
Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Inca - 03-07-2008 23:42

Maybe this is just an LA thing, but fixed gear bikes seem to be everywhere now. Mostly hipsters riding them. Is this the case in other places as well?

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Amor de Cosmos - 03-07-2008 23:54

Yeah, all over the place. It's 1954 again.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Antonio Gramsci - 04-07-2008 00:50

Toronto checking in and can report the same trend.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Inca - 04-07-2008 01:06

Not just with the fixed gears, but LA is undergoing a big upsurge in bike culture. There are groups like Critical Mass and Midnight Ridazz that have varying degrees of political activity and radicalization that are about big masses of bicyclists on the streets, there's a push to change one small but well-traveled east-west street in the center of the city into a "bike boulevard" and cyclists are treating it as such, and some insane riders have even gotten together and have staged rides on stretches of freeways during rush hour. This got them on NPR.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 04-07-2008 01:58

Indeed. One of the internet hipsters at work bought a genuine Canadian Tire 'Mustang' at a garage sale a few months back for \$100. Then he took it to a top notch bike shop and had it put back in order for another \$200. All this for a bike that would have retailed for \$59 when I was about 6.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by loose cannon - 04-07-2008 02:13

I posted this link before on the old site - those fixed gears are soooo elegant. Drool over those bikes - who described it as bicycle porn? *

<http://www.fixedgeargallery.com/>

I've had a fixie made up - took a bit of getting used to, use the brakes quite a lot, the max speed can be a frustrating (max speed is as fast you can pedal) but it looks great. It's also very light. Those chains/ gears sets weigh about 3kg so a light bike gets very light without them.

(* edit Inca did)

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Inca - 04-07-2008 02:20

loose cannon wrote:

I've had a fixie made up - took a bit of getting used to, use the brakes quite a lot

I thought there were no brakes on a fixed gear?

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by WornOldMotorbike - 04-07-2008 02:34

You just 'backpedal', don't you?

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by loose cannon - 04-07-2008 02:44

It's a matter of choice - I left the brakes on. It's a lot easier.

A pure fixed gear involves a lot more leg work or else don't go too fast as you have to work against your momentum to slow down.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by loose cannon - 04-07-2008 02:46

I'm a long way from the masters who lock their wheels to brake on some of the youtube clips.

And my wardrobe isn't quite as cool either.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by linus - 04-07-2008 04:55

Inca, fixed gear bikes aren't an LA thing, they've been a part of NYC bike culture for over a decade now, like the biker bags. Fixed gears make sense in Manhattan, where the combination of very short city blocks, slow traffic and flat landscape make it an ideal setup for bike messengers.

San Francisco has had a pretty entrenched bike culture as well. That's where Critical Mass started, and where mountain bikes were invented, as there are tons of great trails over the rolling hills through the green belt of parks that make up half of the inner Bay Area. It was kind of funny to see that some bikers there adopted the trendy fixed gear setup, given that San Fran and most other parts of the Bay Area are extremely hilly...

A good friend and former roommate of mine dropped out a while back from a lucrative tech career to start a great bike shop where he built terrific bikes like the one below. He had a knack for classic details, from leather saddles to his collection of vintage wool jerseys. The house in the top picture from the link was two blocks from where we lived in Berkeley, a pretty scenic area with lots of greenery and interesting older arts and crafts homes near campus.

<http://www.fixedgeargallery.com/matsuda.htm>

<http://www.fixedgeargallery.com/matsuda2.jpg>

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by evilC - 04-07-2008 07:10

I'd just like to point out that a pumpkin 'jack-o-lantern' is no substitute for a proper headlight.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 04-07-2008 08:33

All the couriers in London, and a few others too, are on fixed gears.

It seems like a deeply, deeply stupid thing in a big city where you need to stop and start repeatedly and therefore actually could use gears sensibly.

It also means they refuse to take their feet out of the pedals and wobble back and forwards all over the road when they are at lights, getting in everyone's way and being a general nuisance.

Stupid things. Keep fixed gear bikes for the track.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by The Purple Cow - 04-07-2008 09:14

The hip happening thing in AMsterdam are these chainless, direct-drive bikes.

http://store.curbside.on.ca/images/bio_ams_men_silver.jpg

<http://www.biomega.dk/Resource.aspx?rid=569>

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by loose cannon - 04-07-2008 09:16

The main reason that they use fixed gears is for ease of maintenance.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 04-07-2008 09:17

Clive's good joke is somewhat spoilt by the annoying fact that even when they're not exactly gigantic, you have to scroll to see photos.

The original idea behind the resurgence of fixies was for couriers to have something simple and unremarkable, since their expensive bikes were getting nicked all the time, I think. Then the pose factor came in.

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Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Stumpy Pepys - 04-07-2008 10:17

I'd just like to point out that a pumpkin 'jack-o-lantern' is no substitute for a proper headlight.

Excellent point. But pumpkins make great impromptu crash helmets.

<http://www.racerxill.com/images/articles/medium/0000004013.jpeg>

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by linus - 04-07-2008 14:53

That sounds like an environmentally sustainable headgear option, SP.

That Peanuts cartoon is here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwXwT_MI2jI

PC, that drive looks interesting, BMW has done this for a long time with its motorcycles. Have you tried a direct-drive bicycle? Are there several gears on it?

One thing I don't get about fixed gear bikes is the snobbery against front brakes, which really don't add much weight and will be much more efficient than pedal breaking (which only works on the rear wheel)

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by dglh - 04-07-2008 15:15

On the amazing bike front, I saw one of these in my local bike store the other day.

The side by side tandem.

<http://www.citynoise.org/upload/836.jpg>

They explained that the guy who builds them builds one a year, and it has several really unusual features (some have one where one person steers, the other does brakes).

They custom build track bikes from a aluminum base frame in the store, which is sorely tempting.

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Bryantop - 04-07-2008 16:34

Aluminium is for foil and drink cans.

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Guy Potger - 04-07-2008 18:27

Amor de Cosmos wrote:

Yeah, all over the place. It's 1954 again.

Fixed gears in 1954?

au contraire mon petit brave

http://images.andale.com/f2/115/106/3561856/1133635210940_hub_sturmey_archer_tc6.jpg

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Bafflin Smoke Signals - 04-07-2008 20:00

There's a fixed wheel Bianchi on ebay at the moment.

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by TonTon - 04-07-2008 20:38

Ok, I've looked at all the photos on this thread, and I am none the wiser - what are fixed gear bicycles?

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Inca - 04-07-2008 21:43

linus wrote:

It was kind of funny to see that some bikers there adopted the trendy fixed gear setup, given that San Fran and most other parts of the Bay Area are extremely hilly...

Well, there seems to be a whole lot of macho bullshit among the fixed gear crowd and the really radicalized bicyclists, in LA at least. It's a shame, because a whole lot of these people that are talking about new ways of looking at transportation seem to be trying to exclude a lot of people with their insularity and cliquishness.

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by The Chubby Cyclist - 04-07-2008 22:06

But they want to exclude people. They don't want everyone cycling in their city, getting from A to B easily and cheaply and without congestion or pollution. Because then how would these people be special, and different, and feel superior? I mean, you get part of the way with a fixed wheel bike and ludicrous lycra outfits to show off your macho twattish separateness. But you're never quite as special as when you were one of the only 3 cyclists on the LA highways.

TonTon - fixed wheel/fixed gear means that there is only one gear, and the rear cog is directly attached to the axel, with no ratchets or derailleurs or anything like that. Because it's solidly fixed, when you stop pedalling the rear wheel comes to a complete halt, which is why you don't need a rear brake. It's also why it's spectacularly dangerous to ride anywhere other than on a track. It's more efficient, cheaper, lighter, and easier to maintain than a real bicycle. It also means you can't accelerate and you struggle on hills, and hate stopping at traffic lights, which makes it pretty impractical in a city.

Re:Fixed gear bicycles

Posted by Bryantop - 05-07-2008 08:41

fixed wheel/fixed gear means that there is only one gear

not necessarily. there are fixed gear bikes with a cog wheel fixed to each side. to change gears you have to take the rear wheel off and flip it over.

all the bike couriers seem to have fixed gear bikes.

