

Reviews Books

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST CYCLING-RELATED READS

Print queue

Cycle doesn't feature all books received. Reviewers pick the ones they think you need to know about from the Editor's shortlist. Send review copies to: Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ

Introduction

This is remarkable.

My experience of cycling has been captured within the pages of a book written by a man born a generation before me, in another country, whom I have never met. As I said, remarkable.

It's as if he knows me. With a poet's precision and compassion, he has got to the heart of the same compulsion I have shared to jump on a bike, and just go cycling off, a need that has been expressed differently throughout my life as I have grown older. With a philosopher's reasoning, he has unpicked and articulated my unspoken thoughts. Now he's telling me what I was thinking all along.

Paul Fournel's evocative writing impresses itself upon the reader, just as gradually, and just as completely, as the bicycle captures the soul of its rider. Anyone for whom the act of pedalling continues to fascinate and infuriate will hear his elegant words accompanying their rides long after this book has been consumed, letter for letter, kilometre for kilometre.

Through these pages, which flow like the mysteriously forming and reforming thoughts of a ride in the Loire Valley, Fournel invites the reader to join him through a lifetime of dedication to the pursuit of an obsession for two wheels. From that miraculous moment, when, at the age of five, he

'no longer heard the motor of running behind' nor the sound of 'rhythmic breathing' on his back, Fournel's love affair with the bicycle began. It has continued unabated well into the twenty-first century. A spell of work in Cairo (where he was posted as the French cultural attaché until 2003) left him temporarily unable to cycle, and almost apysiated as a result. But he has recovered. He rides still.

Born in 1947 into the furnace of French cycling, Saint-Etienne, just before the golden age of the national sport dubbed France in its mythical aura, Fournel grew up steeped in the classic cycling culture that many a modern reader yearns for. Such readers will wistfully inhale from these pages like a world of handmade steel, neither too rigid, nor too flexible, leather saddles imported from England and mispronounced, and, of course Campagnolo gears. What a time to be alive! This is first-hand testimony, forged from the same steel that made his home city of Saint-Etienne famous throughout the cycling world: elegant, durable, something to covet.

He remembers, at the age of ten, embarking on a long ride over the famous cols that surround Saint-Etienne and have seen so many battles in the Tour de France. That day his father, at the end of his reserves of strength, could ride no longer and saved his young son forward. So, alone, the young Paul angled that narrow wheel towards a future that had already been defined by the love of riding fast. A lonely baptism, a difficult rite of passage, perhaps. But one which cemented a bond. Fournel also recalls sitting in the stands in the velodrome, watching the grunts of French racing ripping through the sills, but six men like Saint-Etienne's most illustrious cycling son Roger Rivière. Some education, that.



Fantastic Female Adventurers

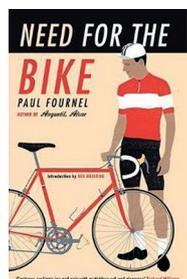
MEET 14 AWE-INSPIRING women who have undertaken challenges over land, sea and space – several of which include cycling. Compiled by a journalist, the style is accessible. My 7-year-old liked how each story began with the women's childhoods and their different paths to adventure. A gift with lots of 'wow!' factor for younger readers, similar to the 'Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls' and 'Fantastically Great Women' series, but equally enjoyable for all ages.

Georgina Cox

Details

By: Lily Dyu
Publisher: Vertebrate Publishing
Price: £12.99
ISBN: 978-1912560172

Need for the Bike



THIS BOOK AIMS to encapsulate our delightful passion – and does just that, covering everything from the author's first memories of riding a bike to being inspired by the professional peloton. It's a personal account of Fournel's life of cycling, with tales including: a love-hate relationship with Ventoux; his first 100km ride, aged ten, when he became a 'real' cyclist; and several vivid descriptions of when it all goes wrong, whether being hit by a car door or descending too fast to retain control.

Details

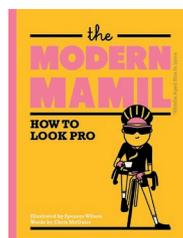
By: Paul Fournel
Publisher: Pursuit Books
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 978-1788162692

Almost all the short tales will be identifiable to any cycling enthusiast. Of particular note is the passage on the joy of riding with friends, where his evocative description of being part of a group rings true.

It's well written and easy to read; the author's background as a poet comes out in his prose. It's been well translated from the original French, so much so you would be hard-pressed to pick out any misinterpretation.

While chapters on *rouleurs* and *barouders* touch on a personal love of professional cycling, the elements of bike-nerdiness within the writing are well balanced with storytelling in such a way that anyone can enjoy this book.

Nik Hart



The Modern MAMIL: How to Look Pro

THIS AMUSING BOOK from Chris McGuire pokes fun at MAMILs (middle-aged men in lycra), providing all the tips required to look as pro as possible both on and off the bike. From shaving your legs to slamming your stem for the most aero look, this book will have you smiling wryly at every page. Most cyclists know someone who is a MAMIL, if they're not one personally. With fitting illustrations from Spencer Wilson to match, this book would make a good stocking filler for any cycling enthusiast.

Pip Munday

Details

By: Chris McGuire [author], Spencer Wilson [illustrator]
Publisher: Ice House Books
Price: £9.99
ISBN: 978-1912867097



Mountains of Dreams

THE 32-PAGE picture book tells the story of 22-year-old British adventurer Laura Bingham, who set herself the challenge of cycling 7,000km from Ecuador to Argentina with no money. The book has brightly coloured illustrations and lovely touches like animals to spot on each page. My 6-year-old daughter loved this book, although I had to keep reassuring her that Laura made it home safe in the end. It's a fantastic real-life story to inspire little girls (and boys).

Victoria Hazael

Details

By: Laura Bingham [author], Laura Wall [illustrator]
Publisher: Award Publications
Price: £6.99
ISBN: 978-1782703433



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