

issue 2 / march 2006

# BIKE PLAGUE

bikes. in LA.

SANTA MONICA CRITICAL MASS 1 YEAR  
ANNIVERSARY

BIKE WINTER L.A. REPORTBACK  
COLE COONCE INTERVIEW

MIDNIGHT RIDAZ REPORTBACK  
BIKE MOVIES!

MS. SPINDLE'S PROBLEM PAGE

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# BIKEPLAGUE

The Bikeplague crew this month was budge, lisa, luz, matt, max, morgan, ms. spindle, tomatoes and trista cinema bee.

Wanna get involved? Got something to contribute? Want to distribute to local shops and stuff? Get in touch then, yo! Contributions best in plain text format with pictures as separate attachments. E-mail us at [bikeplague@gmail.com](mailto:bikeplague@gmail.com)

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Needless to say, bikePLAgue in no way endorses the sorts of stupid adventures and stories contained within these pages.

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Yo kids. This is the second issue of Bikeplague. Despite being chased by ravenous beasts, getting fat, drinking far too much coffee, a complete lack of interest from anyone but ourselves and our own cycling ability (or lack thereof), we somehow found the time to put together a second issue. Found within these pages you'll find lots and lots of stuff, including stuff about the AWESOME Santa Monica Critical Mass first birthday ride, a BikeWinter review section, random stories, films with bikes in them, an interview with local writer with a penchant for bikes, Cole Coonce and other good and cool stuff. We were going to do a calendar section like we did last time but we were too lame. Check out [www.bikeboom.com](http://www.bikeboom.com) for bike stuff in LA.

-morgan

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# NEWS

February Critical Mass had about 100 people and was the most fun one in awhile. Impromptu body of water tour. The ride had good speed, good vibe, good route. No major car-bike interactions. What else could you want?

February Midnight Riders had a ridiculous amount of people. 500? 700? The only numbers we trust come from Joe Linton and we have not heard from him.

Some SWARM kids went out to Death Valley for the Spring Adventure Corps double century the first weekend in March. Some have had better rides, but apparently the adventure was there for everyone.

LACBC has kicked off their campaign to get sharrows on the road in Los Angeles. Check out their website for all the details.

[www.labikecoalition.org/](http://www.labikecoalition.org/) Also, the annual LA Ride happens May 21st this year.

Tour de Drugs in Redondo Beach went off! The South Bay kids came through with 3 tall bikes, a bronco bike, a drunk bike (spring welded between the stem and forks), a skid bike and a swing bike. About 10 LA riders made the 45 mile round trip to hang out and eat at the BBQ. Some racers rode around in circles while teenagers and teachers alike took turns trying to ride the fun bikes.

Paul from ChopperCabras has been busy making bike propaganda in the form of stickers and patches. See him in person for the latest.

BikeBoom calendar is active; check it out at [www.calendar.bikeboom.com](http://www.calendar.bikeboom.com) for posted rides. The best thing on there right now is Chris Nelson's all night ride starting Friday night, the 24th, at Wilshire & Western at midnight. Breakfast in Long Beach! Check it out.



# READERS' LETTERS

Write to us at [bikeplague@gmail.com](mailto:bikeplague@gmail.com)!

**From:** matthew kates <[matthewkates@gmail.com](mailto:matthewkates@gmail.com)>  
**To:** [bikeplague@gmail.com](mailto:bikeplague@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** Practical Activism

I went to college around San Francisco. I didn't ride a bike then. Actually, now that I think about it, I did ride a bike but it was a shitty BMX and Berkeley is more of a walking town, anyway. Point being...the bay area is not nearly as great a bike town as L.A. If you ride a bike in S.F. you're just trying to get around faster. If you are on a bike fighting traffic in L.A. you are most likely the real F'ing deal.

So, point being...I went to college. In college there is a lot of Activism. "What the Eff is activism," you ask? Well, activism is what happens when you give an opinionated person with good networking skills a little bit of information about a controversial issue. Next thing you know, people are wandering around carrying homemade signs (or god forbid, puppets) with stupid slogans on them, chanting stuff. Its kind of like remedial cheerleading for people that didn't go to football games in high school. And it has about the same effect on how the game goes. (As it happens, I went to every football game because I was in the stupid Band, because my neighbor convinced me that it's way better than having to do P.E., which in retrospect was completely and utterly Wrong.)

So, point being... activism is lame. "Go home and recycle or something," is what I have to say to activists. Or even better! Ride your bike instead of driving a car. Did you know that driving a car is the number one cause of people you've never met getting killed in a place you'll never ever be? Also, cars are the number one cause of evil motherfuckers in suits making lots and lots of money! Driving cars is also a major cause of people talking shit about L.A! (Which sucks, because I was born in L.A., and despite the fact that this place is really fucked, it's my home. So Eff you, S.F.)

So, point being...I thought it was really F'ing weird when I realized that Bush is like my girlfriend's pussy hairs and Dick is like my penis and Colon is like everybody's butt-hole! And you know what else? George Bush's son George kind of looks like a chimpanzee! But also, pointing it out doesn't solve anything! In fact, if I felt like being logical I would try to convince you that it makes things worse! But I don't.

So, point being...go ride your bike. That's all you need to do. The world is guaranteed to be a better place for it and you don't have to learn about politics, which is really F'ing hard, anyway.

This month we have somewhat of a rant from one Matthew Kates. What can we say other than that we sympathise, Thew? Politics definitely is F'ing hard. Does anyone out there understand what it's all about?



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# A HOT DATE WITH MY BIKE

**I'd been urging Chris to ride with me on any of the many rides in L.A. for the past 6 months or so, but he always had some excuse. Finally, I suggested Midnight Ridazz and he agreed to go. This was the 2 year anniversary "Make Out" ride and I was super excited to take a bike virgin out on a hot date with his bike.**

He drove out from Santa Monica and we rode the 10 miles from my place in South Central to the starting point in Echo Park. Chris is a runner, not a cyclist, so although he owns a bike, he doesn't ride it much and the ride out



was a bit tiring for him. We took Broadway south and the street was mostly carless. The night was foggy and cool. Very romantic.

As we were approaching downtown he began asking how far we were from the meeting spot and I kept telling him 2 miles, 2 miles, 2 miles. He kept asking and I kept giving him the same answer. It was a long two miles for him and I feared the night ride would be too much. We ran into some friends on Glendale just a few blocks from Echo Park and we tried riding with them, but they were a bit too fast for our newbie.

Depending on who you ask, there were anywhere from 500-1,000 riders. I think it was more towards the lower end, but I wasn't counting. We met up with our LA FNB buddies and Steve from Sacto FNB brought us donated

vegan cookies, so I knew it was going to be a good ride.

We rode from Echo Park to Silver Lake to Atwater Village to Glendale where we went through the Glendale Galleria parking lot. Along the way we had some police cars blocking traffic for us and I thought, "How kind of them to help us for a change"; Glendale cops are particularly nasty. Just a few minutes after saying that I noticed a police helicopter beaming it's lights at us and I was reminded of my very first ride back in July of 2004 to Hollywood Forever Cemetary.

I continued to lose Chris in the huge crowd of bikes throughout the ride and waited several times only to find that he was actually ahead of me. From Glendale we turned back to Atwater-Silver Lake-Echo Park and finally onto Stadium Way to Academy Road where we climbed a hill to get to the make-out spot. The view would have been lovely if not for the fog enveloping us. We hung out with two very cute boys, but I didn't get any action because they weren't my type (ya know, hetero). No hot make-out sessions with anyone, but a good time nonetheless.

Chris and I rode out just after 1AM back to my place. He was super pleased with the ride, thought it was easy, will be coming out for more, and is bringing friends. Yay!

I should mention however, that his sit bones didn't appreciate the 36 mile ride and he spent the next day resting at home.

Not bad for a newbie, eh?

**the bad stuff:** I know of at least three bike-car crashes that night, but all riders are okay. I saw cops harrassing riders and pulling them over and I believe some people got ticketed, but I can't be sure.

**the good stuff:** Jimmy wore a white suit and pedaled as Emily, who was dressed like cupid, passed out chocolate kisses while sitting atop a platform just above the front wheel of his bike. It was super cute.

--luz ángélica

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# BIKE & HIKE MT. JOSEPHINE

Ride then hike...  
definitely a way of  
taking a regular  
'recreational

excursion' into a more  
adventurous outing, adding that  
edge of exploration and self-  
supported to a simple weekend  
activity.

I left my house near Downtown LA a little after 8am to meet friends at Clear Creek ranger station at 10:00am, some 25 miles away. Too much food and little exercise over the winter months combined with a messenger bag laden with pasta, change of clothes, lock, book... led to a slow speed up Angeles Crest highway but I finally arrived at 10:30am. My friends had taken a wrong turn and ended up in Arcadia. Good thing for me, as that meant they didn't arrive until 10:35am. I got changed in the restroom and looped my U-lock through my cycling clothes, helmet, detached front wheel and frame. Probably looked as if some roadie was off in the woods naked to the casual observer. We grabbed a map from the ranger station and set up off the fireroad opposite the fire station at Clear Creek. The going was good and four miles and 1900' of elevation gain later we reached the top of Mt. Josephine. Great views all around (bar the smog from LA). We sat around for an hour making bad jokes and eating lunch, then trundled back down the way we came to the ranger station. I bid farewell to my friends, got changed,

reassembled my bike and coasted all the way home by 4:30pm.

-morgan



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# SANTA MONICA CRITICAL MASS

## 1 YEAR ANNIVERSARY: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 2006

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One year of Critical Mass in Santa Monica. Like, dude! Three fearless bikepLague staff reporters were on hand to chronicle the proceedings as the mass trundled around Santa Monica and Venice prior to heading to a party at the Santa Monica Green Party's offices at 28<sup>th</sup> and Pico. *Photos: Ryan.*

**"Only one year?", someone exclaimed. Yup. Here in Los Angeles, Santa Monica Critical Mass has only been going for a year, but it's been a good year. Starting from scratch, it's built up to three-figure crowds.**

This was my first foray on the westside, although I'd been hearing good reports. I met up with the UCLA satellite group at 5:30pm at the Westwood and Le Conte intersection. For a while there were only four of us, but we steadily accrued more people until we were around twenty. We rolled off into the bleak evening fog, taking Westwood down to Ohio, then onto Santa Monica, briefly making the switch to Colorado for the descent on Santa Monica Pier. A moderate crowd awaited us so we contented ourselves chitchatting until the time came to depart. By this time, we had a decent crowd.

I don't recall the route we took, but we definitely saw a lot of Santa Monica and Venice: Montana, Santa Monica, Lincoln, Abbot Kinney, Venice and the Boardwalk were all roads we rode down. The ride was fun, and varied. Corking of cars was received well, on the most part. A couple of times I felt that riders were being a little disrespectful of drivers - c'mon kids, corking is one thing, but corking a car when you may as well let them go does no good for anyone. Pay some respect, no matter how extremely you are against cars. But for the most part, this was one of the most fun rides I've been on in LA. The lack of respect became directed back at us towards the end of the

ride when we approached the Venice boardwalk - a guy wandered into the mass, pushing riders and yelling. Naturally enough, some pushed back and before long a potential fight situation emerged with four guys on foot challenging the mass. Despite being outnumbered, these guys made up for it in machismo. We rode off unscathed after some well-calculated peaceful interventions.

Finally (and boy, were we hungry by now...), we made our way up to the Santa Monica Green Party's headquarters on Pico and 28th to be greeted by tamales, beer, water and comfy chairs. And what a great vibe. The sort of atmosphere you get at a house party put on by a load of good friends. I can't begin to describe how awesome the party was. I kept wandering back and forth from the comfy couch / disco hall room through the food area to the parking lot at the back. And that was where the real fun began. Alec and Bryan, El Segundo biking fanatics, had turned up with an array of their custom bikes: the swing bike (hinged at both the head tube *and* the seat tube), the bronco bike (whose rear hub is off-center from the rear rim) and the smallest fixie in the world. Topped off with the addition of Max's rather flexible tall bike.

The evening was awesome. So much so, in fact, that we were forced to make two trips to a nearby donut shop to fuel us through the night.

-morgan

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# SANTA MONICA CRITICAL MASS

**DOES EVERYTHING YOU DO HAVE TO DO WITH BIKES?**

**DOES EVERYTHING YOU DO HAVE TO DO WITH CARS?**

Okay, okay, I am a bit defensive about my lack of social activities that are non-bike oriented. This past Friday was a special occasion: Santa Monica Critical Mass had its one year anniversary ride/party so I made the cross town(s) journey to join Zack and the crew.

Some thoughts:

1) It's cold over there on the Westside 2) Two bike trailers with music make anything more fun (especially when playing Public Enemy) 3) The ocean is an amazing backdrop for a group night ride 4) Sorry LA, but the circles in Venice were a lot more fun than the Hollywood/Highland circles 5) All

rides, anywhere and ever, should end at a place with tamales and vegan chocolate cake.

The party in Green Party apparently stands for PARTY. The music, food, bike films and microbrew kept the 100 plus from the ride hanging out for awhile. The weird kids were in the parking lot in the back playing on the fun bikes: A tall bike, a swing bike, a bronco bike (off set rear hub), a skid bike (part exercise bike!?), and a music bike kept us well entertained into the early morning. The Westside can hang, don't let any Silverlake track bike punk tell you different.

Matt

Ps. The Santa Monica Critical Mass ride meets at the SM Pier at 630pm on the FIRST Friday of the month.

# SANTA MONICA CRITICAL MASS THE REALEST RIDE

"Authentic Chi-town Philly cheese steaks" exclaimed the glowing restaurant sign we noticed while stopped at a light. Huh? I grew up near Chicago, and as far as I know, the Windy City is known for its deep dish pizza and Chicago-style hot dogs (never mustard!). My riding partner, from near Philadelphia, was equally confused. The sign also asserted, "It's the realest!" We puzzled over this for a while. The realest what? Compared to other Chi-town Philly cheese steaks?

It was the 1-year anniversary of the Santa Monica Critical mass, so we decided to ride out from the East Side to support The Cause.

Both of us being perennially late dawdlers, we set off well after we hoped. I'll admit it; this was my first time riding to the west side. I'm primarily a commuter, going the short distance from my home in Echo Park to work in MacArthur Park or out within the surrounding neighborhoods. To go across town, I'll typically drive. That might be changing, though. My experienced, well-traveled guide took into account my inexperience and took me a calm, virtually traffic-free route. We cruised down 4th to Redondo, over to Jefferson, from which we entered the Ballona Creek path. Just before

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entering, we stopped at the park's public restrooms to release the pre-ride coffee from our bladders and cover my naked shins and forearms. Riding across the field, bright lights illuminating kids practicing their baseball skills with their dads, I had one of those content, life-is-great, there's-no-place-I'd-rather-be feelings. We descended to the river path and the mist of the cool, evening fog, combined with the industrial nature of the concrete-lined waterway and the massive steel bridges, gave the ride a mysterious, magical feel. "Isn't this romantic?" I asked. "There aren't many girls that would think that," he responded. After a few miles, the path ended in Marina del Rey, where we caught another mostly deserted trail north to Santa Monica.

After a few radioed "Where you at?"s, we finally saw the Massers' red blinkies. When we got closer, we realized some people had

been stopped by a cop. So much for Santa Monica's liberal reputation! Always the advocate for justice, my cohort tried to find out what was going on. I tried to shush him from yelling "Pigs!", fearful of retaliatory police action (see bikepLague, issue #1). After he was assured that they were okay, we joined the rest of the group. We rode down Main Street and Abbot Kinney, eliciting the usual stares of confusion, cheers of support, raised fists of solidarity, and angry honks of irked motorists. We made our way down to the Strand, where some hot-headed gang banger waded into the crowd of bikers and, for some non-evident reason, started pushing people over on their bikes. This angered some, who reacted by pushing him back. Shouting and cursing ensued, and said hot head ripped off his shirt to fight anyone who was willing. Some Massers were tempted, but eventually everyone got back on their bikes and moved on. It was a

strange scene. There was something very animalistic about it all, as if I was witnessing a male bird puff out its brightly-colored chest, protecting his territory or trying to impress a potential mate.

Finally, we ended at the Westside Green Party headquarters, which also



houses the Bike Out Recyclery program. By the time we locked up, the line for Mama's tamales was almost out the door. We took our place in line, and chatted it up with a recent transplant from Vancouver and a native Angelino who has just returned from East Africa. When we finally reached the front of the line, the local microbrew keg had thawed, beer was being generously distributed, and the last of the rice and beans was scraped onto our porcelain plates (yay! no disposable!). We took seats on the comfy sofas to eat, where bike videos ("Still We Ride" about the arrests in NYC's Critical Mass) screened silently, music played, and international Green Party memorabilia covered the walls. After a while, Zack brought out a pair of wheel-shaped vegan chocolate cakes, the super-friendly Green Party lady (who we had, unbeknownst to her, started calling "mom") brought out more reusable plates and forks, and we sang happy birthday to ourselves. He thanked everyone involved in making the event (and the year) successful and passed out commemorative, lime-green, sherbet-colored spoke cards.

Outside the building, the South Bay bike kids' creations were being tried out by the curious masses – the tall bike, the swing bike (hinged at the middle), the bronco bike (which attempts to buck the rider off the seat), and other crazy two-wheeled contraptions. They also had DIY polo sticks, blocks of wood glued to the ends of golf club shafts, and a small, once-inflated-but-no-longer, soccer ball. If a bike polo game was played that night, I missed it. What I did see, however, was some drunk guy crashing into everyone and Alec as graceful as an Olympic figure skater,

looping around on the swing bike. Some random hipster kids walked out of seemingly nowhere (actually the parking lot next door) and seemed fascinated and excited by the whole scene. I guess it must have looked kind of amazing if you had no idea such a bike culture existed in Los Angeles.

Eventually, it got late and we wanted to go, but couldn't, because we were locked to our friend, who was MIA and suspected of being off in a corner, making out with some girl. After looking in the unused rooms, and some clueless boy behavior, we finally found him, unlocked our bikes, and headed east, anxious to climb into bed, exhausted.

molly



**Green PARTY...**



# LA BIKE WINTER

After the success of L.A. BikeSummer, a group of people involved decided to take things one step further. BikeWinter: Ten days of rides, parties and other events. Yay!

*Feel My Legs I'm A  
Racer hill race... in  
the rain.*

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For those who weren't there, BikeSummer is a month-long celebration of the bicycle that is hosted by a different city each year. 2005 was Los Angeles's year. And what a great time we had. So much so, in fact, that some of the kids involved decided they'd not had enough. And thus was born BikeWinter: some ten days of Bike stuff in Los Angeles. We asked some of the organizers to write a bit about their events.

# FEEL MY LEGS. I'M A RACER

**DOWNHILL STAGE RACE // SATURDAY, JANUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>**

Feel My Legs; I Am a Racer is a 10-stage hill race held on the 10 hardest/steepest/most brutal hills in LA. Race day was Saturday, January 14th and 35 riders showed up despite forecasts for rain. The awesome team of volunteers signed people in and the group was off to the first hill. The rain started before we even got there. First hill: Marview near Sunset/Beaudry. Photographers lined the street as the riders raced to the top. The conditions proved to be problematic from the start. People sliding everywhere.

Next hill: Quintero off of Sunset. Sickly steep. Some riders dropped out at the mere site of its awesomeness. The rain continued down and everyone was already wet and cold. The downhill ride to Echo Park Blvd for the third hill exasperated it. The stage began about a mile down Echo Park Blvd before the left onto Baxter. Yeah, Baxter. This wrecked people. Many had to push their bike up and over. The support vehicle (my cross bike with a trailer) had to be pushed up by two people. The rain continues to come down and the

descents are deadly. Luckily we are only racing up. Character is being built with every passing second.

Up and over the other Baxter and then up Fargo. Yep, four hills deep before the riders would climb the steepest hill on the west coast (yeah, steeper than anything SF has to offer). Pure brutality. We were having fun though. Volunteers pushed the oranges/bananas/water/Clif bars in order to lighten their own bags. Over to Glendale via Earl then up the other side of Earl. The last three hills are ones I really like: Duane up from the bottom of Silver Lake Blvd, Maltman from Sunset and Micheltorena north of Sunset. Fantastic! The group, now down to about 20, pushed on.

Hypothermia in LA? Probably not, but closer than I was comfortable with. Watching the descents made my hair stand up. Thankfully no one was hurt and we all made it back to the A-house for the awards ceremony and the pancake breakfast (props to Luz and fam, Justin, Chris and others). T-shirts for finishers and prizes for winners in each category (spandex and non-spandex), Jack Mego and Oisin, respectively. See you next time?







# URBANBIKEASSAULT'S THE CANNONBALL RUN BICYCLE SCAVENGER HUNT

Having learned what worked and what didn't from our last scavenger hunt in October, we thought we'd put together another one for BikeWinter in January. Planning and organizing was much better and this time we had no complaints! Thirteen enthusiastic teams of two, some of which dressed up as characters from the film, began the race and eleven teams managed to finish. Contestants had 2.5 hrs. to find 37 items somehow relating to the cheesy 80's film.

It truly felt like winter in L.A. with a high of 61F and winds strong enough to rock people side to side while riding the 15 mile route. The course included a road block, a taco restaurant (actually greek food), a Friends of Nature meeting with tree loving-car hating hippies, a sex shop, a church where a priest blessed riders for a safe trip, a rumble with a bike gang, and a baby (duck) rescue.

I was Captain Chaos at the last checkpoint. Two hours passed before I saw the first team approaching Echo Park Lake and I began worrying and wondering if they'd all

given up, so I spent the time riding back and forth along the foot path to keep warm. Once the first team showed up, all the other teams arrived at about five minute intervals. I was glad to see most of the teams and eager to head to the finish line and add up points.

Along the way teams had to pick up everything from bananas and toilet paper to empty beer cans and flavored condoms/lube. Several teams presented us with roaches for points in the "Hemp anything" category, but didn't share. In the "pink underwear" category one spirited, blonde Aussie pulled down his pants revealing a thong that was perhaps a bit too small, but I heard no complaints. Two teams found the signs that read: "Re-elect Sean 'Kill a Commie' O'Sanlon: God, Guns, & Guts Keep Us Safe from the Hippie Nuts," but one sign remains unclaimed.

The whole race from beginning to end was filmed by Zack and Ryan and will be submitted to this year's Bicycle Film Festival, which will visit LA in June.

We had a small vegan BBQ and partied hard to the sounds of the Sharp Ease, the Pressure, and the Fullness 'til the wee hours of the night.

The top three teams received trophies, the last team won a broken car air bag, and everyone that raced got an awesome shirt with the UBA logo. Scores were first place: Corey & Matt 62 pts, 2nd: Kris & Clyde 58 pts, 3rd: Mike & Hiep 56 pts, Last: Zack & Ryan 17 pts. --luz



*First prize caps by Alec*



# BIKEWINTERS DIVINE HOLY RIDE THE NACIMIENTO BIKE TOUR

On Sunday, January 8th, from the corner of First Street and Chicago in Boyle Heights, over 80 people celebrated the season of BikeWinter by taking to the streets to enjoy the famous and divine nacimientos of Los Angeles' east side.

For the 5th year, the annual tour drew bicyclists from all over the city and beyond to experience mini Bethlehems, makeshift barns and stables, and in one case, a complete living room reenactment of Jesus' birth and the arrival of the three kings. For many bicyclists, this was the first time exploring the historically and ethnically rich neighborhoods of Boyle Heights and Lincoln Heights.

The tour helped to create a better appreciation of the east side landscape for riders. They found neighborhoods that already are pedestrian oriented, crowded, and colorful. They rode through neighborhoods with street murals, hand painted storefronts, front yard religious shrines, mariachi musicians in practice, old Jewish temples, and the delicious waft of birria, tamales, and chile verde.

The Nacimiento Bike Tour is one of those rare L.A. seconds when west-siders and east-siders, Latino and non-Latino, rich and poor, physically active and non-active people come together and participate in exploring L.A.'s unique cultural traditions and physical landscape in a very environmentally friendly way.

Nacimientos, or nativity scenes, are a tradition that many Latinos throughout Latin America follow during the Christmas season. This tradition takes place in the streets of L.A. where many immigrants and multi-generational families spend countless hours creating nacimientos in their front yards, porches, on roofs, and in the home.

Nacimientos range in size, complexity, and creativity. Some can be a simple scene of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus or can be elaborate landscapes with tinsel waterfalls, sparkling lights, and hundreds of pieces. Each nacimiento reflects the creator's devotion to Christmas and can be very personal in nature.

For many Latinos, the building of the sets begins the day after December 12th, which is the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and they stay up until January 6th, when the three kings arrive with gifts for the new born king.

The ride is sponsored by the Latino Urban Forum, The Rare Times, and the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition. These sponsors like to organize rides that celebrate culture, history, and local food. Please feel free to join the growing list of riding fans who enjoy the nooks and crannies of L.A. at [lmvela@earthlink.net](mailto:lmvela@earthlink.net).

*Lupe Vela and James Rojas*





# TOMATOES' VASECTOMY RIDE

On January 12, I had a vasectomy. On January 8, four days before it I had the Tomatoes' Pro-Death, Pre-Vasectomy Celebration Bicycle Ride as a part of Bike Winter. I thought it very appropriate to have a ride in commemoration to my vasectomy because my love for bicycle riding and my decision to never breed have a lot in common. They're both fueled by my desire to keep my life simple. Writing this, it's taking a lot of effort for me to not talk shit about breeders and I feel that I was successful up until this sentence because saying that it takes a lot of effort to not talk shit about them is in effect, talking shit about them albeit very vaguely. Sorry.

Anyway, my ride started at Griffith Park. I brought 60 dollars worth of Thunderbird because I wanted to see people puke and plus that's what I served during my ride for Bike Summer, and I wanted to start a tradition. There were about 15 people on the ride. It was no Midnight Ridazz, but I was still pleased with the turn-out. It didn't take long for some of us to get really drunk including your's truly. We had a group photo by the statue of the cub and then took off east down Los Feliz. I, of course, was the biggest hindrance to the ride. I had a big cooler in my basket, and I had my old, broken-zipper backpack stuffed in there on the side of the cooler.

First, just a few of my belongings fell out, but then the whole damn backpack fell out going down Vermont, dumping my belongings everywhere. And I was already so Pureed by that point that I was too much of a buffoon to gather my stuff efficiently, and someone had to help. So, anyway we finally get to the first stop, Barnsdall Art Park to watch the sunset. If you've never been there, you really should go. It's very beautiful. It's at the top of the big hill near Vermont and Hollywood. We all sat there and got extremely drunk. The sunset was breathtaking. It was a moment to remember between friends, bikes, the city, and alcohol. Me, Luz, and Lety all snuck into the Frank Lloyd Wright section and took pictures.

After that, we were heading to the La Brea Tar Pits, but Luz fell off her bike twice, and I got scared, so we wrapped up the ride by eating at a vegan restaurant in Thai Town. I had a quesadilla. It was the best quesadilla I've ever had. Either that, or I was drunk.

So anyway, I'd like to say that even though my ride was probably the shortest organized bike ride in the history of the human racists, it was still really darn fun and I'll cherish that memory for many years to come.

-tomatoes



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# THE BIKEPLAGUE GUIDE TO TOP BIKE MOVIES!

Trista Cinema Bee, our girl in the know, lists the best movies there ever were with bikes in.

Here's some great movies about bikes and bike riders. I'm not rating them because they are all worth watching or they wouldn't be on this list. Go forth and rent!!!

## **Beijing Bicycle** (*China 2002*)

A young boy finds work as a messenger and has to buy his bike, paying it off as he works.



**BMX  
Bandits!**

But when it gets stolen he's on a mission to find the culprit. Eventually he does, but nothing is that simple. This movie is sad and infuriating but the fact that you feel so much for the kid's loss is what makes it so good.

## **The Bicycle Thief** (*Italy 1948*)

This Italian Neo-Realist Classic, directed by the great Vittorio De Sica, is one of my favorite movies. It turned me on to all the classics of Italian cinema of the 50's and 60's. (feel free to email for suggestions.) Post-WWII depression finds our sad hero Antonio finally getting his bike out of hawk so he can work, then it gets stolen. BASTARDO! The whole movie is Antonio and his son Bruno (this kid is amazing) walking all over Rome, as he tries to find the bike and figure how he will survive these desperate times.

## **Breaking Away** (*US 1979*)

Everyone has seen this one, but it's a great movie. A group of townie working class boys in Indiana struggle to figure out what to do next with their lives. The biker in this story is Dave and he wants to be an Italian racer, pretending to be Italian to meet ladies and to the great frustration of his father. There's an inspiring race with a semi-truck, a disheartening one with the Italians, and a final race against the college snobs. Go Cutters!

## **BMX Bandits** (*Australia 1983*)

Omigawd- this was totally my favorite movie

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when I was 10! It only ran in the states on HBO, but is now available on Netflix. Nicole Kidman's first movie, it's basically "Goonies" on Bikes. RAD. It's formulaic and goofy, but the baby biking bad-asses foil the bad guys, OF COURSE!

#### **I heart Huckabees** (*US 2004*)

One of the best movies of 2004, it's really all about meta-physical philosophy and the nature of being. But riding bikes is central to the lead characters, and it's so important to them that you can't help but feel good about it being important to you too. That's nice. Jason Schartzman is an earth-loving poet and Mark Wahlberg shows up to a fire on his bike. Bless that man.

#### **Quicksilver** (*US 1986*)

Stock market star Kevin Bacon decides he needs a change and becomes a NYC bike messenger. I haven't seen this movie since it came out. But I know there are some good riding sequences and it can't be left off this list.

#### **Triplets of Belleville** (*France 2003*)

A beautifully animated film about a little boy, Champion, who grows up with his grandmother. She trains him to be a racer and he makes it to Le Tour, only to be kidnapped! She must find him and rescue him, with the help of the wacky Triplets of Belleville. Very

little dialogue. GREAT Music.

#### Honorable Mention:

##### **American Flyers** (*US 1985*)

Kevin Costner convinces his brother to train and compete in a long-distance bike race over the Rockies. Their relationship is tested and strained as they train and race together. Lots of bike race tech talk.

##### **The 40-year-old Virgin** (*US 2005*)

Dorky Andy hasn't found the right girl yet, obviously. The movie is funny cause Steve Carell is amazing, but it makes this list because he is a dedicated bike rider, and the jokes about his bike are really funny and sweet.

#### Action Vids of Possible interest:

##### **Le Tour de France 2005: Magnificent 7** (6-Disc Series) (*2005*)

Live coverage of the races.

##### **Diversions Video Magazine**

BMX Flatland videos by local rider and filmmaker Bobby Carter. Shot all over the world.

##### **Odyssey BMX Videos**

Another local outfit, this Cerritos-based parts maker has a street riding team and flatlanders.

##### **Cassette** (BMX) (*UK 2003*)

Supposedly the best British BMX video ever.

##### **Hit and Run** (BMX) (*US 2005*)

##### **Network** (BMX) (*US 2003*)

Also check out... [www.digave.com/videos](http://www.digave.com/videos) (drag race NYC)

Enjoy!

Send comments and suggestions on films to

**Trista40@hotmail.com**

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# ON DRAG RACING, CYCLING AND ATAVISTICALLY RECONNECTING WITH THE GHOST OF AMERICA PAST



We'd been reading articles by this guy Cole Coonce for a while in local papers, and we've been pretty stoked that there's someone writing more than just one-offs about bikes as idle assignments. We decided to meet up for a ride along the LA river, over the stiff climb that is Mt. Hollywood at the back of Griffith Park, then down into Los Feliz to get coffee and talk a bit about bikes, drag racing, and road riding.

*Morgan:* So, tell us something about yourself, who you are?

*Cole Coonce:* Well, I'm kind of like Walter Mitty: I'm a bit of a wannabe cyclist in a way - never quite as into it as what I think about. The thing about cycling is that it's incredibly humbling. Physically, mentally, intellectually, philosophically, etc - and I think that is my attraction to it. I think what is interesting is that despite my abilities as a cyclist and knowing just enough about bikes to get me into trouble, I'm a huge fan of thermodynamics. Cycling being a thermodynamic process. I've always been a fan of the internal combustion engine. Massively, nuttily into it. In contrast, most likely, to a big part of your demographic. My journalistic background is the most extreme forms of thermodynamics as applied to the automobile: drag racing. Zero to one hundred MPH in under a second, zero to two hundred and fifty MPH in 2.3 seconds, zero to three hundred and thirty MPH in 4.4 seconds, you know: the G-force is taking the skin off your cheeks. But that being said, that is an extreme example of what the automobile promised when it was becoming mass produced: freedom, exhilaration. But just take a look at this intersection here [gestures as cars stopped at the lights]: that's not about freedom. That's about drudgery. So I think that cycling conversely, or ironically, fulfils the promise of what the automobile was there to deliver.

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**Morgan:** *A classic case of people forgetting about what something was there for the first place, right? Becoming routine.*

**CC:** Right. You guys commute to and from the Westside by bike. I was reading recently [referring to the recent LA Alternative cover article, "Vicious cycling"] about some guy leaving his job on the Westside to come back to Silverlake and there, coming off the off-ramp of the freeway is the guy who he works with! That's just a classic example of commuting. I live in Eagle Rock and I punch into jobs in Culver City. And I know that it takes me one hour fifteen minutes to ride by bike and can take one hour twenty minutes by car. But every day it's consistently

**"TRYING TO EXPLAIN  
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CHOCOLATE TASTES  
LIKE ON LSD TO  
PEOPLE WHO'VE  
NEVER TAKEN LSD."**

1:15 by bicycle.

**Morgan:** *A bit more predictable on the bike.*

**CC:** Yeah.

**Morgan:** *So the reason I emailed you originally [for the interview] is because your name has cropped up a few times recently in articles about bikes in local papers [most recently, the City Beat article, "The World is your Velodrome"]. And we like that. You're into bikes. Do these articles reflect a growing interest from publications, or is it you pitching it to them?*

**CC:** What is the cart and what is the horse? In the world of journalism, it's harder and harder to stay ahead of the curve. Everything is co-opted immediately so when you pitch things to people, it's got to be about stuff

people haven't heard about before. And in this day and age, we've heard it all before it's even happened. So with the 'straight' publications - and by that I don't mean 'fetish' oriented, as I'd describe your fanzine [fuck yeah!] - they know what a bicycle is, but they don't understand what people are so nutty about. They don't understand the enthusiasm. So yes, I pitch them on different things that are applicable to cycling and Los Angeles. In that sense, I'm the engine that's driving it. On the other hand, trying to explain the euphoria of cycling to someone who doesn't do it, including many people in the 'straight' magazine world, is like trying to explain what chocolate tastes like on LSD to people who've never taken LSD. There is an abstraction and there is a cognitive disconnect to it. We all get it, because we've all got the fever.

**Morgan:** *Yeah, like that article you wrote in City Beat and another that I read on line where you rode up Mt. Baldy with a drag racer. He's blasting by you and you're quoting different great thinkers of the past to paint a perfect portrait of how it feels.*

**CC:** Ha ha! That guy is a bit of a friend of mine. His name is Whit Bazemore and he's known as the world's fastest cyclist because he's one of those guys who goes from zero to three hundred MPH in four seconds. But truth is, he'd rather be climbing Glendora Ridge road on a bicycle.

**Morgan:** *Yes, you write a lot about drag racing and a lot about bikes. It seems like you're almost writing about them as two aspects of*

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*the same thing. Can you say a little more about that?*

**CC:** Well, what makes drag racing so special, and again it's hard to explain it to people who haven't got the fever, and I have the fever although I'm a fan, not a racer per se. There is a quote from the curator of technology at the Smithsonian about drag racing. He called the obsession 'technological enthusiasm'. You've got people who are so completely enthusiastic about the technology to the exclusion of everything else in their life that makes sense. So we've got you guys [referring to Max] with the screwiest bicycle designs you can possibly think of, making whatever weird statement you are, but you're just so into it that you just can't fuck with it. This person wants to get up in the morning and wants to do something to a bike that makes it better, or more extreme, or more abstract, or whatever it is, and so that's the correlation: drag racers have this weird DNA which says, 'OK: I have this hunk of aluminum. How can I make it go three hundred and forty MPH instead of three hundred and thirty?'. And I think the same science is applied to cycling. But there's also the buzz. If you're sitting in the dragstrip and you're going from zero to a hundred in a second, that's the same as if you're sat waiting at the intersection and a tractor trailer rear-ends you at a hundred

MPH. It's the same G-force. It take a certain type of person to think that that's great. So if you're riding your bike back down from Santa Barbara at 8pm on a Saturday night down PCH and you're getting buzzed by cars at eighty MPH and there's a part of you that says, 'this is great!', it's the same thing. So I think both drag racers and cyclists do have issues. But that's what's important. If they didn't have issues, there'd be nothing to write about, you know?

**Morgan:** *Yeah, I'd definitely agree with that. Progressing from that point, your recent article talks about the end of a relationship being a good kick-off point for becoming really into bikes and I'd say that both of us can identify with that.*

**CC:** Looking back, and saying, oh, so that's when I got really into bikes...

**Morgan:** *Exactly. Do you think that breaking up with some sort of a romance is the prerequisite for becoming an obsessional cyclist?*

**CC:** Yeah. Bazemore - this drag racer - had a really bad motorcycle crash and a part of his rehabilitation was to get on a trainer - a bicycle trainer - for 45 minutes a day as a part of his workout. And he really thought he was doing something. Conversely one of his





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friends was this olympic cyclist, and he was like, 'yeah, well done, 45 minutes....'. So he put Bazemore on a real bike. And he was overcoming real physical trauma. And this just got through to him. Although I can't really speak about that, as I've never had real physical trauma, I do know the trauma of the id. Overcoming a break-up: you can either sit there and stare at the world and be mad at the world, or do something. So if you're really mad at a member of the opposite sex, or the same, then cycling is a really good motherfuck, with your tongue hanging out as you're climbing a hill. You know, in my instance, I would literally cuss her name as I was climbing. Not that I was right and this person was wrong. But probably. So I find that romantic break-ups are really good for getting into shape.

**Morgan:** *You can go either way: a downward spiral into drinking and drugs, or say 'fuck you! I can look after myself without you!' and make some positive efforts.*

**CC:** It's strange. It's even beyond looking after yourself. You're channelling your own rage. It's the most benign way to channel that anger and ultimately it's quite healthy. We were bullshitting this on the way up the hill, but if it weren't for cycling then there'd be a lot more postal shootings and office shootings.

**Morgan:** *So you go on midnight ridaz, you got the first copy of the zine without us even knowing it. The LA bike scene is really fascinating to us, which is why we started this zine. Where do you see this coming from?*

**CC:** If you'll let me mix my literary references, Alexis de Tocqueville, a french philosopher came over in the 1800's and talked about how this weird thing called

democracy was working in America, in spite of itself. That could be applied to cycling in Los Angeles. Talk about square peg / round hole. It's just the big hammer approach. Making people understand. Getting back to the point that a bicycle makes a lot more sense than a car a lot of the time. The only real issue is stuff like changes of clothes. I don't bicycle every day but when I do I make sure I have a change of clothes, so I can be at work and not thought of as being another smelly cyclist. But I think 'movement' is the right term, there's a definite groundswell. I applaud what you guys are doing, as you're definitely a part of that. Just acceptance - if you cycle around other parts of the country. People here think that cyclists are from Mars, but elsewhere in the country, they think they're from Pluto. I think in a way, cyclists from LA don't know how good they've got it. Not to say there can't be a ton of improvement, there certainly can.

**Morgan:** *It's really fascinating because the LA scene seems to have just come from a series of random events. It's a scene that is still very much in and of itself and not co-opted.*

**CC:** Right, right.

**Morgan:** *Except maybe the fixed gear scene which is becoming a little like that [mainly in reference to 'Team Puma', the puma-sponsored messenger race team].*

**CC:** Yeah, that's becoming a little precious. I personally don't ride one and don't understand the joys associated with them but I understand that they're there for other people. They've become the Mazda Miata of the cycling scene. They've become this weird symbol of the cycling scene. And they have to watch out, with all due respect, simply because they are somewhat precious about

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what they're doing, which is somewhat alienating, which is something you've got to watch out for, because you're kind of alienating the kind of people who you really want to win over.

**Morgan:** That's a really, really valid point.

**CC:** Yeah, and I'm strictly here to co-exist with cars. I want respect from them, and I'll give them the same. In the same way that they're completely asshole, soccer moms on their cell phones blasting through a yellow light and not paying attention to what they're doing - not understanding that force equals mass times acceleration, that this is basically a tank that they're blasting through the intersection, conversely there are some, you know, let's call them 'extreme' elements in the midnight ridaz crew and various subcultures who piss motorists off. And I'm just like, "look man, you're not doing me any favors". The next time that I encounter that guy that you pissed off, he's going to remember YOU and not think twice about revving it up and scaring me.

**Max:** *The funny thing is that most of them you see showing up and taking their bikes off the back of a car! It really isn't the people that ride the most who are the most agro.*

**CC:** Right. You know what's hard, that when you're all pumped up on adrenaline from cycling and you're totally hyper-aware and a car or bus cuts you off or does something that's not very cool, you just want to get up on their tire and yell at them. Myself, I take a deep breath and calm down.

**Morgan:** *It's really easy to get into a herd mentality when you're in a herd.*

**CC:** Yeah. I've seen instances with the ridaz

and they come to an intersection and someone in a BMW does something they don't like and they start kicking the corner panels. You know, this is not doing anybody any favors.

**Max:** *I think it's a bad combination of the psychological disconnection you have with driving a car and the ultra-sensitisation of being on a bike, being all 'grrrrr!!!'.*

**CC:** Yeah, it's tough. At least every urban cycling trip, I really want to motherfuck at least one person in a car. And just in general, and not to play into a stereotype, SUV drivers are the worst drivers. They're the least aware [cue muttering from all parties about Hummers]. I think that what should happen is that everyone registering an SUV should be tricked into going to another session of Driver's Ed via some sort of sting operation, offering free tune-ups or something. Not to be reactionary or anything. But I can dream.

**Morgan:** *It's been a real pet peeve of mine recently: riders being over-aggressive. I've ended up yelling at people on rides recently.*

**Max:** *kind of a general problem is that whole mentality of simply 'being in the way'. You know, 'let's ride, and get in the way...'*

**CC:** You know, I'm sort of a zen libertarian. I want to peacefully co-exist with people and now have them cut me off or do screwy things to me. And the lunatic fringe of cycling undermines that. Not that there aren't lunatic fringes everywhere. I was on one midnight ridaz once and we were on Adams, maybe, near USC, and there was this one guy playing chicken with cars, riding on the wrong side of the road. Luckily the darwinian stuff will take care of this guy soon enough, before he can do too much damage.

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But you know, that's a bit counterproductive. *Max: I think it was pretty funny on the last midnight ridaz where the police were saying, 'stay in the right lane, stay in the one lane'. We need a little more reasonable goal. Like, 'stay out of on-coming traffic'. I think we can handle that.*

excruciating enough, particularly with where my mind was at the time. I sort of though, 'OK, is this the best you can give me? Is this the worst you can through at me? 'cos if it is, I can stare it down, and not because I'm a badass, but it's just a case of "I win, you lose"' [Top D.R.I. quote there! - morgan]. Of course, in my mind I win. In reality I don't.

**CC:** Yeah. But I don't mean to bag on the ridaz. I have really come to appreciate recently the ridaz and the 'organizers', as they've really done the impossible and worked out how to herd cats.

*Morgan: one of my favorite phrases, 'herding cats'. thanks. Anyway, one last thing. You ride up to Mt. Wilson and I've seen a post from you talking about doing ridaz on a friday followed by the Planet Ultra event from Lone Pine to Panamint Springs near Death Valley by moonlight. You're into both the urban scene and the roadie/ultradistance scene, that we're very much into. We were just stoked to read about that. So maybe just finish off by saying something about your favorite roadie rides.*

**CC:** Yeah, that was all fortuitious. It was the midnight ridaz theatre ride, I think, and the next day it was the Planet Ultra Lone Pine by moonlight century ride, and I'd just broken up with someone just three days before, so I was all ready for that. The Lone Pine to Death Valley century was simultaneously the best and the worst of road/distance riding, especially when you're dealing with forty to sixty MPH headwinds, and thirty degrees temperatures! On one level it was excruciating and on another level it wasn't

**"THE LONE PINE  
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AND THIRTY  
DEGREES  
TEMPERATURES!"**

river all the way to Nashville. It's not necessarily something that your readership is going to hop on their bikes and do tomorrow. But it's such a great way to commune with the medieval boondocks and swamps, you know, dixie, and you see things on a bicycle that you don't see in any way. That could be Death Valley, Vermont, or the Natchez Trail. That ride is all kudzu and cypress trees and swamps and it is very transcendental and on some atavistic level you're getting in touch with the ghost of the American past. And I think you can only do that on a bicycle.

*Morgan: Profound. Thanks!*

*You can find more info on Cole Coonce's writing at...<http://www.kerosenebomb.com/>*

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# SEX PEDALING IN LOS ANGELES

**Budge reports back on his debut on the new RideArc ride on February 3rd.**

What seems to be a cyclical trend (or a poorly placed bike-pun within the first 7 words) reoccurred once again last Friday, tired, thinking mostly of beer, and seated firmly in the couch...do I bother attempting to change this? Earlier efforts to make it out to the Westside (what once was my locale after moving from the other side of the globe) had failed: the first anniversary ride for the Santa Monica Critical Mass would have to be passed up, no way I'm riding cross town from 37th and Hoover without any food at 6pm on the off chance the ride hasn't left yet. But, being in Los Angeles (supposedly the most bike un-friendly city on the face of the planet) there was of course an alternative. On the frosty winter eve (approx 60 degrees and not a cloud in the sky), RideArc, a ride organized by a few local architecture students had reemerged after several months of obscurity to take back its place as the 'first-Friday-of-the-month-ride'...well at least that wasn't on the west side of town.

Having missed previous RideArc rides due to some unfortunate clashes of agenda (ie: free beer tasting) I had sworn to make it out to the next ride, and being somewhat of an architecture nerd I could write this off as 'research' for my now somewhat flailing Phd. Due to a process of osmosis from living in my present situation with other 'time-unaware' house members, I found myself leaving home for a 5 mile ride at the time the ride was supposedly leaving. Of course this is L.A.

and I arrived with a good 45 minutes to spare.

The theme for this months ride was the provocatively titled "Sex, Sexuality, and Love Ride" and was to meet at Sunset and La Brea, next to the 'Crazy Girls' strip club.

Without many noticing, a young employee gingerly sidled her way up to a friend and asked if the ride was Critical Mass, as she had moved from Seattle and was curious to know why 50+ riders had located in the local gas station. After being informed it was a sex-themed ride she left with a concerned look on her face, walking back to the club with high-cut g-string sticking a good 4 inches above her pant line...it appeared the title of the ride was somewhat fitting. Eventually the riders rolled out of the gas station on a rather indirect path to UCLA...wait, wasn't I trying to avoid riding to the west side?

A few things led to this ride standing out from other 'mass' rides I'd previously been on. The speed of the ride for one (we made it to UCLA and back, with stops, in around 2 hours) was much faster than normal. Unfortunately many didn't understand the concept of 'corking', or that other wacky concept 'waiting', but not to worry. Second, the reply to the common question of bewildered bystanders of "what is this?" wasn't the usual "Critical Mass!" or the always witty "it's a bike ride!" (hilarious) but rather, "it's a sex tour!". If that doesn't get seedy dudes standing on Santa Monica Boulevard at 11pm into riding, nothing will.

Throughout the ride a number of stops were made to point out varying sites of architecture in L.A.'s concrete fabric, relating to differing aspects of 'sex', 'sexuality' or 'love'.

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A number of concerned Beverly Hills residents peered out of darkly tinted SUV windows to try and figure out why 50 or so cyclists were staring out their house, perhaps concerned some twisted 2006 version of Clockwork Orange was about to unfold. The only 'bit of in-and-out' however was saved for stop-offs at the liquor store, or swiftly timed jokes pertaining to questions of "what is an example of feminine architecture" (the answer for those curious to know was the Pentagon, but I'll leave you to figure out why that is).

And so after passing through numerous neighbourhoods, risking certain death on the always enjoyable section of Wilshire through Century City, stopping off in Will Rogers Memorial Park, and tempting each other to ring the doorbell of palatial mansions set in Bel Air like the mature adults consuming cheap liquor on bicycles that we are, there was only one thing left to do. Attempt the always fateful pass through Sunset Strip on a Friday evening. Nothing compares to the bottom-feeding scum of the earth 'humans' strategically placed at the awful clubs and bars situated on this part of Sunset Boulevard. I've ridden through some unpleasant areas of Los Angeles in my time, but not even that strange smell that emanates from the La Brea tar pits late at night, or the smashing of glass bottles being thrown at me from somewhere above in Downtown by crack-dealers compares to this.

Hundreds of police, drunken jocks, and people with already poor driving skills now intoxicated by cheap American beer populate the roadway. Somehow avoiding the opening of car doors, numerous police officers and severely pissed-off motorists stuck in a traffic-jam at midnight after having paid \$14 to park (oh the irony), the ride finished back at the starting point with a few less than had begun, but a successful ride in all.

If you're bored on a Friday night (that isn't Critical Mass, Midnight Ridazz, Westside Critical Mass, or any other Friday night ride) come down to the SciArc led bicycle outing, RideArc. Not only will you see some curious pieces of architecture you've never noticed whilst dodging traffic on Vermont or Olympic, but you might even come away with a slightly better knowledge of this supposedly bike-hating city.



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# TO THE EXTREMO: I ROCK THE ROAD LIKE A VANDAL

Reading adventure stories/books has always been a part of my life. Hearing about trekking in the Himalayas, backpacking in Latin America, desert crossings in Africa, peace workers in the Middle East...these stories always took me to a far off place and reading them was an acceptable way to spend a rainy day when I could not be out riding.

of a far off place by a person I would never emulate, but the timing was different. See I was on my first bike tour, a 3300-mile trip from California to Pennsylvania, when a driver lost control in the snow and hit me head-on at 55 mph. Luckily, my only injuries were a broken wrist and some bruised legs (and a destroyed bike).

Traveling to ride BMX trails all over the country was always adventurous, but was never an *Adventure* the way the ones I read were. Simply, these stories were about

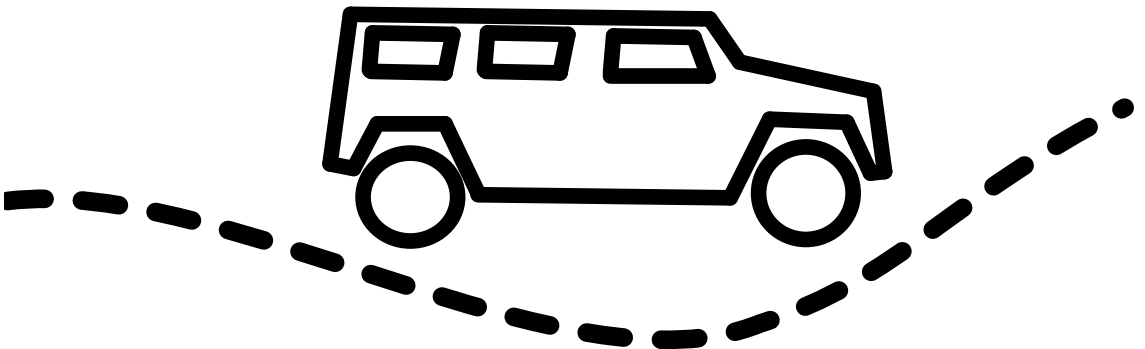
**"WE KNOW THAT THEY  
USE PEOPLE LIKE US  
TO SELL DUMB ASS  
SUV'S TO PEOPLE  
LIKE THEM..."**

people I would never meet who were doing things that were out of my reach. This I fully accepted. But something changed when I was 23. Sitting in a stranger's living room, after being released from a hospital in Flagstaff, Arizona, I came across The Ultimate High by Goran Kropp. An account of his 7,000 mile bike trip from Sweden to Nepal to climb Everest w/o oxygen or Sherpas. Another story

Reading his account had two seemingly opposite effects on me 1) It made my mishap seem trivial (some of his friends died on the mountain that year and he had to hike past their frozen

bodies) and 2) The realization that adventure is subjective. Fully I was on an *Adventure!* After ten days of rest I was off again with a new bike. Sure, I was not going to write any books, but I had rain storms, head winds, sketchy sleeping spots to be found, trucks to fight off and broken bike parts/tools to overcome.

Riding in Los Angeles is its own *Adventure*



every day, do not let anyone tell you different! Advocates like to champion the safety of bicycle commuting, but we all know it is dangerous. Hell, most of us enjoy the danger element.

Admit it. The light turns yellow and you sprint. When you split lanes at 20 mph you think about the envious motorists and your near Nirvana state of consciousness. You may not be fighting off

polar bears, but when the bus drifts left, the work truck drift right and you have to move your arms into the center of your bars, you are risking life and limb. After momentarily being pissed off, we chuckle at the Extremo (or often Extrema) in the X-Terra who swerved and almost hit us. We know that they use people like us to sell dumb-ass SUV's to people like them. Their adventure happens in a box (after they leave the work box); ours is real. When

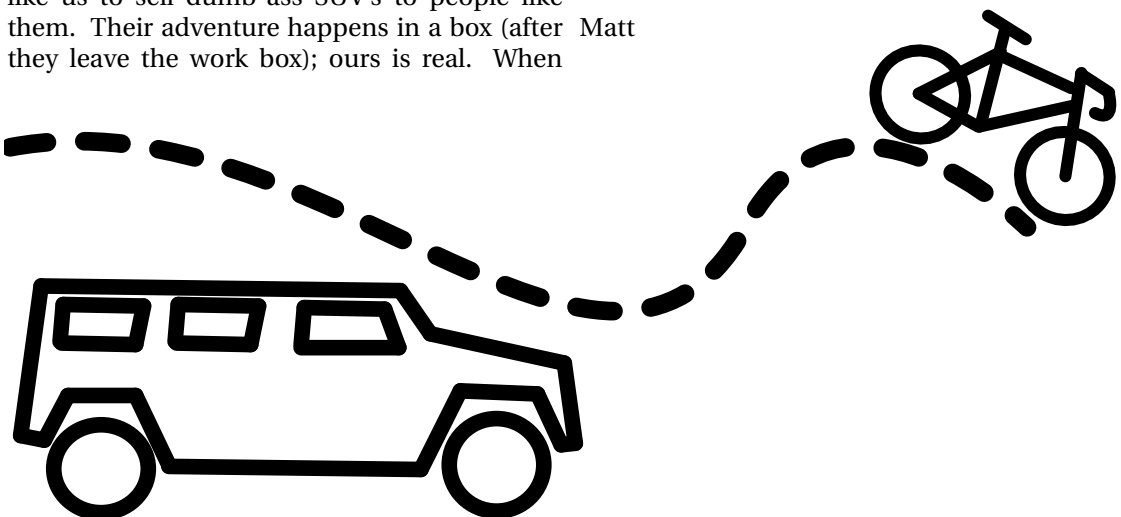
the pavement is hot, we feel it. Potholes may spill their coffee, but they can kill us. Right-wing paramilitaries may not kidnap us, but we have well-funded armed and dangerous gangs

that don't want us in the street (like the LAPD). On more than one occasion I have had a bike related incident escalate to a gun being pointed at me.

Should we seek out danger? No. Ideally, I do not want to almost be hit on a daily basis. I would much prefer riding conditions to

improve. But meanwhile we need to accept the *Adventure* / danger element of our bike riding lives and harness it. Sitting in a bar is far less exciting than the ride to/from. Remember that next time you are bored. Our adventure merely needs realization to be at the level of the stories I have read. Trust me.

Matt



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# 12 DAYS, 1001 MILES, 3 DIRTY KIDS.

One drunken October night spent in Boulder, CO with awesome friend and equally awesome travel partner, Will, plans to ride our bikes from Brazil across South America were initiated. Over the course of a few sober weeks we quickly came to the realization that not only would getting to Brazil would be financially impossible not to mention the fact that riding as far as we wanted would be impossible with the time we had. The plans quickly turned into an EPIC ride from Seattle to San Francisco, and soon we were able to convince fellow Boulder bike punk, Robbie, to join us. August first we all met in the Seattle/Tacoma airport to embark on our EPIC adventure. Unfortunately there just isn't enough room in one issue of bikePLague for all the gritty details, but hopefully there can be some inspiration to get on a bike and ride really far.

## **Things you really do need:**

Bikes that are meant to carry things. We all had racing frames and did a combination of rigging panniers on with c-clamps and then Robbie brought a trailer. There were several points at which we thought we were going to snap our chainstays, and forget getting out of the saddle to climb hills. It worked alright, but I don't think the set-up would have held up much longer than it did.

Tubes. I can't stress enough on bringing or restocking your supply. In our first 2 days of riding I had 4 flats that couldn't be patched. Fortunately, I restocked in Portland and then never had another flat the whole trip. Plus, how often do patches really hold for most of us?

Something to write in. Robbie was the best

at keeping a day to day account of what was

going on. Each evening we'd all sit down and recap the day's events. After so many days and so many similarly small towns things tend to get a bit jumbled.

Clifbars. I'm pretty sure we should have attempted to get a sponsorship from Clif. Not only were they the easiest vegan source of calories to carry, but just the thing when you realize you can't pedal anymore, but the next town is still 15 miles off.

## **Things we sent home from Portland/ Watch out!**

iPods. If you're riding with other people, sing to each other okay? Honestly, Will and I had a good sing along to some Little Mermaid songs that I wouldn't trade for anything. This will also make you REALLY appreciate your record collection when you get home.

Clothes. I didn't have this problem, as I was really close to underpacking, but Robbie had more than he could wear. Arm warmers make a great substitute for a long-sleeved jersey since you don't need to stop to take them off only to need them again 20 minutes later. It's really easy to get used to walking around in spandex everywhere you go and not think twice about it. I do highly recommend flip-flops for the always-hygienic campground bathrooms.

Saddle sores. In riding 75+ miles a day you're bound to run into trouble within two weeks time. Ironically, the person that spent more time on a bike before this trip also had the worst problem in this area, so don't think you're immune to it. Triple Anti-biotic ointment will save your ass.

## **Things you should do:**

Sleep outside on the beaches of Oregon. I'll

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admit, we put up the tent a few times to ward off the wind coming in off the water, but every chance we got we snuck down to the beaches and just crashed out. The wet air will do a number on your chain overnight though, so don't forget the lube.

Hangout inside of a giant redwood. There's plenty of time in a 30+mile stretch on the Ave of the Giants in Northern California, get off the bike and love the trees a little. They will also make seeing clear-cut forests in the northern part of Oregon a little less painful.

Ignore elevation charts. Eventually you'll start mentally exhausting yourself if you

know you have a big hill to climb in the later part of your day.

Eat at Farmer's markets. You'll save money. You buy local produce. People in small towns are really awesome when you turn up with a loaded bike in tow.

### Getting Stoked:

Cycling the West Coast by Lonely Planet. The book is pretty solid and dependable. We rode quite a bit faster than they intend, but they still have days of 50+miles for the most part.

-megan



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# ASK MS. SPINDLE

**Ask Ms. Spindle welcomes your letters on any subject, including, but not limited to: bikes, knitting, the separation of church and state, love, mid-century modern furniture, gardening, stain removal, and Los Angeles landmarks. Email [spindle@stealthissweater.com](mailto:spindle@stealthissweater.com)**

Dear you fucking Spindle bitch,

What I wanna know is, do you pussies in LA think we're not hardcore enough in the 718 to host Bikesummer or what? Your Bikewinter is a JOKE. I don't think you REALIZE what we go through out here on a DAILY basis. We are keeping it real in a desperate way out here. We are keeping bike culture VITAL and ALIVE and to be dissed by you people who spend all your time choosing which type of sunglass lenses are best for visibility and protection is just not right. I am seriously BUMMED OUT that you think Canada is a more appropriate venue to carry the Bikesummer torch than us here in Brooklyn. We might not have maple syrup or poutine but we have style and we seriously have RE-INVENTED what it means to be street.

Schwinn Warrior,

The 718

PS. We have 16 vegan restaurants in Williamsburg alone. Take that, sucka.

Dear Warrior,

I was the lone voice voting for Brooklyn. I can't fucking stand Canadians.

Dear Ms. Spindle,

I know this isn't a very relevant question for Los Angeles, but what do you do when it rains and you need to go somewhere?

Might Melt

Crenshaw District

Dear Might,

There are 2 schools of thought on this one. The first is, "rain is a wonderful excuse for an adventure. Seize the day." The other is, "can I borrow your car?" Personally, I'm into wet riding,

as long as I'm fully clad in something waterproof and I check my brakes about every 3 feet. Better still to be on a fixie, so those pesky wet brake pads aren't the only thing between you and potential death. But if some big strapping man offers me and my bike a ride in his big gas-guzzling SUV, I'm gonna say yes. Because, if he's driving alone, he's a gross wasteful slob, but if he's car-pooling with me, then he's part of the solution!

Dear Ms. Spindle,

I'm stoked to go to Bikesummer in Montreal. I love hockey and poutine. My Dad says that when he and my Mom were students in Rochester, New York, they used to go up to Niagara Falls all the time to pick up hookers and score weed. He said you could just go between the US and Canada with a fake driver's license, no problem. But I was talking to some hippie chick the other day at the coffee cart near my work, and she said you need to have a passport to get to Canada. What's up?

Slugman

Mid-Wilshire

Dear Slug,

In the halcyon days before Homeland Security sowed ruin, fear, and mistrust, yours truly wandered between nations with nothing more than a school ID and a half-baked alibi. These days, you can't board a plane to Canada without a passport. The drive-through stations are supposedly a bit more lax, but do you really want to risk it and end up tortured and then photographed with your new "friends" in some airless, windowless cel in an illegal offshore detention center? If you're a US citizen and you plan on returning to LA, get a passport. Start now- it takes a couple of months.

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The last word...

***Go!***

Next issue?

I dunno. Maybe May sometime? Maybe sooner if you write us, punk!

Incidentally, we're still too idealistic to run ads, so still send us cash. Yay.

