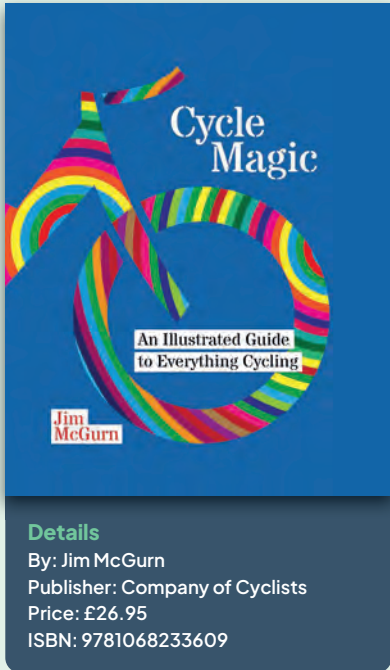




Cycle Magic



Details

By: Jim McGurn
Publisher: Company of Cyclists
Price: £26.95
ISBN: 9781068233609

Jim McGurn gave me my first job in cycling journalism a very long time ago. (When? See the photo on page 334.) He was the driving force – or rather, the pedal power – behind New Cyclist, ByCycle, Bike Culture Quarterly, Encyclopedica and Mike Burrows’s Bicycle Design. These titles mixed an eclectic and practical view of bike technology (covering everything from recumbents to carbon-fibre monocoques and MTBs) with history, culture, travellers’ tales and a Richard-Ballantine-like optimism for the bicycle’s power to change the world for the better.

I raise this partly as a disclaimer; I’m not a disinterested reviewer. But also because this ‘illustrated guide to everything cycling’ feels like a

compendium of greatest hits from the McGurn back catalogue, intermingled with more traditional bike-book fare like dealing with punctures and profiles of cycling personalities.

“Cycle Magic is a coffee-table book on cycling that has so much breadth it’s hard to categorise”

Cycle Magic is a coffee-table book on cycling that has so much breadth it’s hard to categorise. One moment you’re reading about cargo bikes, frame materials or velomobiles, then it’s Frank Patterson, Simone de Beauvoir, bicycle-related stamps or circus cycling.

Depending on how familiar you are with Jim’s oeuvre, there will be things here you recognise: those David Eccles illustrations, such as the lovely one in the style of Van Gogh’s Road With Cypress and Star; Mike Burrows-isms like ‘annual pneumatic suspension’ (tyres); bikes in the 19th century Australian outback, in Cuba, in novels, in art, in the air.

Yet it hangs together remarkably well. There’s no index but there is a comprehensive list of contents, which is really all you need; this is a book to dip into. In terms of tone, it reminded me of Richard’s Bicycle Book, in that it’s a celebration of cycling and not merely a manual.

Dan Joyce



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Go West

Details
By: Steve Silk
Publisher: Summersdale
Price: £10.99
ISBN: 9781837995721

Expecting yet another book by a middle-aged man about what sounds

like a fairly underwhelming journey, I was happy to be proved wrong. Steve Silk is an acute observer, striking up conversations and bringing in economic and social history; he followed in the footsteps/cycle tracks of Charles G Harper from 1905. Recommended.
Ian Small



Braver than you think

Details
By: Claire Davis
Publisher: Peard Publishing
Price: £12.99
ISBN: 9781068464331

LEJOG is not that unusual a ride. But Claire Davis’s

decision to do it almost on a whim and solo makes it much more so. She provides insights into the challenges that women face and also of what we gain when we’re ‘braver than we think’. Cycle touring is in its nature quite repetitive – eat, ride, sleep, repeat – but this book remains interesting throughout.

Gwenda Owen



The World at 15 mph...ish

Details
By: Naomi Johnson
Publisher: Bold Font Publishing
Price: £14.99
ISBN: 9781739381103

This book mixes a ride across continents with more traditional tourism. There’s a chapter per country or region, focusing on a theme, like food, freedom or friends. There are nice details, such as dealing with the bikes en route in Nepal and Italy. Yet the backdrop is a need for speed that’s winked at by the title. I wished we could stop and take in the view.

Gosia Polanska