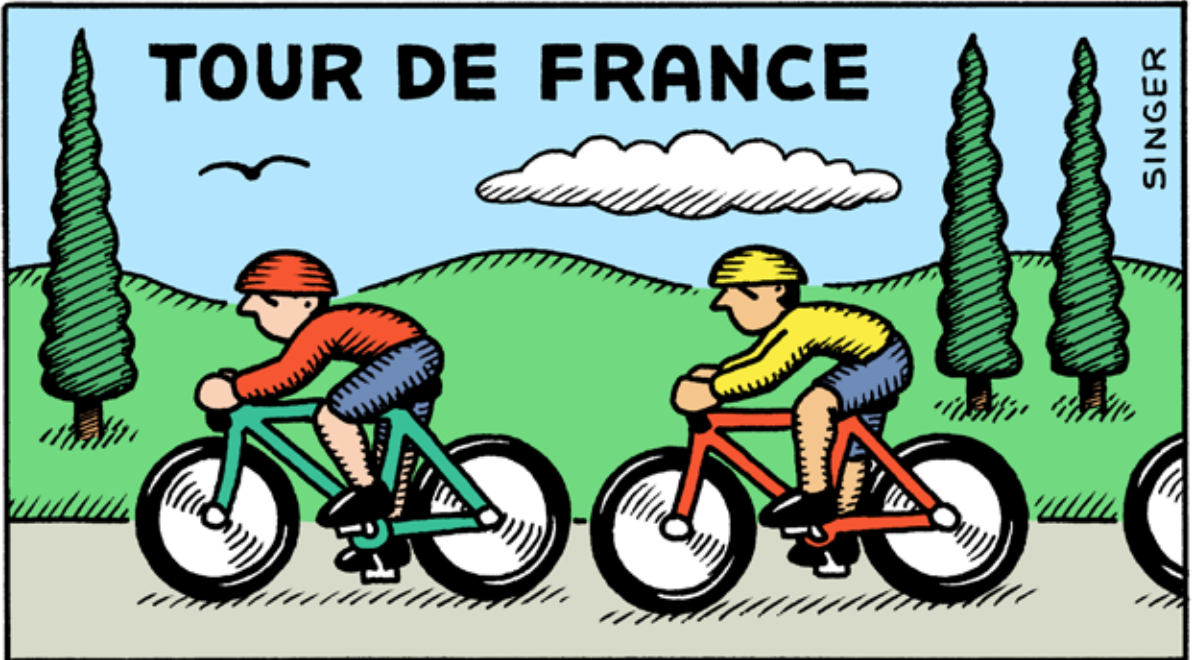
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