

The Reel Deal

CineCycle's Martin Heath



Toronto filmmaker Martin Heath has had a lifelong love affair with cycling.

It began on a 300 km ride he took as a teenager, travelling from his hometown of Leeds to Whitby in Northern England and back on a fixed-gear bike. That ride, he says, “changed him forever.”

Now 64, Heath still holds the world distance record he set in 1998 for Brevets de Randonneur Mondiaux – organized, long-distance bicycle rides – when he covered 9,780 km in a single year.

Leeds was also the birthplace of Heath’s relationship with film. He joined a local film society there in the 60s and has never stopping rolling. His accomplishments include the rock and roll documentary *The Son of Tutti Frutti* which brought him to Toronto in 1972, when it had a long run at the Roxy Cinema.

Heath later built and toured an inflatable cinema and, for many years, was head film reviser for the Toronto International Film Festival,

where he ensured the print quality of films was perfect. A collector of rare film, he has amassed over 2,000 films and 50 projectors. He even built a pedal-powered projector used to screen silent films (complete with live piano playing.)

So which came first, bicycles or film?

“For me?” Heath asks and then answers without hesitation. “For me, the bicycle, of course.”

Heath points out, however, that historically bicycles and film arrived around the same time. It was 1885 when the first “safety bicycle” arrived and the first film was screened just three years later.

Heath has been able to combine his two great loves in CineCycle, his cinema-cum-bike repair shop. CineCycle has taken many forms since its start on Bathurst Street in the late 70s. The alternative theatre and performance space currently resides in 401 Richmond’s old coach house, down the bumpy lane behind 129 Spadina Avenue. Heath offers appointment-only specialized bicycle repair in the space and also operates a coffee bar, offering delicious coffee made with his 1950

The door to CineCycle shows preserved graffiti left by textile workers of the 1930s.

La San Marco espresso machine.

Bicycles may have come first for Heath, but in the film department he has the final word. Toronto will be hosting an alternative film festival during the Toronto International Film Festival this September, and Heath is running it.

“I’m the only person who would have the audacity to do it,” says Heath. “Plus, I have my own theatre.”

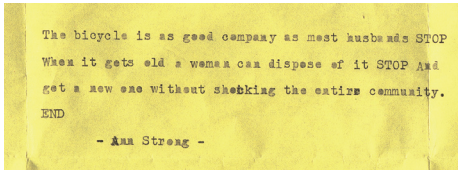
As Slamdance is to Sundance, Heath’s Micro-CineFest promises to showcase truly independent films with a little more edge. The festival’s slogan is “Tired of TIFF??... or just TIFF’ed Off??”

Heath also hosted the Cycle Messenger World Championships’ official “unofficial” after-party at CineCycle this summer. Couriers from all over the world ate grilled burgers and drank local beer after completing the grueling three-hour race. During Bike Month, CineCycle screened classic films like *Jour de fête* by Jacques Tati and hosted a talk by Lorne Shields about his collection of bicycle photography from the early 19th century.

By TAMMY THORNE, PHOTO SAM JAVANROUH



Vintage alleycat flyer



“The bicycle is as good company as most husbands STOP When it gets old a woman can dispose of it STOP And get a new one without shocking the entire community. END – Ann Strong”

This delightful telegram was addressed and delivered to me personally at a recent bicycle gathering by a bumbling French postman named Martin de la Rue. Listed on the telegram was the intersection where we were at, and the message “URGENT: DELIVER WITHOUT DELAY.” The postman, dressed in 1940s period costume, is the creation of local bicycle advocate, photographer and artist, Martin Reis.

dandyhorse had the opportunity to interview the French postman during his second year of duty in Canada.

DH: *Monsieur de la Rue, why do you deliver by bicycle?*

MR: *Bon... parce-que c’est plus pratique, evidament mieux pour la santé.*

DH: *En anglais, s’il vous plait?*

MR: *With a sniff, he continued, “It is stupid to take the car and it stinks.”*

DH: *Canada Post usually delivers by truck. Why is your way better?*

MR: *“They deliver everything by giant truck.” He laughs. “My work would never be done. It would take weeks by truck! Don’t tell me it takes weeks for you to get your mail? I know when I am delivering sometimes I am finding a big truck in the way in the lane for the bicycles. This is no good for anyone.”*

“I think bicycles are the best way.”

And, then with a smile and a nod, he is off on another delivery...

My telegram, it turned out, was just one of many “messages of hope” delivered by de la Rue. Based on the cycling postman in Jacques Tati’s 1949 film *Jour de fête*, Reis says his postal carrier was also inspired by friend and fellow artist Corwyn Lund, who delivered postcards on a red bike as part of a performance art piece at Harbourfront. “It made me realize the potential to combine fun and art,” says Reis. “I like that private-public bridge that performance art, in an unexpected situation, creates.”

It was during last year’s Nuit Blanche, and its non-corporate sister event Nuit Noire, that Martin de la Rue really came to life. “I found 35 artists I wanted to make deliveries to and handed out some generic extras. There is no prior announcement that the postman is coming. That is part of it,” says Reis.

Reis also delivered a telegram to the new restaurant Tati on Harbord Street, named in honour of the French film star. “He got it!” said Reis, recalling the owner’s reception. Reis’ French postman has also been known to attend Critical Mass in Toronto. “I try to send a positive message to celebrate the bicycle. This is a good place to do it.”

“It is about achieving that joie de vivre,” he says. “The postman is not overtly political, but what he does, instead, is provide an anachronism. He is a man out of place. The postman is stuck in the past, yet he is efficient and straightforward. He is the antidote to the fast Blackberry society where everything disappears in air. The Postman communicates with you directly, which pleasantly surprises you.”

More of Martin Reis’ work can be seen at www.tino.ca (and throughout this magazine). Martin de la Rue rides a Peugeot.

By TAMMY THORNE

PHOTO ALEX VS. ALEX

Vélocouture

Earlier this spring, Nathan Phillips Square played host to Toronto Fashion Week. For seven days and nights, T-dot fashionistas took in the top togs to be had in Canada. Yet their style efforts, however grandiose, overlooked a growing and important trend: fashion for those on two wheels.

Fortunately, there are a growing number of web resources for those interested in flywheel-friendly fashion. One of the most participatory of these – appropriately named *Vélocouture* – is a Flickr group where members post their pics of their choicest pedalling outfits.

Elena Potter, a photographer and Ryerson student, is one of the hundreds of cyclists world-wide who have been posting to *Vélocouture*. Potter discovered the Flickr group when her roommate recommended a related group, *Wardrobe Remix*. Potter then used it for research when she created her own bike fashion spread for a class, and eventually started posting some of her own pics.

Like other members of the *Vélocouture* group, Potter also has a favourite cycling outfit. “I have this same skirt that I wear all the time, so that a pair of tights, flats, a nice blouse and a sweater or blazer and scarves. I know it’s not a great idea to wear scarves on a bike, but I love them. I love the way they blow in the wind when you’re on your bike. And sunglasses are essential, of course.”

Whether your favourite cycling outfit is old jeans and a t-shirt or a gauzy vintage gown, you’ll likely find a match on the *Vélocouture* group site. Check it out at www.flickr.com/groups/velocouture.

By LEAH SANDALS

Featured Shop

La Carrera Cycles



Torok’s works at the La Carrera Cycles exhibit feature large unstretched, raw canvases that reflect her respect for both the built environment’s straight lines and the detailed two-dimensional expression of stencil artists like Toronto’s Janet “Bike Girl” Attard. Other pieces are ink-on-paper representations of bike couriers. “I like their style of dress,” Torok says. “And, I like their bikes.” Torok works as a camera assistant, but when the film season slows she stays busy refurbishing bikes to sell. She also volunteers at Bike Pirates, a do-it-yourself bike shop.

The Shop

La Carrera is as much a celebration of bicycle style, art, and design as it is a business, but there is something inside for everyone. Commuters, messengers, “fixies” (fixed-gear riders), roadies, cyclocrossers, BMXers, mountain bikers and more will find a welcoming, neighbourly vibe.

DJ’s and art exhibits at the 106 Harbord Street location, are among the features that owner Nadir Olivet says “keep it fresh.” You will not find prices on most items, nor will you encounter pushy salespeople. And where you would expect a cash register, you find an espresso bar.

Olivet is not only a bicycle enthusiast, but a car and motorcycle mechanic. “To understand this shop,” he says, “you need to hear the story from the beginning.” Olivet’s love of cycling was born of car racing and his shop recalls a famous pan-American auto race that,