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URBAN VELO

Bicycle Culture on the Skids

Issue #8 • July 2008



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Contents



On the cover: Roughly two dozen riders came from Japan for the 2008 CMWC. See page 40 for coverage. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

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Contents photo: Nicholas Hohman on the hardcourt in Pittsburgh, PA. Photo by Brad Quartuccio

- 6 Editor's Statement**
Brad Quartuccio
- 8 Publisher's Statement**
Jeff Guerrero
- 10 I Love Riding in the City**
Readers from around the world share their tales of city cycling
- 30 A Special Place In Hell For Bike Thieves**
Phillip Barron
A lost Canto from Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is rediscovered.
- 34 Sustainable Fuel**
Julian Birch
Channeled properly, anger can be pure rocket fuel. Use it wisely on your commute.
- 40 Gallery**
Brad Quartuccio
Cycle Messenger World Championships
- 46 Residue**
Roger Lootine
- 48 World Naked Bike Ride, London 2008**
Henry Thompson
The World Naked Bike Ride streaks through London to promote cycling over oil use.
- 60 Bikes on Film**
Jeff Guerrero
The Bicycle Film Festival kicks off its 2008 tour in Manhattan's Lower East Side.
- 62 Fastest Man On A Bicycle Honored At Last**
Dan Pugatch
Major Taylor was one of the greatest athletes of all time. Worcester, Massachusetts honors him with a bronze statue.
- 64 Share... And Share Alike**
David Hoffman
Examining Vélib, the successful French public bike sharing program.
- 68 One Car**
Mary Megliola Franzen
Family living with less cars, more bikes.
- 72 Technical Gubbins**
Brad Quartuccio
Bike threading explained, and a simple way to measure chain stretch.
- 78 No Exit**
Andy Singer


Editor's Statement

By Brad Quartuccio



Color covers and more print copies than ever. While this was always in the plan, actually having it come to fruition is something else altogether. Far from being the freak of the week, bicycle culture is the cool kid on the block. Adolescent for sure, the urban culture is growing up. Already bike friendly cities are reaping the benefits of such forethought, less cutting edge locales are quickly playing catch up. The “scene” is maturing, with new faces offered a whole new array of places to plug into. When it comes down to us, people are reading

along for the ride. And we can't thank you enough.

International contributors and content truly shines for issue #8, with two features hailing from the United Kingdom, content about bike-sharing in Paris, I Love Riding in the City pieces from around the globe and a photo gallery from the Cycle Messenger World Championships in Toronto. This isn't to say that the stateside coverage isn't important, but just reflecting a sliver of the world cycle culture. We're honored to be a part. 

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

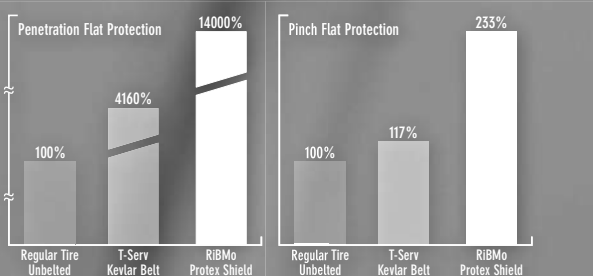
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The charts demonstrate the comparative puncture and pinch-flat protection between three Panaracer tires. Unbeltd, Kevlar beltd and Protex Shield beltd. Protex Shield provides almost 4 times the flat protection and more than double the pinch flat protection of a Kevlar beltd tire.

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Publisher's Statement

By Jeff Guerrero



We Takin' Over, One City at a Time


It started out in Europe many years ago. The Dutch began laying cycle paths in the 1890's. By the 1920's Germany was forced to build extensive bike lanes to alleviate traffic jams caused by bikes. As the century wore on, automobiles became more popular but gas prices skyrocketed across much of the continent. With an eye on the high cost of transportation and a practical outlook on life, cycling was a natural solution to the transportation needs of places like Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Cities all over Europe followed suit, and soon hundreds of miles of bike lanes and cycle paths crisscrossed major cities like London and Paris.

In the 1970's American consumers got their first taste of high gas prices, and the ubiquitous V8-powered automobile began losing market share to the 10-speed bicycle. Deft politicking managed to revive the oil and automobile industries, but for millions of Americans, the seed had been planted. In high-rent cities like New York and San Francisco, many people continued to choose bikes over cars, and some forward-thinking cities recognized the importance of bicycles

in their urban planning.

With the dawning of the millennium came an increase in environmental awareness, and a war that brought about a sharp increase in gas prices. Once again Americans began to look for an alternative to high energy costs, and for many the answer came in the form of a 10-speed relic from the 70's.

Here in 2008, with gasoline eclipsing \$4/gallon in the U.S., bicycles are gaining acceptance at an unprecedented rate. American cities are looking to their European counterparts for inspiration, and governments are seeing the value of well-designed bicycle infrastructure. What's more, politicians are recognizing cyclists as a worthwhile constituency. Bike lanes are sprouting in traditionally conservative cities with hopes that the two-wheeled voters will show their appreciation on Election Day. Even presidential hopeful Barack Obama has promised to support national cycling initiatives.

So look out Ford, GM, Dodge, Toyota, Cadillac... We takin' over, one city at a time. 

Urban Velo issue #8, July 2008. Dead tree print run: 2500 copies. Issue #7 online readership: 30,000+



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Henry Thompson

LOCATION: UK and Yemen

OCCUPATION: Environmental consultant

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

I live in East Oxford in the UK and work overseas. Oxford and Cambridge are the two most bike-friendly cities in the UK—almost like Netherlands. Lots of mothers and multiple kids. Riding here is just part of life, the traffic is stupid so nobody drives unless they have to. Bike theft is a hassle so people have pretty scrappy bikes. There's been an increase in 'London freestyle' on road rules so people now just go when the traffic permits. It's pretty clear that people get scrunched by trucks when they are obeying the rules... So best ride for yourself and stay alive.

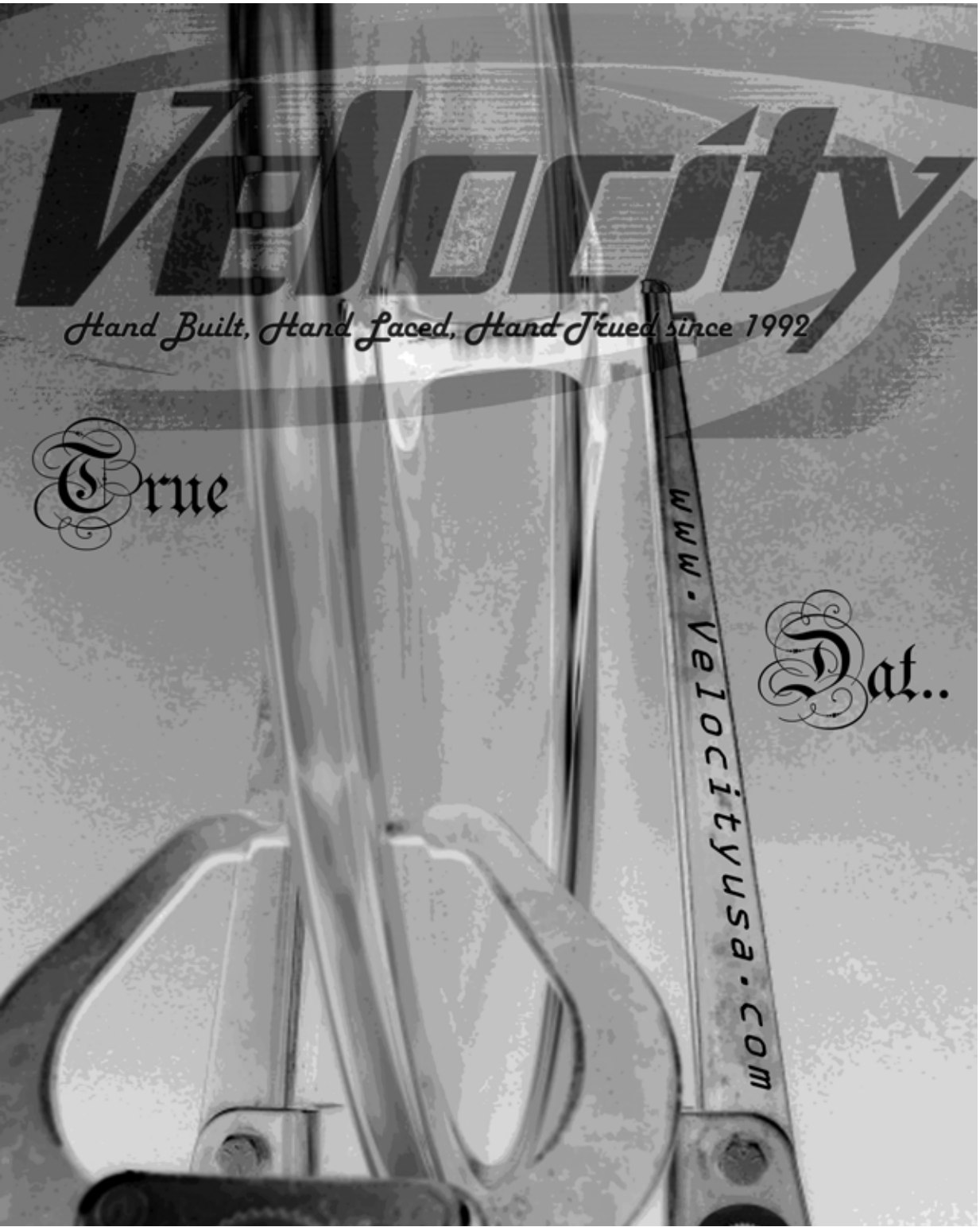
What was your favorite city to ride in, and why?

I liked being a student in Netherlands in the late 80's. We biked around Wageningen on slouchy black fietsen—sometimes dead drunk. The beefy rear racks are there for a purpose: getting a ride sidesaddle behind a Dutch lady was the best treat. Biking into the teeth of a January north

wind was no fun—maybe that's why they have trains. I liked cycling in Tokyo in the mid 70's. Cycling was for poor people and kids—but on a hot summer night one could get the breeze and just cruise round from Roppongi to Ueno to Minato, meet people on their bikes. London is fun but the air quality is dire. Missoula MT was fun for a while, but is that really a city? I haven't dared ride a bike in Sana'a but people do—there's a brave set of time trial folk.

Why do you love riding in the city?

There is no other way to move. Best of all I like bits in the road where I can explode—basically a sprint through some sections of traffic where I know all the cuts and spaces. In London, Victoria to Piccadilly through the paths in back of green park, or the section from Hampstead Heath to Regents Park through Camden. Unlike anything else it makes you live. I went on the Sheldon Brown memorial ride and around seventy very convivial people turned up with some classic British frames.



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Soupie

LOCATION: Pittsburgh!

OCCUPATION: Minister of Bicycle Retail

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

Picksburgh is a fun city to ride in because you could be riding in four lanes of one-way traffic and make a turn and be in the woods or by one of the rivers. There are a TON of potholes and road imperfections, not to mention brick roads and cobbles that add some variety. Oh, and hills... I love each and every one of them.

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

Other than Pittsburgh, I really like Richmond, VA. RVA offers all kinds of bizarre adventures across train bridges to secret swimming holes, crazy parties and forties by the James River. All of it is a 20-minute bike ride away at most.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I used to think about all kinds of important environmental issues, but it just comes down to riding. Riding a bike is a total BLAST and driving a car around town totally sucks. When I drive places I feel like a slug, when I ride I feel alive.

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

A good friend of mine once left me a bike note that said "Fenders and brakes are for queers." I respond three years later that, "Fenders and brakes are for commuters, and are sweet!"

Photo by Kevin Dillard, www.demoncats.com

Where are your nipples?



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Carlo Russo

LOCATION: Adelaide, Australia

OCCUPATION: Graphic Artist/Cook

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

I live in a semi-quiet city in south Australia called Adelaide, named after a pommy lady named Adelaide. Since Adelaide is a small city I found the most efficient way to get around is on the bike. The city and surrounding suburbs have designated bicycle lanes but with these you still have to tackle the tintops. The linear bike path is a bike/walk track stretching the foothills to the coast, a good

14 URBANVELO.ORG

90-minute blast following the Torrens River without hitting the traffic. Easy!

What's your favorite (or the most exotic) city you've ever ridden in, and what's special (or memorable) about it?

In the nations capital, Canberra. Canberra has a vast network of cycle paths weaving in and out of the city. And if you're into a bit of fat tyred fun the trails are only a short drive or even better a 30-minute ride for some pinus radiata needle crunching.

Why do you love riding in the city?

It beats the hell out of driving. As the plebs wait like sheep to be dipped in the traffic lights I'm on the treddy, mp3 blasting away sniping, dodging and cutting through the lines of petrol munchers like a cut snake.

And being a graphic artiste I get to see bits of ephemeral street art in side streets, alleys and other dark hidey holes. When I get to my destination I feel alive and ready to take on the world. OK, OK, the city.

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

Sniping through the streets on the KM monkey,

Jersey pocket chockers with art, feeling a little punky

Hit an alley and plaster a wall, pole, fuse-box or dumpster

Mate, cycling through the city is the way to go chumpster!

Contribute!
Send your answers and a high-quality photo to:
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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Matt Bronner
LOCATION: Concord, CA
OCCUPATION: City Maintenance Worker

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

San Francisco. Beautiful city, killer cycling scene, and challenging hills. It put the hook in me when I was a messenger for a summer, where in three months I learned more about how to ride a bike than in the previous twenty years.

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

Riding in the city, or anywhere for that matter is fun for me on any type of bike. Fixed gear, road bike, mountain bike—whatever. They all put a smile on my face. I like waving to kids on BMX bikes, grannies on hybrids, and commuters with panniers. I have seen and experienced the negativity some riders seem to exhibit towards other riders, and it amazes me. We have the potential to become a paradigm shifting community, changing our world for the better, but instead we insist on wasting our energies on petty criticism. Let's get over ourselves and get with the program, because opportunities to change the world are rare, and this could be our last chance.

Check out www.mattbronner.com

NAME: Stephen Holloman
LOCATION: Salt Lake City, UT
OCCUPATION: Student

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

I live Sandy, UT, a suburb of SLC, and riding here is like playing dodgeball with hot moms in Suburbans. This is the suburbs though, once you hit the heart of SLC, it's a typical (not nearly as congested) urban-city ride. Rush hours hold the worst conditions for bicyclists, but late night rides unveil some of the most amazing views and hill bombs. You have mountains to both sides, leaving you with tough, but manageable, hills to climb that are even more fun to bomb.

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

I have only ridden SLC, and it's super versatile, big hills, big bombs, great flats, great terrain to play around on. Dodging cars, and taking lights, its all in the daily, and still keeps me coming back for more. There is an up and coming fixie scene, BFC, they are killing it with monthly events such as the BFC Sunday Sprints, and BFC Trick Comps. They are helping to educate the mass public on bike awareness and trying to help people get out of their cars and trying to support smaller carbon footprints.

Check out www.myspace.com/bfcsaltlake





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I Love Riding in the City



Fotografía: José Vásquez Vallejos (Bilobicles) Modelo: Pancho

NOMBRE: José Vásquez Vallejos (Bilobicles)

UBICACIÓN: Santiago de Chile

OCUPACIÓN: Diseñador

¿Dónde vive y como es montar en tu ciudad?

Vivo en Santiago de Chile. Montar aquí es complicado para los primerizos pero ya con experiencia se hace muy fácil circular por las calles en tu bicicleta.

¿Cuál es tu ciudad favorita para montar, y por qué?

Valparaíso, por su gente, sus calles, restaurantes, me gusta esta ciudad porque es un puerto único nada que se le parezca, sus casas de colores colgando de los cerros como

si estuvieran en el cielo: una ciudad muy hermosa para visitar.

¿Por qué te gusta montar en la ciudad?

Me muevo mucho más rápido que en cualquier otro vehículo, además del dinero que te ahorras. Te hace sentir muy bien de salud y desestrezado.

O simplemente decir lo que quiera sobre montar en la ciudad... Alguna poesia?

Me gusta cuando monto bicicleta, desde arriba veo todo más hermoso, incluso yo.

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Annie Gillberg
LOCATION: Seattle, WA
OCCUPATION: Bike shop clerk

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

I live in Seattle WA, which is a pretty bike friendly place... plenty of commuters, and more and more new cyclists by the day which is very cool. The hills aren't too terrible, even with my fixie

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

I'm from the midwest, so I'd have to say Minneapolis. It's such a bike friendly place, and I love stopping for coffee and staring at bikes at One on One!

20 URBANVELO.ORG

Why do you love riding in the city?

I get to ride by everyone stuck in their cars, and actually see the city for what it is, rather than just trying to get from point A to B. You really can't get to know a city in a car. Plus it's fun to see everyone's bikes... fixies, choppers, tall bikes...

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

Please for the love of your bike... check the fucking chain tension! I love my fixie... and if you love yours, you wouldn't let the chain tension get too slack!



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I Love Riding in the City



Kev with his first bike, circa 1970

NAME: Kev Botman

LOCATION: Christchurch, New Zealand

OCCUPATION: Aircraft Engineer

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

I'm back here in Christchurch, and it's great. I bike to work as it takes me 30-minutes to ride and 20 to drive. The city is mostly flat and for many years people have cycled, so the city has grown up with the idea as it were. The City Council is reasonably pro-cycling, I have seen a lot of improvements in terms of cycle lanes and dedicated cycle strips at intersections since I first moved here many years ago. They support a Season of Cycling which covers a lot of events and races, including a multi-lap sprint race around the central city area.

22 URBANVELO.ORG

The Council and Environment Canterbury also do a lot for MTB riders. There are two large multi-use parks for riding, plus there are a lot of good tracks on the Port Hills, which are on the edge of the city. It's 15-minutes to the base of the hills and then you have hours of tracks at altitude with great views... it's a great place!

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

The one I'm in right now! I have moved around the country a bit but nothing compares to here.

Why do you love riding in the city?

It's exciting but not life threatening, but you have to be on your game. Christchurch drivers are reasonably aware of cyclists but you never know... I know that I can get most places in the central city just as fast by biking.

I like racing the buses, they stop a lot so it's this leap frog game, that's good fun. But mainly I just like making good progress, and really because one of my happiest places in the world is on the saddle of a bike.

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

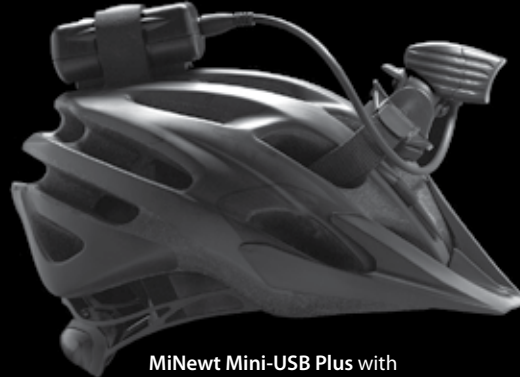
It's not what you ride, it's not how you ride, it's THAT you ride at all. Have fun—life is short. Riding today makes a difference tomorrow.

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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Paula "Righteous Metal Broad"

LOCATION: San Fernando Valley/Los Angeles, CA

OCCUPATION: Medical biller by day, novice blogger by night

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

I live in the Van Nuys area and commute to and from West Hills. It's unsafe to ride out here so I get an adrenalin rush whenever I hit the streets. Granted, that's not the only reason I ride, but I honestly believe the streets will become safer once there are more and more bicyclists out riding. Nearly every day at least one person tells me that they would love to do what I do and just go out and ride but they don't because it's so unsafe. As cyclists are more

visible to motorists, hopefully motorists will learn to share the road and less cyclists will die in hit and runs. Not only do I want to change the attitudes of the drivers out on the streets, but I want to educate the new bicyclists out there. I see many people riding on the wrong side of the street, with no head or tail lights at night, etc.

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

Tough question, because I only ride in SFV/LA, I know I have favorite streets, favorite paths, favorite areas. I really love the Metro Orange Line's bicycle path. I ride 4 miles out of my way to take that path every day. My daily commute is about 18 miles. It's worth it because it's 4 extra miles and it's safe. So, I guess my favorite city to ride in is SFV/Los Angeles, because I live here.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love riding because it's healthy, I lost 60 pounds when I was an occasional bicyclist 2 years ago. Then I inherited an ancient SUV from my father and drove that for a year (supplemented my "healthy living lifestyle" with a gym membership). Before owning the SUV, I was a bus rider. I only lost about 15 in that entire year (try as I might, I could not lose anymore). Then gas started going up, so I sold my SUV and used the money to buy a better bicycle. And I don't regret becoming "car-free" at all, it was like unloading a huge load off my shoulders. I don't have to worry about gas, car maintenance, insurance, parking, etc. I've developed a new love for public transportation. I am much more mellow, I've lost more weight, my clothes fit so much better and the endorphins from my daily rides feel great.

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

Cheesy as it may sound, sometimes it is best if you do stop and smell the roses (or coffee, or corner taco stand). It's much more pleasant if you have the choice to be able to stop on your bike, rather than stop because you are stuck in traffic. I've found that I am catching some things that I would regularly miss if I was driving, a beautiful sunset or sunrise (the latter rarer), a cute child waving "Hi", a cute guy waving "Hi", other bicyclists high on endorphins, a corner grocer or thrift shop. When I'm on my bike, I feel more a part of the scenery. I'm no longer outside looking in. I'm out there, living it up...

So go out there, live it up... I'll see you on the streets...



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I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Phillip Barron

LOCATION: Durham, NC

OCCUPATION: Writer, digital media artist

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

Durham, NC is a post-industrial town trying to figure out how to keep being democratic, open, and inclusive while moving forward with a capitalist understanding of progress. It's the city that tobacco built. Along with sales of the famous "bright leaf" tobacco came storage warehouses, drying/re-drying plants, hosiery mills funded by and aimed at serving the tobacco industry, and even schools endowed by tobacco magnates like the Dukes. Now, Durham is the City of Medicine—go figure.

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

I rented a mountain bike in Oaxaca, Mexico in 2005 to ride through its streets. Traffic flows in the streets like a swift river. Oaxaca is, like most developed areas, an auto-

centric place. But bicycles fit right in with traffic there, and I felt oddly comfortable riding with the buses, trucks, and taxis swirling around me. From Monte Alban, a Zapotec city that dates back to 100 AD, to the glossy, new medical facilities off Chapultepec Highway, I realized that drivers seemed to be more aware and respectful of bicyclists than I am used to. You know how we cyclists talk about our bikes becoming extensions of us, about how perceptive and intuitive we can be when we ride every day? Oaxaca is the only place I've been where I believed that drivers of cars had those same intuitions and feelings of corporeal extension.

Why do you love riding in the city?

Exploration. Not knowing what you will find around the corner, and when you round the corner, not really knowing what you've found until you know the history.

Check out www.nicomachus.net

Phillip wrote A Special Place in Hell for Bike Thieves on page 30.

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Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!

I Love Riding in the City



NAME: Jason Crane
LOCATION: Albany, NY
OCCUPATION: Union Organizer/Jazz Writer & Broadcaster

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

I just moved to Albany, NY after living in Rochester, NY for seven years. There are some stark differences—Rochester has quite a few bike paths and trails, plus bike parking throughout most of the downtown area. Albany has very little of all of that, but it does have lots of hills and cool neighborhoods to ride in. Plus, it's a great place to be a bike advocate—home of our state government and ripe for improvements!

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

When I was 17, I moved to Furukawa, Japan for a year as an exchange student. Furukawa is a town of about 60,000 people located two hours north of Tokyo by bullet train. I'd ridden a bike before, but my year in Furukawa was the first time I biked for my daily transportation, and also my first experience in a bike culture. It was a blast. By the end of the year, I could ride with no hands while holding an umbrella in a rainstorm. And it gave me a freedom to explore and learn the language that I could never have enjoyed in a car.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I've made great friends riding my bike, not to mention all the weight I've lost and muscle I've gained. I also founded the cycling site RocBike.com to help people in Rochester build a real community for bike commuters and other transportation and recreation cyclists.



NAME: Bernie Crane
LOCATION: Albany, NY
OCCUPATION: Kindergarten student (age 5)

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

I live in Albany. It's a good experience for me to ride in my city. I like to get my bones moving. It helps me get strong and healthy.

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

My favorite city to ride in was Rochester, where I was born, because I had more room and there was a lot more space to get out there and play on my bike.

Why do you love riding in the city?

I love riding in the city because it's a lot of fun. I've ridden my bike for four years. I can do any kind of biking I want!

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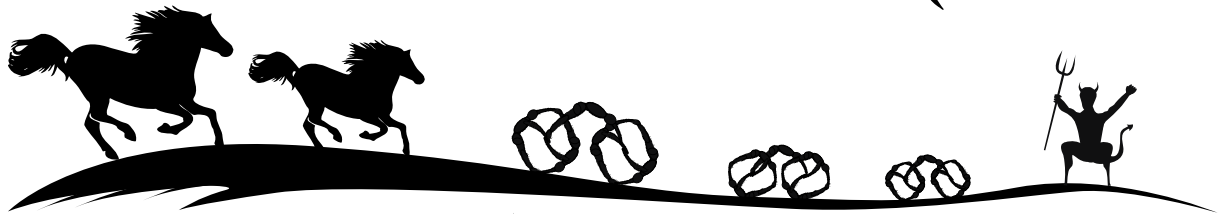
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A Special Place In HELL For Bike Thieves



By Phillip Barron

A neighbor recently posted a note to the neighborhood listserv that his daughter's bike was stolen. The bike was unlocked, leaning against another (adult) bike, which was locked. Both were on a semi-enclosed front porch; one could have determined that the kid's bike was unlocked only if (s)he had seen someone park the bike without securing it, or (s)he walked up on the porch to find out. Either way, this is a pretty bold move for a community where, as my neighbor says, "our neighborhood doesn't feel to me like the kind of place where..." he needs to lock his bike.

Don't waste your breath (nor your keystrokes) calling

him naive. Regardless how fashionable cynicism is these days, it's worth lamenting that we live in a world where we can't leave a bicycle in a front yard without it becoming a target for thieves.

Nevertheless, bike thievery is a unique moral and criminal transgression. Theft of one's bike has been known to rile the wrath of even the most otherwise placated pacific souls. Indeed many in the cycling community have noted that there must be a special place in hell for bike thieves.

To know whether there really is a place in hell reserved for bike thieves, you have to turn to Dante Alighieri. Dante is not just the only person who claims (with some authority)



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to have been to hell and back. He is also famous for relaying that there is a special place in hell for just about every sort of miscreant. And sure enough, according to Dante, between the grafters and the gamblers, there is a circle of the inferno reserved just for people who steal bicycles.

You might have noticed that Dante's comments on bike thieves didn't make it into the original edition of *The Divine Comedy*. Dante's journal tells us that the omission resulted from his editor's fascination with more complicated technologies: carts put before horses and what not. Disappointed that mention of his velophilia didn't make it into his magnum opus, Dante later published the Canto concerning bike thieves independently under the title "Tractatus di Ciclisma." A rare copy of the Tractatus recently resurfaced during an excavation in Florence.

In an effort to correct his editor's mistake, we republish the text for the first time in seven hundred years.

Then my guide said to me, "Now it is time to quit the wood; see that you come behind me. The path I shall lead does not burn, and you would do well to follow close behind."

Once our feet resumed their path, the tormented continued their ancient wail. My guide, the Poet, beseeched me to view the next pit with cautious eyes. I surmised that, like the ones before, this pit's walls were steep so that climbing out is prohibited by design. In the center there rose a summit with strata of endless undulating paths encircling the conical mount.

The Poet advised that I look more closely at one of the layered paths. On it, a most peculiar sight did move before my eyes. What appeared to be a bicycle was actually a party of five fools bonded together for all eternity.

They formed themselves, two apiece, into the wheels of fleshy bicycles. Hands grasped ankles in a human wheel at the sight of which I might have laughed had not such exultations of pain carried through the air. The fifth and most rigid among them clasped the hands of the wheelmen, whose thrice wound palms and fingers formed axles. Together they rolled. Each wheelman's spine was repeatedly subjected to the gnash and grind of the rocky path.

I asked my guide, Virgil, what these violators had done to be sentenced as both man and machine, dehumanized and beaten by the weight of their own movement.

My guide said merely that I have not yet looked closely


enough. And as I returned my eyes to the tissue and sinew that tore at every revolution, I saw one of the bicycles become unsteady. Rolled away from its lane beside the mountain it did, and an explosion of noise filled the pit. A grand team of one-hundred and eighty horses sped from behind the unstable human bicycle to trample the five punished souls.

On the uneven path pocked with holes, the five wheelmen—although bloody and weak—quickly reassembled their velocipedic form and continued their roll within the narrow confines of their path.

My guide revealed to me subtle tortures which my eyes did not independently perceive. The cyclists'—if that they can be called—path was one of many unending undulating surfaces, alternating between climb and descent. Both were designed expressly to insure that neither climb nor descent is of such length that a traveler might gather momentum. Instead, the wheelmen are frustrated by the sharp curve of the path in descents.

Whether the onslaught of horses gains mastery over the velocipedes depends upon their position within the path. If their machine of marrow strays away from the mountain to which their path is bound, the horses' authority is summoned. With no appropriate markings delineating the bicycle's space, the cyclical men have taken to riding so close as to grind their shoulders against the escarpment solely to prevent an equine trampling.

"Who then dear guide," I pleaded, "are these sufferers who ride the shoulder of the path to avoid an explosion of horse power?"

And Virgil answered, "the contortions you see before you are the eternal humiliations of those who sought to misappropriate a bicycle from the world of its rider. They did so disrespect the joy and utility of the world's greatest contrivance that they spend eternity in futile and dispiriting detour." 

About the Author

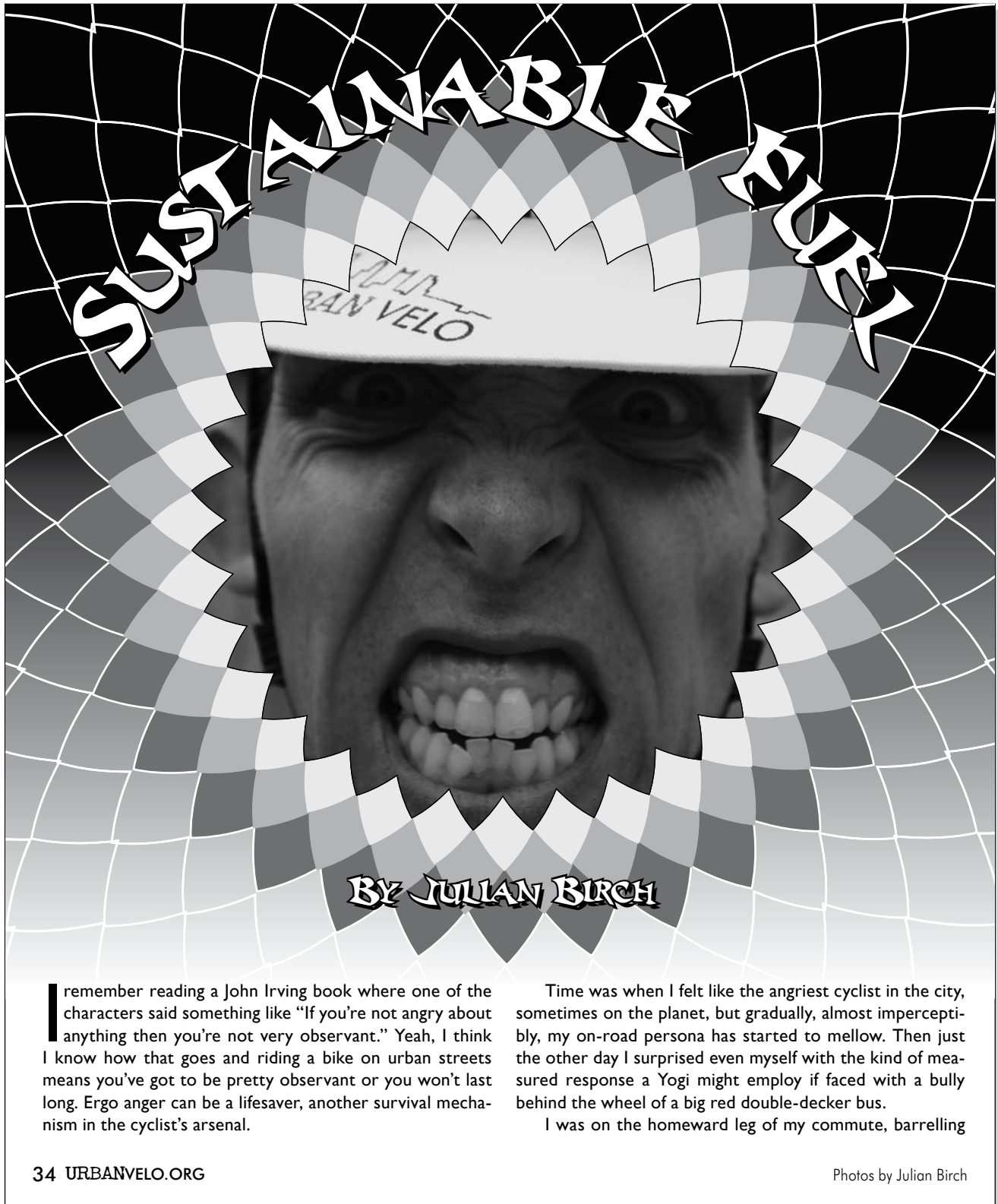
Phillip Barron, a cyclist and philosopher, lives in Durham, North Carolina. He works with the National Humanities Center, writes "The Outspokin' Cyclist" for *The Herald Sun*, and is the pedaling force behind nicomachus.net.

WABOBA



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I remember reading a John Irving book where one of the characters said something like “If you’re not angry about anything then you’re not very observant.” Yeah, I think I know how that goes and riding a bike on urban streets means you’ve got to be pretty observant or you won’t last long. Ergo anger can be a lifesaver, another survival mechanism in the cyclist’s arsenal.

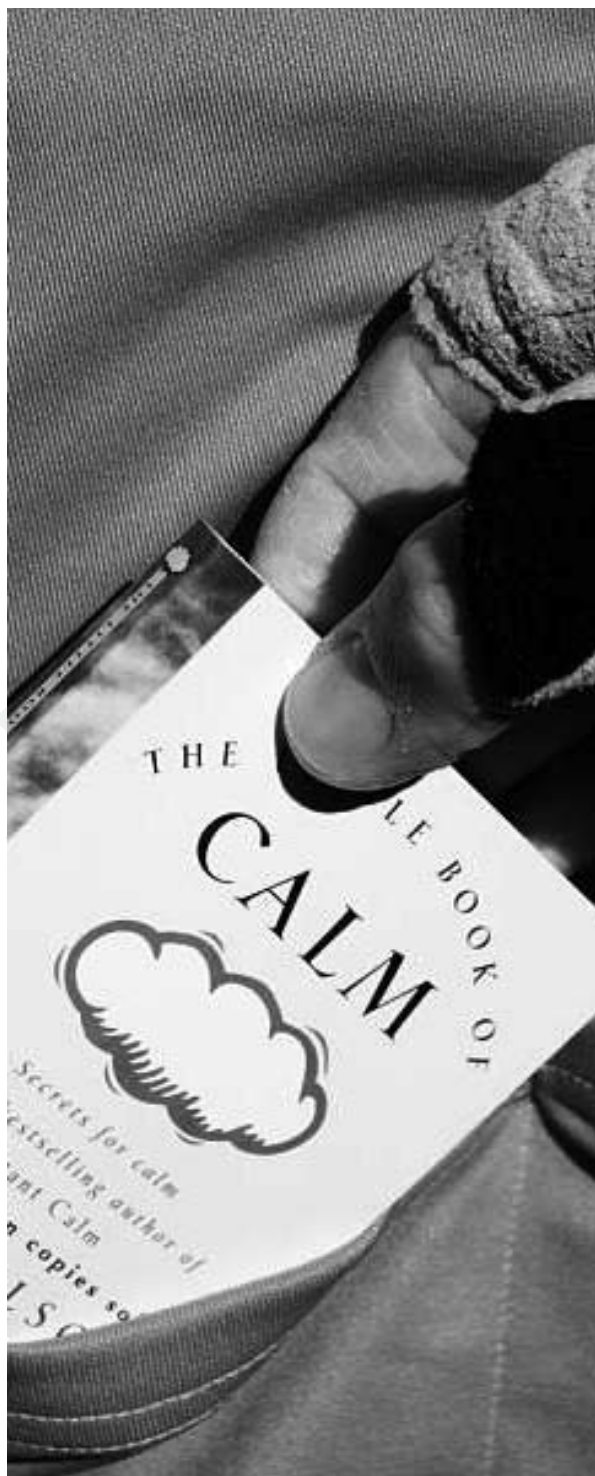
Time was when I felt like the angriest cyclist in the city, sometimes on the planet, but gradually, almost imperceptibly, my on-road persona has started to mellow. Then just the other day I surprised even myself with the kind of measured response a Yogi might employ if faced with a bully behind the wheel of a big red double-decker bus.

I was on the homeward leg of my commute, barreling

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away from one set of lights, where I'd just out-maneuvred said bus, only to be confronted by amber lights a few yards down the road. The pedestrian waiting to cross looked anxiously apologetic; she obviously didn't expect I'd stop. I was to disappoint her (I specialize you know). Suspecting I'd been concentrating too hard on getting in front of that No.26 and had missed the change from green to amber I grabbed handfuls of brake. The road was wet and greasy yet I negotiated a fishtailing halt, albeit nearly sideways on to the stop line. But before I had time to congratulate myself I felt rather an odd sensation; my bike nudging forward as if it had a little more stored momentum to surrender. Mm, something was amiss. My brain was turning over slower than a big gear up a steep hill but it dawned on me; perhaps some outside influence was involved.

I turned to face an expanse of red glossy bus filling the sky and getting much too intimate with my back tyre! Gawping at the driver, my mouth hung open like a suffocating fish. He glared back from behind glass with an all too familiar kind of stare. A look that said "**** off you stupid ****ing 2-wheeled freak! What did you stop for? I wasn't going to. You ****ing dick!" – Yeah he had expressive eyes! I had a quick check to make sure my back wheel wasn't compromised but feeling the blood rising, I stared down those cold little piggy eyes and telepathically transmitted a message of "Yeah? Well you'll get yours... mate!" I shook my head and slowly turned to face the road ahead.

Time was when such calmness and control would've been unimaginable, that bus driver would've certainly got a fistful of expletives and maybe a bang on the cab window for good measure given the opportunity. The heightened adrenalin and accelerated heart rate would've probably been good for five miles of extra go-go juice too.

Sadly there always seemed to be an innocent, unwitting bystander who'd catch the fallout from such heated exchanges. Victims were typically slightly shocked and frightened bus passengers or unfortunate pedestrians wincing at my colourful language. Though directed at a half-wit behind the wheel (trying to turn me into a description-defying lump of kerbside detritus the pigeons love to pick at) my outbursts were more like buckshot than bullets. F C S & W words spat out with such venomous ferocity pelted down on the pavement and scorched the blameless. I'd feel ashamed when I caught the look in their eyes and slightly disappointed too that my outburst could've turned a neutral witness into a hostile one. The swearing and arm-waving extravaganza sure was good therapy, for all of about 10 seconds, but in the end I was never very proud of myself.

Becalmed today I may be but cycling on the road still feels like a political act most of the time. However, subtler

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manifestos i.e. less gesticulation and cursing probably have more chance of getting the undecided inside. I've discovered you can say a lot with the eyes alone (but first you must establish eye contact) and as a bonus feature my Jedi mind control is really coming on.


I've learnt too that thou shalt not criticize the driver, oh no. Who am I to point out driving skills that need development and attention? Just a pesky cyclist is all. Of course I have no rights and how dare I take up space on their personal highway? Did I say I wasn't angry? Phhutt! Oops, did I get spit on you? Regardless of whether the numbskull could've killed me, highlighting their shortcomings only ever raises their blood pressure alarmingly and brings out a bit of the old Anglo-Saxon vocabulary. Yeah I'm fluent too but chances are they're headed for a coronary any day soon so why waste my breath bandying obscenities? Yet you've got to look out for yourself, no one else will. So now I anticipate every one on the road is either an idiot or a psychopath. If they're neither, well great, if they are one or both I'm hardly surprised but I'll just mutter my scathing critique to the wind, thank you.

Of course the memory-banks, the database of scenarios and driver behavior is ever expanding; driving standards aren't improving. There is the chance I don't com-

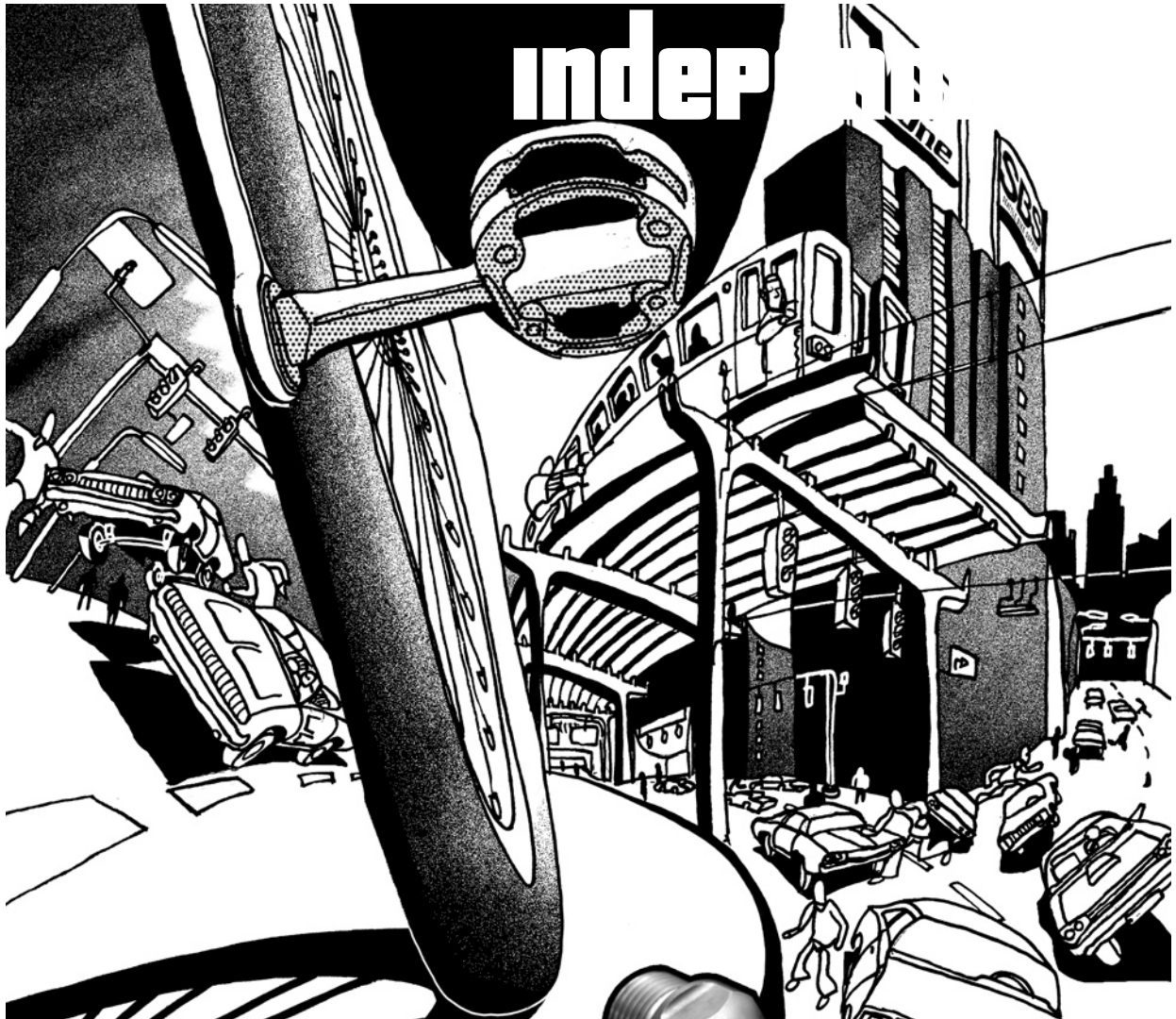
mute quite so hard these days and have freed up previously over-stretched resources and stolen a fraction more time for electricity to cross the synapses. The result being I see things earlier, react faster and don't have so many fuel-injected interactions perhaps.

Yet if I'm taking it easy why is that feeling of over-cooked spaghetti legs more of a frequent feature, especially on the homeward journeys? The ravages of time can't be the reason, surely? Am I giving in too easy? Hopefully not although after so many trips round the block there is a numbing inevitability to what regularly plays out on the roads around me. While still appalled daily by some of the tricks those in charge of a lethal dose of metal get up to I don't get so regularly wound up. Anger is like electricity in the blood and I have less running through my veins than I once did, the red stuff doesn't boil up so easy either. Less fire in the belly means less zip in the legs then.

So I'm a little less explosive, physically and mentally these days but I don't feel duty bound to calm anyone else down. Sure be angry when you need to be but be observant too – like I need to tell you, huh? Anger can be pure rocket fuel and happily it's one of the most environmentally friendly and sustainable fuels on the planet.

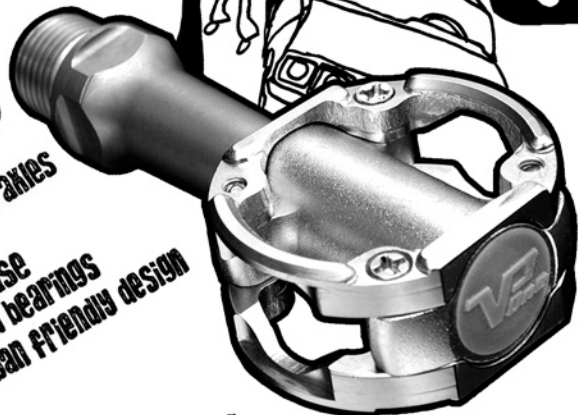
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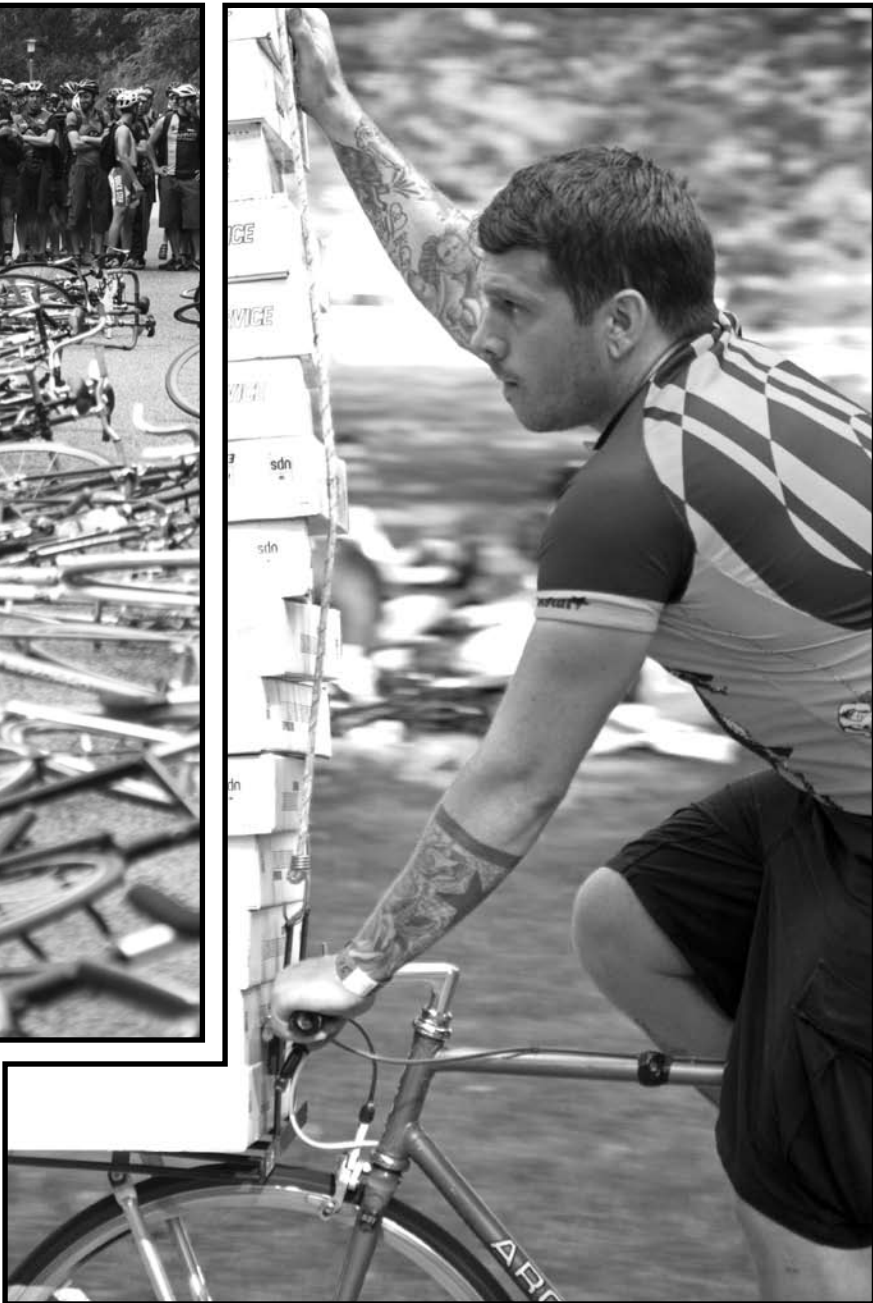
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WORLD Naked BIKE RIDE LONDON 2008

By Henry Thompson

Photography by Billy Macrae
billymacrae.blogspot.com

I change into my orang-utan suit in the bowels of the Park Lane underground garage. They set the lights really low in there, so behind the Planet of the Apes rubber mask I can't see very much, but take great pleasure from riding under the exit barrier, just.

Out in the sudden brightness I'm briefly in big traffic, then cross the pavement to ride straight out into Hyde Park and on what must be one of the widest and most luxurious bits of cycle path in London: the avenue of mature plane trees that runs adjacent to Park Avenue.

Three lads ride up alongside, they want to take my photo, and so I stop while bystander's watch and chuckle. I'm just a guy dressed as a monkey riding an armchair bicycle.



I head for a group of fifteen or more Day-Glo yellow cycle police standing together in the shade and looking happy in anticipation of their day out with the nudes. They laugh at my bike and as I hop off, one of them walks over for a closer look. I stroll off toward the gathering event, looked for a few friends, don't find any, and walk back. They're feigning disinterest, but yes, it has reflectors and a bell, two brakes and gears—it's road legal.

The group of riders grows and grows pinker from the top down as the surrounding crowd of tourists, photographers and passers-by also grows. The tourists are just funny, holding up their cell phones to take hopeless shots of a few pallid bums and people with bicycles. The passers-by are laughing, trying to steer their kids away or talking to their friends about it on their phones. The photographers are mostly a nuisance; few ask if they can take a photo, some have brought stepladders and long lenses, while some try hard to pretend that they're not taking photos — particularly near women. Hidden in a monkey suit, I am immune to this: a lot of people want photos — but it's not in any way intrusive for me. It's an odd mix, the highly middle-class greens with a liberal agenda, the international gay set, and our laughing proletarian police as chaperones.



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The ride organizers would like to get the body-painters off to one area and essentially protected from photographers until the ride, and to get the ordinary riders assembled in a long straggle in the avenue and then on a signal they all strip and ride. This would minimize the opportunities for hassle photographers and maximize the effect, perhaps. But on the other hand there are the bronzed, tattooed, pierced, shaved and ardent exhibitionists who really want to get their money's worth. The result of their show seems to be the large coterie of overweight middle-aged male photographers in dark-glasses.

So the normal non-habitual naked riders, especially the women, have another strategy. They start the ride fully-clothed, then as the ride progresses, they remove either one piece at a time in a delightfully demure disrobing of their own timing and design, or they pull off on the pavement at a chosen spot and strip — to hoots and cheers of support and encouragement from other riders. They seem to do this in pairs with mutual encouragement and disbelief. But at this stage, everyone is bonded by the experience, so it's very easy and funny.



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As with the critical mass—it's the hooting, whistling and ringing that signal movement... We move, but this is painfully slow, as the public have formed a narrow lineout through which we must pass to get going into the road. It is not easy riding an armchair slowly. The bike weighs perhaps 100 pounds and is low-slung, I can ride at walking pace, but not a weavy-wobbly tip-toe dragging pace. I have to wait for clear ground in front, then go. People are laughing, cheering and just gawping. Once out onto the open road life gets better, I move out into the front and settle in just behind the front riders and police escort. There I have room to ride because the police have closed the roads to traffic to allow the volume of riders the full road to ride in. We hoot, we yell, we weave. It feels good to stop traffic like this. The sun is out, London is packed with people who can't afford it, and they're all so happy to line the railings and laugh and cheer and take photos with their cellphones.

We move fast—up Piccadilly, down Haymarket, through Trafalgar Square, and down Whitehall. In Whitehall I stop in the wide center lane and look back at the throng—it seems about the same size as last year. People are up to the usual antics, taking photos of each other on the Cenotaph—that most sombre and sparse of our first world war memorials. What first seems sacrilegious is actually a vindication of the freedoms they died for. I remount and rejoin the naked snake near the tail end, straggling up to the corner of Parliament Square where more naked people start hopping about for more photos... The police are keen to move people on simply because they can't hold up the traffic forever, so their calls of "Move on!" are met with replies of "Go slow!"

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Westminster Bridge. What is it with women stripping off on Westminster Bridge? The Houses of Parliament and the surprised tourists were obviously too tempting.

York Road on the South Bank is one of those streets that are always in shade—lousy cold in winter, wonderful in summer. We fizzle along past the Shell building and out onto Waterloo Bridge. Another favorite stripping off point with people lining up on the pavement to get photos taken buck naked against a backdrop of London beyond the Thames and a few startled-looking tourists. Now comes the hard bit—Covent Garden and Charing Cross Road. The streets are narrow and packed with shoppers, so the pace slows again to walking pace and a frequent standstill. I've got a name now, "Monkey," and people are making monkey hoots and being very supportive but I am sweltering in the acrylic fur suit and there is no air when we stand still. Ribald banana jokes float about. I'm just wishing to take it off. But Covent Garden also brings laughs and cobbled streets that make everything visible jiggle. Charing Cross Road has construction, congestion and a long standstill at Seven Dials where a kind young man hands me a promotional litre of flavoured mineral water, which I drink without stopping. Without this I was surely in for an almighty headache. Last year on Charing Cross Road I saw a policeman crash his bike because he was ogling a particularly fulsome lady. No such luck today, we're hardly moving. But on Oxford Street, despite the narrowness of it, we float along. Naked cyclists kiss the windows of buses while giggle-frozen teenagers inside show gapes full of bubblegum and wide eyes.

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Then it's Berkley Square. This is my costume cut off point in front of the US Embassy. One of the very few Embassies worldwide not owned by the State Department, this example is rented from the Duke of Westminster at a very solid commercial rent. I strip; I've had enough of sweat and fake fur and the rubber mask. The Indonesians and Americans can have my ass, because the very best bit is just around the corner. Park Lane southbound is a gentle downhill, four or five lanes wide and devoid of traffic, so from being packed into mass or wheels and legs on one lane we are suddenly all spaced out and very very free: naked, light and flying. I tear off down Park Lane weaving between the riders who call out, "Monkeyyyyy! You took it off!" This twenty-second blast is by far the best bit—there's nobody much on the pavement, the road is immaculate, we fly... It is

delicious. I weave, scraping my skids, people laugh, it's just a moment to kiss.

Round Marble Arch and onto the grass to flop and wonder what to do next. I always want to go straight back and do it again—only much much faster.

Riding an armchair in the town is not a great way to move fast, you can't run between vehicles, you can flip it about much. But it has huge cachet, people love it, break up laughing. I'm beset by unattached women who want to pose, who ask where why and how and who claim it is the sexiest most desirable bike they've ever laid eyes on. Dario Pegoretti, we are brothers. 

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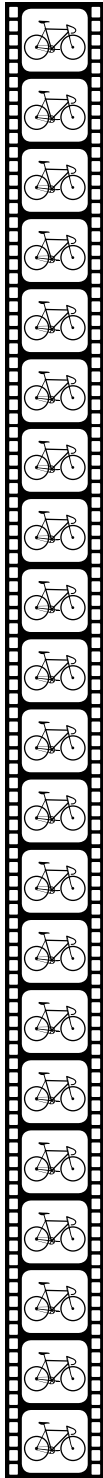
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Bikes on Film

By Jeff Guerrero



Bicycle Film Festival - NYC

The Lower East Side might be the perfect venue for hosting an urban cycling event. Easily accessed from Brooklyn and the rest of Manhattan, the matrix of crowded streets offer a myriad of cultural activities and opportunities for fun. Not to mention plenty of chances to play in traffic. And with well over 18,000,000 people living in the metro area, there's a good chance you have friends or family in NYC.


As in years past, Urban Velo headed to NYC for the 2008 Bicycle Film Festival. Arriving on Thursday night, we spent most of the day Friday riding around the city and meeting up with friends—old and new. After a cruise up to Harlem via Central Park, we headed downtown on the West Side Bike Path. When we arrived at the Film Anthology building a marching band was playing to a fast-growing crowd of cyclists.

Friday's program included a special presentation of Benny Zenga and Brian Vernor's "Goodbye Tomorrow." The eight-minute reel was a preview of their upcoming documentary on crossing Africa by bike. Another good documentary was Kalim Armstrong's "Orange Bikes Take Manhattan," which explores a highly-criticized, bicycle-themed DKNY marketing campaign. On

the lighter side, "The Loaded Warrior" lampooned the Mel Gibson classic "Road Warrior" with bikes and beer replacing cars and gasoline.

Saturday's activities began with a block party at 2nd and 2nd. Highlights included trick demos, skills competitions, music and a handful of bike companies showing off their wares. Saturday's main event was the messenger film program, and anyone who made it into the sold out theater knows why. No other screening was as much of a party, replete with lots of beer and a boisterous crowd. The audience went wild for local filmmaker Daniel Leeb's entry "King of Skitch," especially with the star of the film, Felipe Robayo, in the audience. Along with a contribution from perennial favorite Lucas Brunelle, the screening featured a variety of documentaries, shorts and music videos.

With a limited amount of time at our disposal, we only took in a sampling of the festival's offerings. Rest assured, there's much more. Check www.bicyclefilmfestival.com for complete program listings.

For more Bicycle Film Festival 2008 coverage, including photos and video, visit www.urbanvelo.org/bff2008. 

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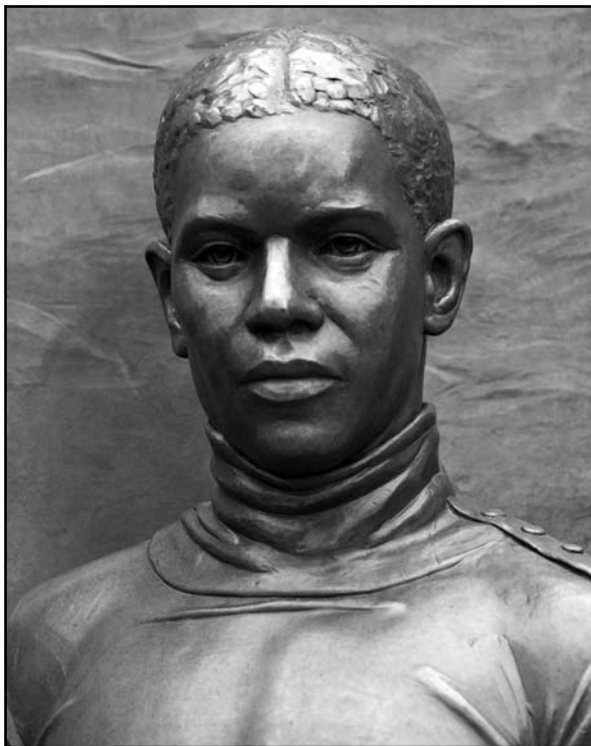


Photo by Betty Jenewin

By Dan Pugatch

Marshall "Major" Taylor, known as the Worcester Whirlwind in the early 1900's, was an extraordinary athlete whom overcame many obstacles other cyclists did not endure. Taylor left Indiana in the 1890's to the more liberal state of Massachusetts to follow his dream of track cycling during a time of racism in excess. Many did not want to race Taylor because he was not white; others


used it as an excuse because no one could beat him on two wheels. In velodromes across the world, Taylor continued to persevere despite the physical and verbal abuse his competitors unleashed on and off the bicycle.

At the Worcester Public Library on Wednesday May 21, 2008 a statue honoring Taylor, the first modern day African American champion athlete was unveiled. Hundreds of cyclists, politicians, citizens, and school children came out to remember as City Manager Mike O'Brien put it, "A man we honor for his character and role in breaking down boundaries in cycling and life." Among the crowd was the first American to win the Tour de France, Greg Lemond, and Olympic track and field champion Edwin Moses.

The morning started with a 20-mile ride sponsored by the Seven Hills Wheelmen that passed the infamous 18% grade George Street that Major Taylor used for training in 1899. As noon approached, cyclists and citizens arrived for the unveiling of the Taylor statue. The New England Gospel Choir kicked off the celebration and local dignitaries as well as family members shared stories of passion, inspiration, and triumph. This statue is not just a memorial to say to the world the Worcester, Massachusetts was home to the greatest cyclist of all time. It is as Mrs. Chandler of the Worcester School Committee put it, "So kids can come to the library and learn about a man and be inspired to succeed." Statues are not sculpted because people great, unless they were also great at heart. And with a strict code of self discipline including no alcohol, no tobacco, no racing on Sundays and always forgiving his adversaries, Major Taylor met the former and the latter.

Taylor's constant strive to be able to just race despite his skin color was one of many early fights in Civil Rights relatively early after slavery's abolishment. Speaker Edwin Moses quoted Nelson Mandela, "Sport has the power to change the world, give hope when there's despair." Moses feels strongly that "when good people want to do something, you can wipe out evil and prevail" and that is exactly what Major Taylor did on and off the track.

For Lemond, Major Taylor was an inspiration. Both cyclists started in their teens professionally, at the time one graduates high school and starts adulthood. Lemond reminisced about how his grandfather talked about Taylor. Three years later as not only an American, but also the youngest person in the Tour De France, Lemond felt just a hint of the outsider status that Taylor experienced everyday.

Located only a few blocks from Union Station, the statue is an essential visit for cyclists across the world. Check out The Major Taylor Association at www.majoraylorassociation.org for more information on Major Taylor, and upcoming related events. 

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Share...

By David Hoffman



And Share Alike

Urban Velo examines Vélib', the French bike sharing program.

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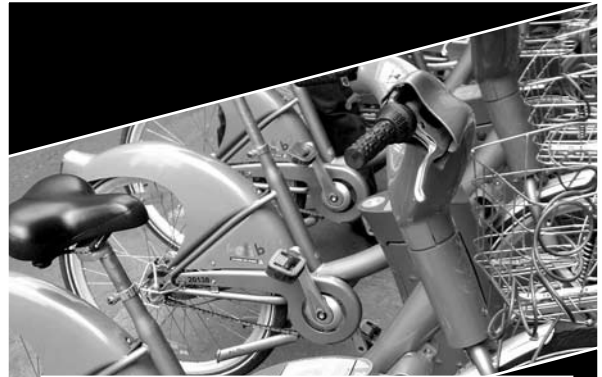
Have you heard about Vélib', a bicycle sharing program in Paris, France? This enormously successful program places thousands of free bicycles in the hands of the French, for them to rent 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The bikes are free to take from one location to another provided that you check it back in at any rental station within 30 minutes or less. After 30 minutes, users are charged a nominal, then increasingly stiff fee for keeping the bike. The system is designed to promote short, one-way trips by bicycle, as there are hundreds of stations throughout Paris. Finding a bike or a nearby location for returning is incredibly easy to do. One year ago, prior to Vélib', the number of trips per day made by bicycle in Paris was approximately 12,000. Currently, more than 70,000 trips a day are made by bicycle in Paris. That represents a *six hundred percent increase* in bicycling!

Origins

Modern day bike sharing can trace its roots back to a Dutch counterculture movement in the mid-sixties called *Provo*. *Provo* won a seat on the Amsterdam City Council, and a series of "White Plans" were developed. The most successful was the "White Bicycle Plan" of 1964 that called for 20,000 community bicycles to be made available to the public. In 1968 bikes were painted white and left in the community for anyone to ride, though not nearly in the numbers called for in the original plan. Success was modest, but the idea caught on. Other locations around the world have implemented similar free bike programs over the years, with the bikes typically painted a single color for easy identification and recovery. This simple and basic method of bike sharing continues to this day. See for example the Austin Yellow Bike Program (www.austinyellowbike.org/bikes.htm) out of Austin, Texas. Portland, Oregon has had a very successful bike-sharing program for years. Free Ride (www.freeridepgh.org) out of Urban Velo's world headquarters in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, operates a "bicycle library" where cyclists can check out bikes for free. Until recently, programs around the United States like these received little if any attention. And there are actually quite a few. For those of you who are keeping track, these low-tech bike sharing systems are often referred to as "first generation."

As the concept of bike sharing became more popular and fashionable in Europe, several attempts in the 1990s and early 2000s were made to commercialize the movement, moving into the "second generation" of bike sharing. One large program (for the time) of 1,100 bikes was launched in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1995. Bikes were checked out for the nominal fee of depositing a few coins in to the release mechanism. Bikes had to be returned to the same

spot, however, and there was a significant amount of theft despite efforts to make the bikes difficult to disassemble without special tools in tandem with designing them to look different from other available bikes. This and other similar efforts were met with a reasonable degree of success. Bikes were typically made available by depositing coins, swiping a credit card at a station to release the bike, or alternately, associating the bike with a user's mobile phone account. The technology for releasing and tracking the bikes was still developing rapidly.



An interesting side note to the provo "White Plans": the "White Corpse Plan" was developed in 1967, and can be thought of as a forerunner of the current Ghost Bike movement (www.ghostbike.org). The Plan called for the chalk outline of a person killed by an auto to be drawn around the body, the line chiseled out and filled with white mortar, and then the outline left permanently in place.

The French Connection

In the United States, cheap oil was nearly a birthright until a couple of years ago when prices started rapidly climbing. Now at a national average of \$4.00 per gallon, media attention is finally being given to what was once considered a fringe activity for Americans: using bicycles for transportation and not just recreation. Stories of "everyday people" miraculously riding to work or the store are the current vogue. A benefit to all of this media attention is that bicycle advocates can point to systems in place elsewhere and finally be taken seriously.

Enter Paris, France.

Paris isn't the only place where bike sharing is rapidly catching on, but it provides a great example. The French system works so well because it is easy to use. In mid-July of 2007, the system was launched with 10,000 bikes and 750 bike stations – all with at least 15 bikes per station and at intervals of roughly 300 meters. Cyclists swipe a credit card and are assigned a bike at the station. The bikes are all identical, set up with batteries for lights that recharge when docked at any station, and complete with baskets for errands and of course holding strategically placed baguettes. Bikes that are not functioning properly are reported when returned to a station. Mobile crews of mechanics ensure that bikes are up and running as rapidly as possible. The current technology-rich systems for checking out and tracking bikes are considered “third generation.”

The first 30 minutes are free, and the cyclist can return the bike at any available station with an open spot for the bike. Additionally, it appears that the “safety in numbers” theory that as more cyclists take to the road collisions involving cyclists actually decrease relative to the number of riders on the road, may be correct. Parisian motorists seem to be adjusting with little trouble to the massive numbers of cyclists on the road. But who would expect anything less from the country that holds the Tour de France? And as if this doesn't sound good enough, Paris has plans to significantly expand the system to over 20,000 bikes in the coming years.

Vélib' (www.velib.paris.fr) is operated by the city of Paris, but is financed by JCDecaux, an advertising company. JCDecaux earns money by advertising on the bikes, and in return, gives Paris a portion of the revenue. Here in the United States, Clear Channel Outdoor has licensed the rights to a system similar to the one in Paris, though to date, no system has been deployed. Among some cyclists, there is vehement opposition to Clear Channel Communications – they were the parent corporation of many radio stations whose morning show shock jockeys were egging folks on to report misdeeds that they had done to cyclists, or even worse. This was especially true at a recent mini-summit held with neighborhood advocates in San Francisco, a city that is beginning to take a close look at deploying a similar system to Vélib'.

Here. Now.

Interest in bike-sharing programs in the United States is at an all-time high. I recently attended the previously mentioned mini-summit organized in part by the Bay Area Bicycle Coalition (www.bayareabikes.org). Several potential vendors were present to showcase their wares, including Clear Channel Outdoor. Presentations were made by local transit agencies, the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (www.sfbike.org), land use organizations, and the City staff. Input from local citizens was sought, and lively


discussion ensued. These types of mini-summits will become increasingly common as more and more cities consider bike-sharing programs.

In Washington, D.C. a bike sharing program is currently being rolled out called Smartbike DC. This is the first of the Clear Channel ventures to operate here in the U.S. and is tiny as compared to its Paris counterpart; only 120 bikes in 10 locations. Congressional staff in the District of Columbia will soon get their own bike sharing program in an effort to make it easier for elected officials and staffers to get from building to building as well as around the Capitol without driving. Bikes Belong (www.bikesbelong.org), the Industry-funded national advocacy group in partnership with Humana (www.humana.com), one of the nation's largest healthcare interests plans to have 1,000 bikes at both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions later this year. A recent editorial in the Philadelphia Inquirer indicated that local advocates were already gearing up to get a program in place in the near future.

In the private sector, Humana has developed an in-house bike-sharing program called “Freewheelin” that they proudly presented at the 2008 National Bike Summit. The system as they developed it works similarly to other third generation efforts, but has the added component of Social Networking built in for their users. Cyclists can log miles online, schedule rides, swap stories, arrange competitions, etc. Humana plans to continue to develop their system with the hopes that other companies or organizations can deploy it. From Humana's perspective, people who regularly bicycle are typically healthier people and that translates to lower healthcare costs overall.

Other cities around the world (mostly in Europe) have implemented third generation bike-sharing systems with considerable success. Here is a short list of some of the more prominent locations: Aix-en-Provence, Rouen, Barcelona (Bicing), Brussels, Copenhagen, Lyon (Vélo'v), Nantes (Bicloo), Toulouse, Stockholm, Pamplona (Cemusa), OYBike, Call a Bike (Berlin, Frankfurt, Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich, Karlsruhe), Copenhagen/Helsinki/Aarhus (CIOS), Oslo, Sandnes, Seville (Sevici) and Vienna.

Why It Works

Paris-style bike-sharing works well in dense, populated areas where people work, live, and play. As transportation costs continue to rise many predict a return to the urban core from the suburbs. Population centers will become increasingly mixed in use – shopping, work, entertainment, and services will once again become centralized. This is the perfect environment for bike-sharing systems. Europe has always had these types of population centers, and many moderate to large American cities fit this bill. Just as we all heard that peak oil was nearly upon us, so too, will be bike-sharing programs. 

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ONE CAR



By Mary Megliola Franzen

The first hint to change our ways came in the form of a bright orange impound notice from the Seattle police department. It was stuck to my husband's 1979 Celica, anchored first by the windshield wiper and later by the rain. We didn't really mean to leave the car parked in the same spot on the street for nearly a month; we just hadn't had any occasion to move it.

We had entered the marriage the previous year with a car apiece. We held on to them in much the same way we both kept our old pots and pans. To this day we're not sure if our neighbors really thought the car was abandoned, or if they just wanted that parking spot. In any event, that bright orange notice was a clear sign that one of our two cars never went anywhere.

Our first step was to move the Celica to the other side

of the street. Our second step was to give it away. That was 1993. Three cities, one child and 15 years later, we're still a one-car household.

Through the years a lot of people haven't quite known what to make of this. Often I would get a sad smile from people who assumed we simply couldn't afford a second car. They would gently suggest that a used car might be within our range. (Considering we drove a 1990 Corolla past the 195,000-mile mark and into the next millennium, I'm not sure how much more used a car could get.) Then came the part of the conversation where I told people that we were living with one car on purpose, we hoped never to own two cars at once, and my husband liked his daily bicycle commute. I would admit that I like walking and taking the bus. At that point the kind folk looked away and changed the subject.



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That was then. Back when a fill-up cost less than \$20 we were the otherwise normal people with quirky transportation habits. Now we're hip. Visionary. Responsible global citizens.

Actually, we're two people who really hate to be in the car. We make job and real-estate decisions based on our desire to minimize driving. Yes, we've saved a pile of money over the years by not having a second car, and yes, we are both deeply concerned about global warming. We also get really cranky if we have to be in the car for more than 20 minutes at one time. Most people feel liberated when they get behind the wheel. We feel trapped.

I've tried to explain to people that being a one-car family isn't all that difficult, and I point out that we've done it most of our married life. They respond, "But that's you." That's true, but they're looking at the wrong side of who we are. They're giving us too much credit for being tough, and they're failing to see that we're simply avoiding an unpleasant activity.


Perhaps that's my calling in the fight against global warming—to point out that driving a car isn't all it's cracked up to be. Drivers assume that leaving the car at home is a sacrifice. I see it as a gift. No traffic, no parking fees, the freedom to read a book while someone else drives. It's a beautiful way to live. Someone needs to tell these people that the car is not their friend.

And yet, we own one. We've had many conversations about going entirely car-free, but something always stops us. We recall the last time we had to transport a fever-

ish child to the doctor, or the trips to and from Boy Scout camp. Sometimes we need things from Target or Costco, and they—like most big-box stores—are in the suburbs. So we hop in the car and go.

We try to make the car our last resort, preserving its definition as a necessary evil of modern life in the United States. I admit that sometimes it's a highly convenient evil. Our son walks to and from school—but when it's pouring rain and he has to turn in his science project that day, I drive him. On that day we are thankful for the car. More often, the car is the annoying thing we have to park once we get where we're going.

As I write this, two 20" tires were just delivered to our front door. They're for a decades-old folding Raleigh 20 that my husband bought somewhere or another online. Bike purchases have begun to blur. He's fixing it up to be my city-girl errand bike. I'm wondering how many groceries I can fit in the front basket and whether I can ride it while wearing a skirt.

Big grocery trips will continue to happen in our car, a '05 Pontiac in a shade of orange inexplicably called "Fusion." We've gotten older and acquired some real estate, so these days we park our car in our garage and impound stickers are a thing of the past. Now we're the ones leaving notes on neighbors' windshields, trying not to sound too irritated when they park in the alley and block access to our garage. We can always get the bikes out, though—all 10 of them, with their fenders and baskets and headlights, just waiting to set us free. 

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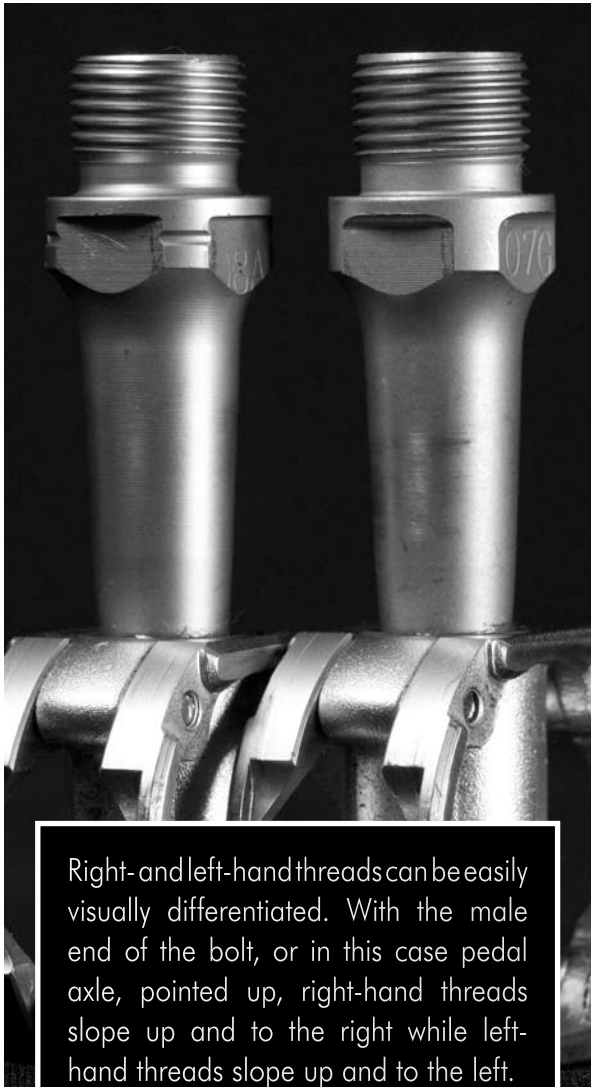
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Bike Threading 101

By Brad Quartuccio



Right- and left-hand threads can be easily visually differentiated. With the male end of the bolt, or in this case pedal axle, pointed up, right-hand threads slope up and to the right while left-hand threads slope up and to the left.

Few things can cause a bigger headache for a bicycle mechanic than left-hand threads. The confusion and frustration of “loosening” a stuck pedal only to realize you’ve truly just been making it really, really tight is unparalleled, and replayed time after time in shops everywhere. Sometimes lefty isn’t loosey, and it’s a good idea to have a firm grasp on this concept before grabbing the cheater bar for that stuck bottom bracket.

Most everything in life is right-hand threaded, meaning that if you turn the head of a bolt clockwise the bolt will get tighter. As a de facto standard it works well for most applications of fasteners and machine parts. There are instances where the physics of mechanical movement dictate that particular items be threaded opposite this standard, hence left-hand threads that tighten when turned counterclockwise.

Parts of a Bicycle with Left-Hand Threads

Pedals – The left (non-driveside) pedal and crank arm

Bottom Brackets – The right (driveside) cup of English threaded bottom brackets.

Fixed Hub – The lockring on a track hub.

Freewheel – The bearing cover. Don’t loosen it, it’s a mess.

Mechanically speaking, pedals, bottom brackets and that freewheel bearing cover have left-hand threads where they do because of the principle of precession. Jobst Brandt explains, “[Precession], in which a round object rolling in a circular ring in one direction will itself turn in the opposite direction... Precession forces are large enough that no manner of thread locking glues, short of welding, will arrest them.” Newtonian physics at its best. Pedals are far more prone to precession than bottom bracket cups are, thus Italian and French thread bottom brackets which are right-

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hand threaded on both sides work without loosening. Most all bicycles in the United States have English threading with left-hand thread on the driveside, fixed cup.


As for the track lockring, it is left-hand threaded in order to resist the cog wanting to unscrew with backpressure. Friction between the face of the cog and lockring causes the lockring to tighten as the cog wants to loosen. Properly installed that first time, this is a tight connection that will rarely fail and a solid mechanical reason to avoid so called "suicide" setups with a right-hand thread lockring and fixed cog on a converted freewheel hub.

Every mechanic has a different method for remembering what threading is what. Personally, I remember that the pedals loosen by turning the wrench over the top of the pedal towards the back of the bicycle. English thread bottom bracket cups have threading opposite the pedals of the same side. Take note before pulling out the "Arm of God" cheater-bar wrench extension.

When rifling through the parts box or otherwise encountering pedals where left- from right- isn't marked

The arrows in the image show the direction to tighten the given pedal. If you can remember that the pedals tighten towards the front of the bike as shown, you can remember that the bottom bracket cup on each side tightens opposite the pedal of the same side.

or otherwise obvious, one can easily discern the different threading with some wisdom passed down from grandfathers everywhere. With the threads pointing up, right-hand threads slope up and to the right while left-hand threads slope up and to the left.

Keeping threading in mind will save many headaches and knuckles from slipped wrenches over time. Easily confused by even the most competent mechanics, frustrations with a tricky part just not coming loose always merit a look at which way the threading may go. Righty-tighty, lefty-loosey, except when it isn't. 

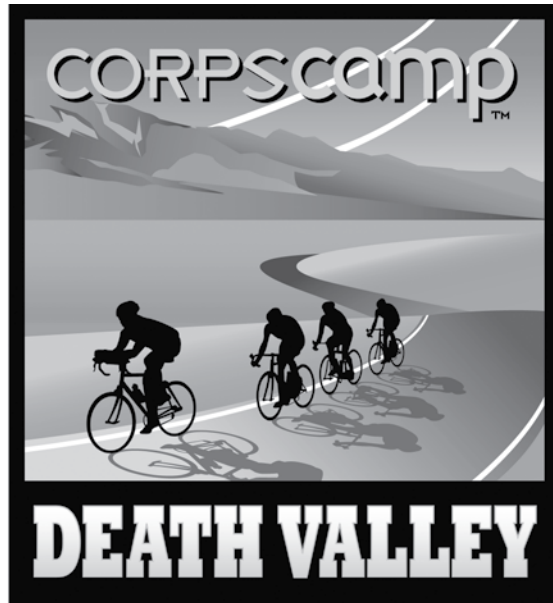
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Bike Chain Stretch

By Brad Quartuccio



Chain stretch is an ugly beast. Caught late, it can spell disaster for an entire drivetrain through premature wear. Besides keeping things clean and lubed, regularly checking and replacing your chain is the best thing to you can do to protect your drivetrain investment.

Bicycle chains are $\frac{1}{2}$ inch pitch, meaning that there is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch between each pin. Using a ruler, you can measure 12 complete links of chain, pin to pin, to determine if the chain should be replaced. On a new chain this measurement should be exactly 12 inches. A chain that measures $12 \frac{1}{16}$ inch should be replaced before any drivetrain damage is incurred. Past the $12 \frac{1}{8}$ inch mark and you should expect at least the most used chainring and cog(s) to need replaced for a new chain to work properly, and most likely the entire drivetrain is past its prime.

It is truly a misnomer to say that chains “stretch” as they do not increase in length due to physical stretching of the links but due to wear on the chain pins themselves. Whatever the mechanism, a stretched or worn chain is bad news all around. Inspect and replace your chain when indicated, it’s a small investment as compared to the rest of the drivetrain. 

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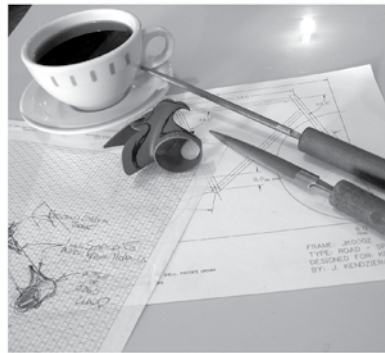
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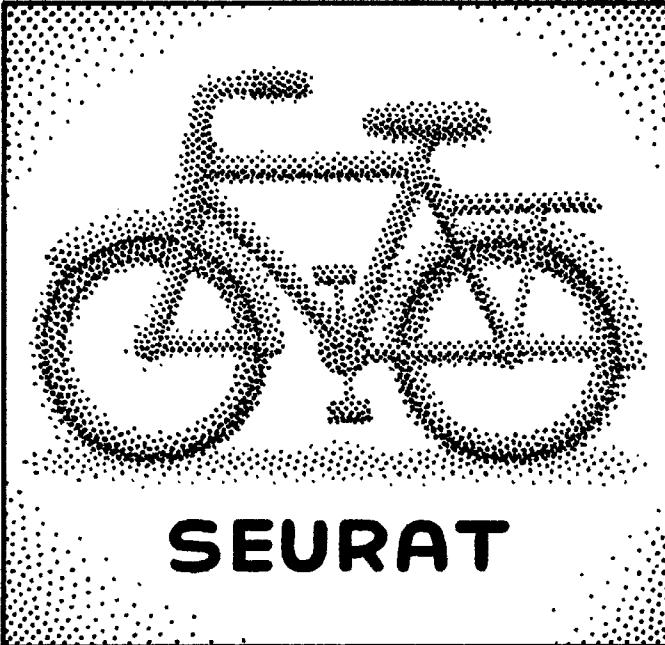
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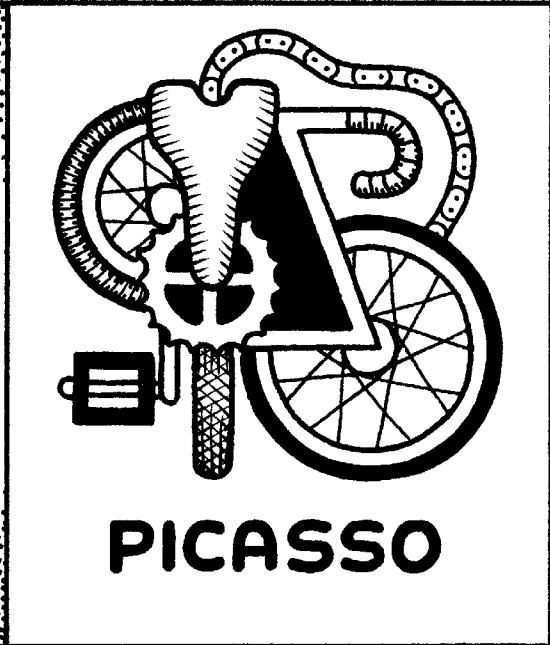


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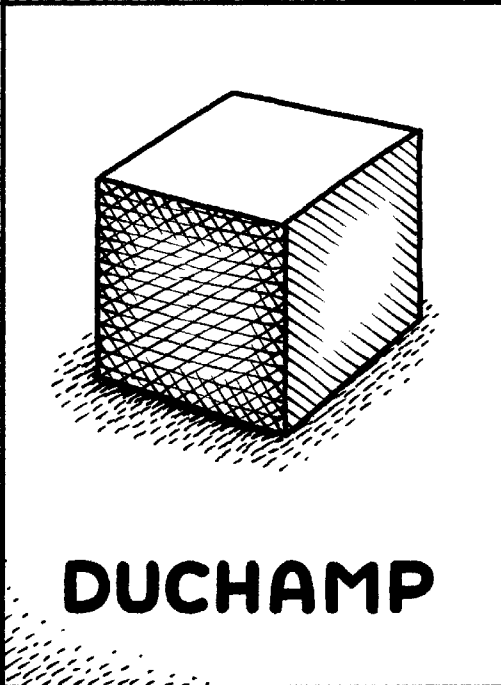
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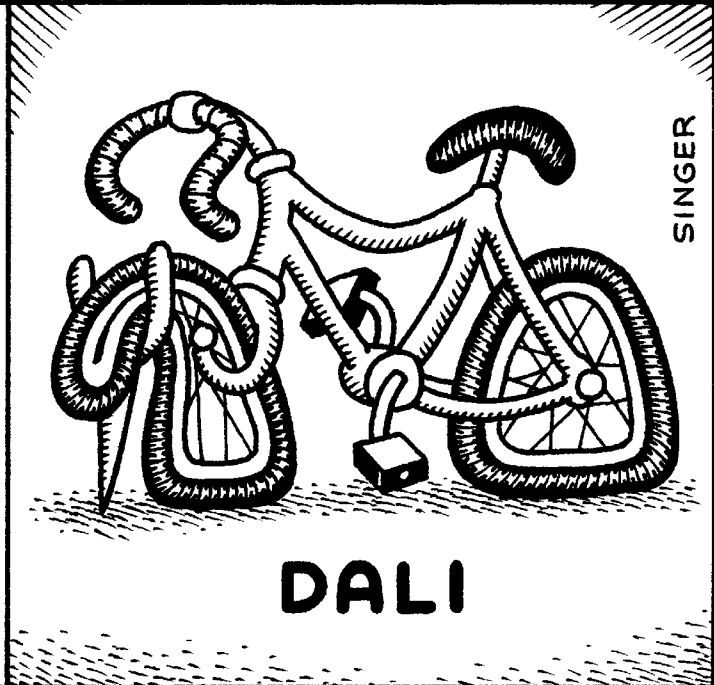
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NOBCO (Canada) Xtreme Bike (Puerto Rico)



Tell them you saw it in Urban Velo!