



**Friends. Sunshine.
Sanity. Mud. Wheeee!**
A bike is so much
more than a frame
and some parts—it's
the key to a lifetime of
pure, unadulterated joy.

THE HAPPINESS HANGLINE



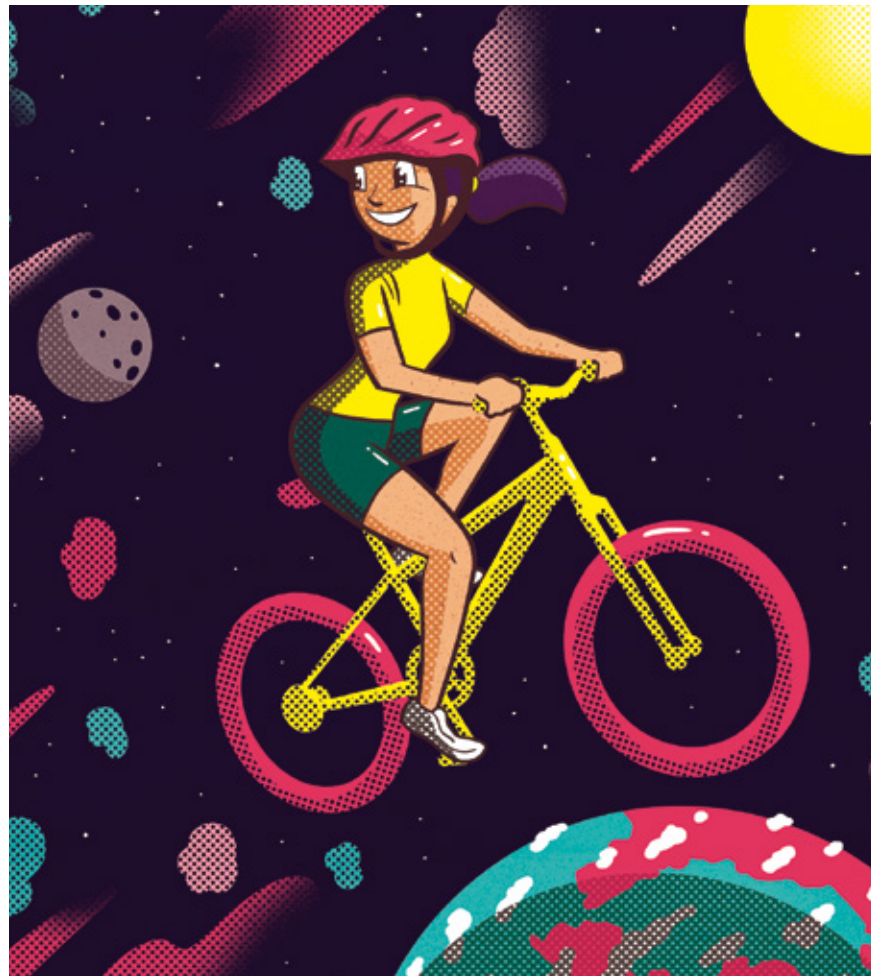
By Gloria Liu

At the time of this writing, the author's favorite personal aircraft was a creamy purple Juliana Roubion. Gloria is senior editor at BICYCLING and documents her joy on Instagram @thats_my_line.

AIR

BIG

25 REASONS CYCLISTS ARE HAPPIER THAN EVERYONE ELSE



WHEN I PICTURE my perfect trail, my mind always wanders to a certain ribbon of singletrack in Santa Cruz, California. It dips and swerves through the redwood forest at just the right mellow cant to let you maintain constant launching speed. Smooth kickers and side hips beckon you to send it around every turn, and are so exquisitely built it feels as if the locals who created them had only your maximum enjoyment at heart.

My ideal ride, I guess, has many opportunities to leave the ground. I know there is neurochemistry behind why getting even the tiniest bit of air can make me go “who!” But I think it’s more than just dopamine playing its greatest hits on my brain.

Full disclosure: I don’t usually get huge air—it’s more often “sensible air” or even baby air. But whether I’m bunny-hopping a speed bump on my ’cross bike or going off

a drop in the bike park, the process is the same. I love that moment of commitment—approaching the edge and acknowledging that when my tires leave the ground, there is some level of uncertainty in how they’ll land, then doing the counterintuitive anyway: putting in a couple of extra pedal strokes and charging it. It’s bold and so opposite from the increasingly careful way I approach other aspects of life as I grow up—planning my vacations further ahead of time, dutifully putting away more money for retirement.

Instead, in the air, I’m so free and light as to defy gravity. That’s why I daydream about that trail in Santa Cruz and why I keep seeking out rides like it. Because when I get off the bike, I go back to my life knowing this: Today, I left the security of the ground to see if I could touch the sky. For a fraction of a second, my bike enabled me to fly.

THE

HUNT

By Kyle von Hoetendorff

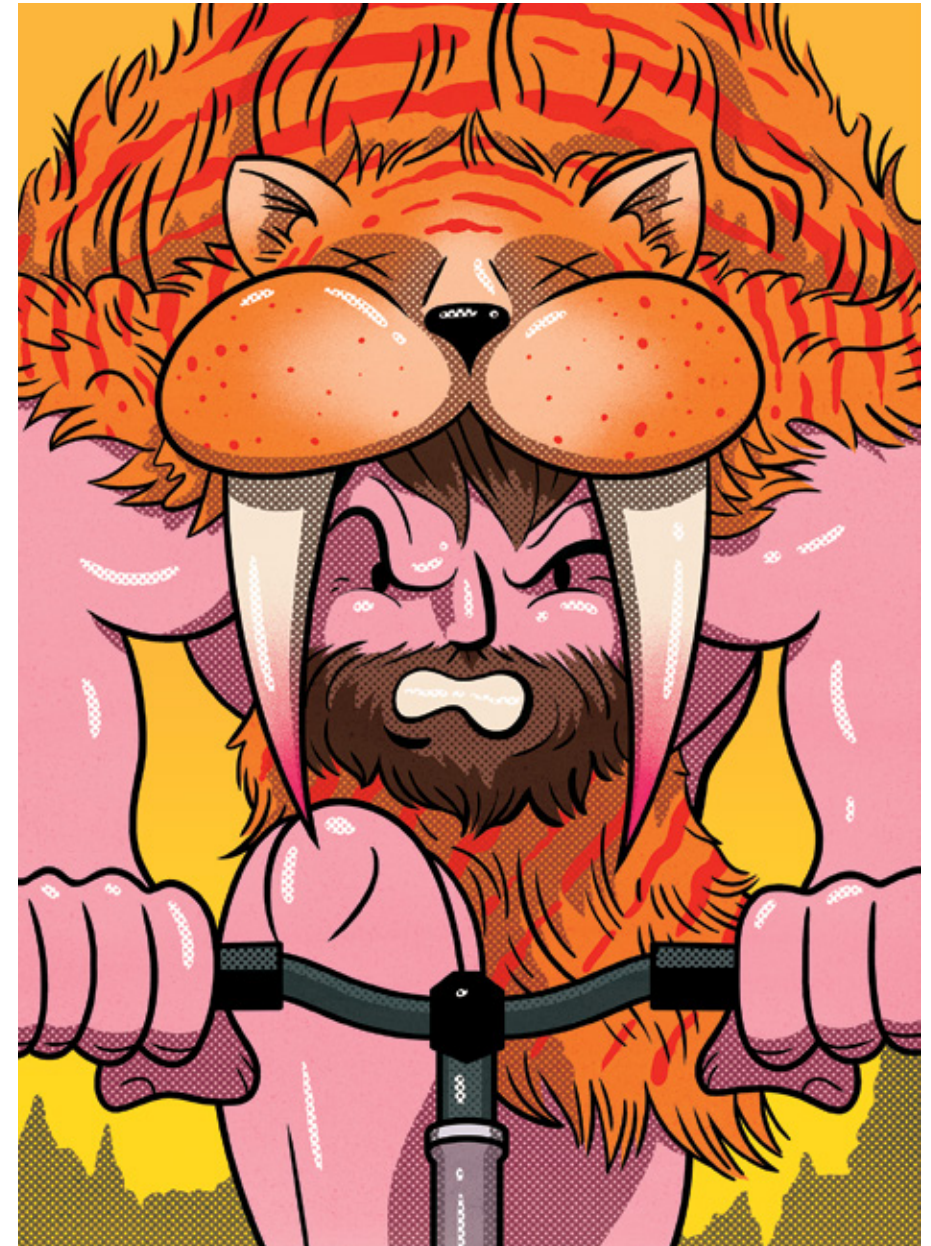
A resident of Portland, Oregon, Kyle von Hoetendorff (@newantarctica on Instagram) writes for Yonder Journal and Manual for Speed.

HERE’S WHAT I KNOW: Riding a bicycle brings me joy. But why this hobby over, say, building a 1:64 scale model train set based on the movie *Snowpiercer*? It’s not obvious. Cycling is more torture than massage, more salty than sweet. A good ride leaves my legs smarting and my lungs paper-thin. Injuries and expense are par for the course.

Confined to the rational, the pursuit of cycling fails. It isn’t rational to rocket down Whistler with my hands frozen to the handlebar and grit scouring my teeth before launching myself into a veil of mist. It isn’t rational to head to Australia where, instead of enjoying a continent’s worth of beaches, I pedal over melting, sucking asphalt in infernal heat.

But I need that exertion, the speed, the danger. I guess my brain is still connected to the fundamental elements that shaped our hunter-gatherer predecessors. The part of me that’s hardwired to deal with saber-toothed tigers and run down an antelope now finds an outlet in the self-flagellation of pedaling up mountains and avoiding trees while skipping across skeins of singletrack.

I hunt for happiness. Instead of hunkering down over a smoldering fire in a dank cave, I gather with like-minded friends in curated coffee shops and worn-out burrito joints. Instead of tooled hides, we wear tech fabrics and vintage T-shirts. I hunt for joy, I feed on it, and it’s that memory that sustains me until I can get out there and ride again.



a thing. // 3 Because calculating how fast you can take a switchback leaves no room in your head for the crap that’s bothering you. // 4 What coasting sounds like. // 5 That about-to-crest-the-hill feeling. ►

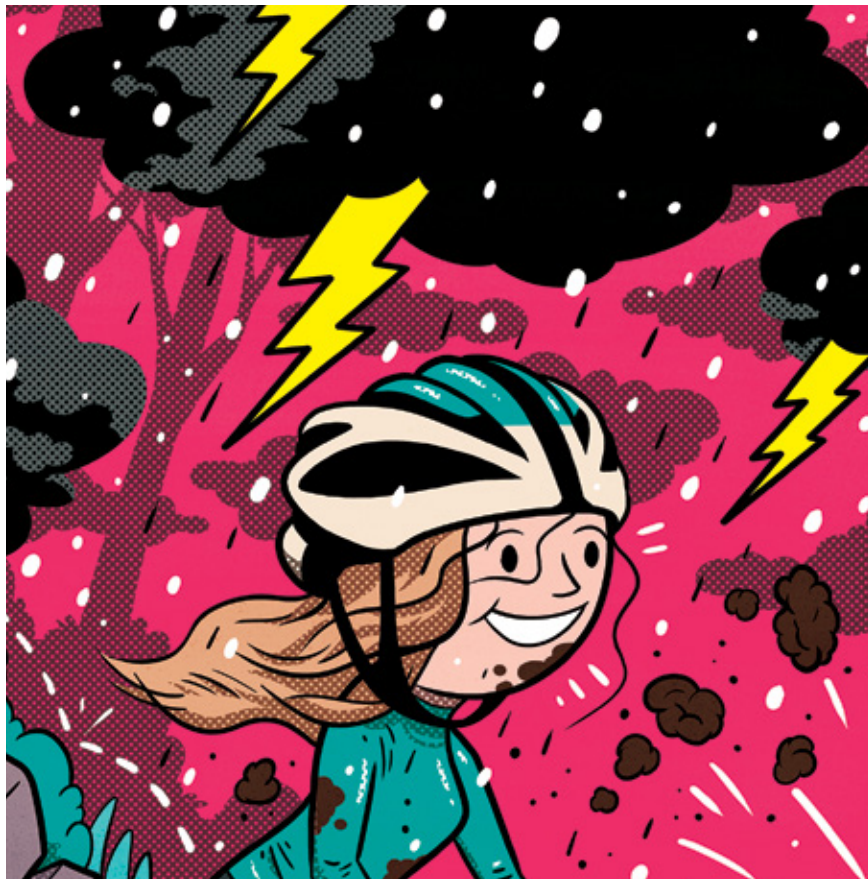


By Sarah Thomas

The author has been a pedicab driver, bike mechanic, tour guide, and messenger. She is currently bike touring in South America. Instagram: @nomadiccycling.

THE RUSH

THE



OVER THE PAST 20 years I've tried pretty much every type of cycling there is, and I can't say I've disliked any of it. Whether I'm whizzing by traffic on city streets or getting lost in the woods or racing cyclocross, I experience a euphoria that washes away negativity and stress.

From the seat of a bicycle you simply cannot be upset—trust me, I have tried to be angry and it just isn't possible. Someone can scream at me from their car or try to run me off the road, and the rage I initially feel burns off almost immediately. I start pedaling furiously after the offending vehicle, only to feel completely unbothered by the time I catch up at the next intersection. Driving a car, on the other hand, appears to have the exact opposite effect, evoking shameful behavior in otherwise kindhearted people.

I got into racing cyclocross two years ago to keep myself from hibernating under the covers for the winter—to extend my happy season: Paying the registration fees

basically forces me to go out and ride in horrible weather. Racing 'cross was scary in the beginning, but after my first race, I was hooked. Once I was pedaling, all I could feel was a rush of excitement and complete focus on the course before me. My competitive instinct kicked in, and I wanted to go as fast as I could for as long as possible.

I still feel anxiety before every race, and I dread going out in cold, often rainy conditions. I regret signing up and even tell myself I'll never do it again. But every time, as soon as the whistle blows, my anxiety disappears, I cease to notice physical discomfort, and by the time I cross the finish line I can't wait to sign up for the next race.

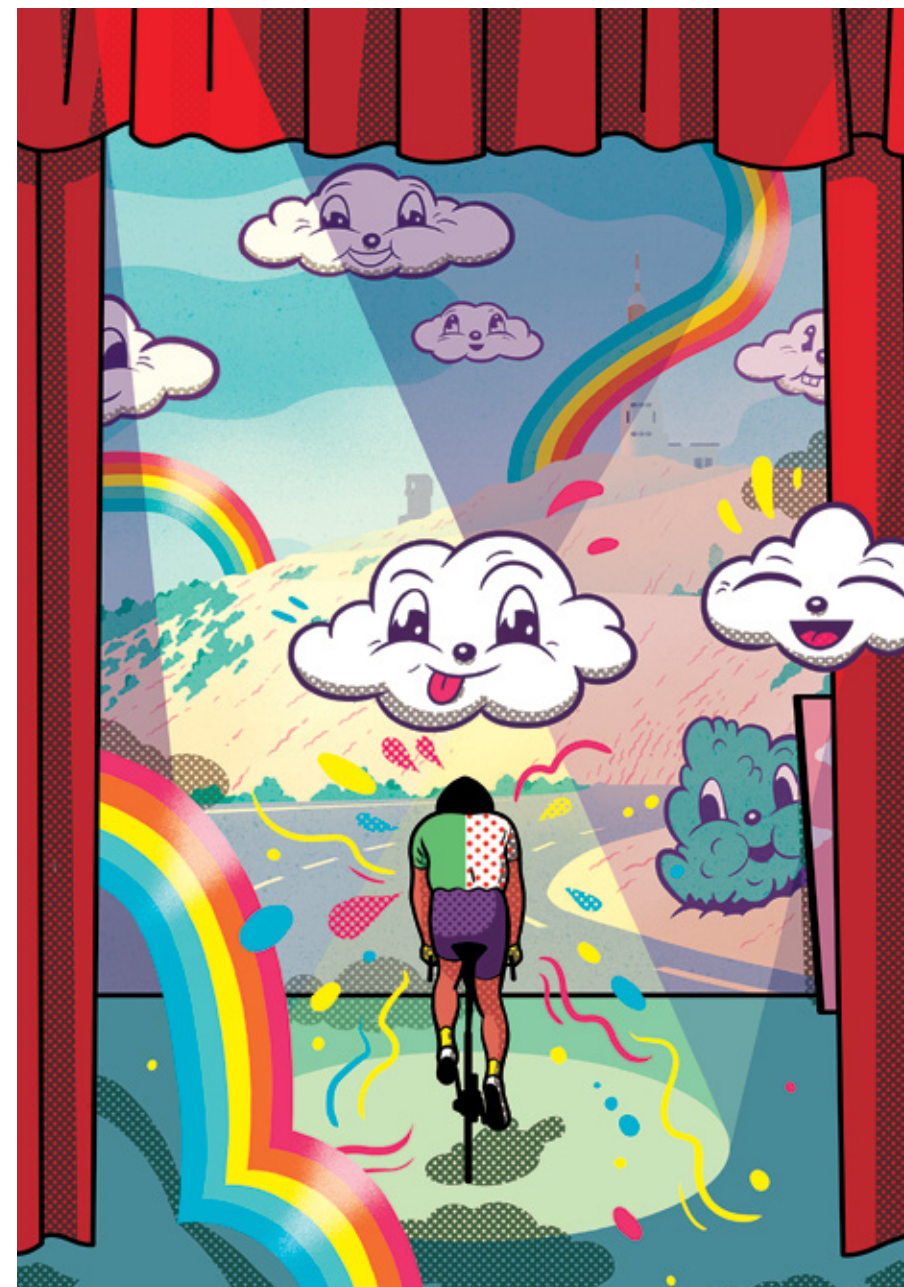
If I let myself dwell on angry drivers or bad weather, I may never get outside. Sometimes the most difficult part of riding is just leaving the house, but I have learned that no matter how much I think I want to stay indoors, I am always so much happier when I choose to ride instead.

MY

IMAGINATION

By Christopher Stricklen

The author (@creedub on Insta) sells shoes at Nordstrom in the SF Bay area. He gets through the day imagining he's on his bike.



THERE ARE PROBABLY around 3,048 reasons cycling makes me happy, from the people I've met, to the diet I've thrown out the window, to the simple feelings of enjoyment, freedom, and relief.

But one reason feels different than the rest: Cycling unleashes my imagination. Since becoming an adult, I've tried to keep that part of my childhood intact. It's the only way that I can unplug. From day to day so much stress builds up from work, parenting, and other responsibilities that I can't wait to put my thought process somewhere else. I can do that when I ride.

I try to pick a different inspiration almost every time I go out with my regular Wednesday group. I imagine I'm Eddy Merckx in Milan-San Remo, or Marco Pantani without his helmet, Chris Froome, Sagan, Cav. You get the picture.

If I feel spunky on a long climb, I think, *How would Froome attack this?* If I'm in the lead-out train coming home I ask myself, *When does Sagan dump the gas and shatter the field?* And finally, when the time is right, I give it my absolute all. It's pretty much like I'm acting out a play when I'm hammering on the road with all my friends. When you make that move, everyone is watching and there's always a reaction. I love it!

I know I'm nowhere close to the caliber of a WorldTour rider, but imagining myself as one, even for a little while, adds excitement, anticipation, strategy, and a hell of a lot of fun to every ride. It's my escape—and why I keep coming back.

// 6 Because we're not running. // 7 We're high on embro fumes. // 8 You steer the bike, you opt for the A-line, you ride one extra hill rep, you choose to bail. It's one realm where limits are often self-imposed.

// 9 Because nothing—maybe not even chocolate—makes us feel as good (find out why on p. 31). // 10 #newkitday // 11 Campagnolo. // 12 The view from the top. // 13 Because we eat fries and ring cowbells



GETTING

AWAY

By Leah Flickinger

The author is BICYCLING's executive editor. She has never looked back. Find her on Instagram @leahflick.

MY BIKE IS TANGLED in thorns at the bottom of a ravine, hurled there by a boy I thought I loved.

The relationship had been intense. The kind where you're certain you'll spend the rest of your lives together even though you're 21 and don't know what the rest of your lives means.

It was the summer after college graduation, on an island off the New England coast known for rugged cliff-side beaches and Victorian hotels. I'd ride all over on my sky-blue, 12-speed Univega with toe clips. To the beach. To get groceries. To the laundromat where, to save quarters, I'd shove my clean wet clothes into a canvas bag, then balance it on my handlebar for the ride home. Some nights after whiskey at Captain Nick's, I'd pedal, wobbly, down the dirt road to where I lived, with my eyes closed because I couldn't see anyway. I'd smile in the dark. On days off I'd ride a 16-mile loop around the island. Which felt something like exercise and made me feel good.

The relationship had started because the boy was everything other boys hadn't been: attentive, appreciative, adoring. My friends saw something different in him, something less benign.

By late summer, I had started to feel a tug. College classmates were getting jobs in the city. He didn't want to move to the city. He wanted to drive across the country. I wanted to be near family.

I told him I needed to leave. He lost his mind. It happened that fast. Maybe he thought that without my bike I couldn't leave him.

I crawl into the brambles. The thorns bite my skin. I pull until the clinging branches let go—there's no way I'm going anywhere without my bike.



as part of a spectating endeavor. // 14 #capsnothats // 15 Our socks are the best. // 16 V-shaped calves. // 17 Our gear uses more space-age materials than the movie *Tron*. // 18 5K is the warmup, not ►