



One Wheel Will Do, Thanks

NOR CAL MOUNTAIN UNICYCLISTS FIND FEW PLACES THEY CAN'T TREAD
By Chelsea Frasier

"This will prove out to be ironic," Corbin Dunn says.

Kicking a 30" freewheel unicycle, Dunn pedals up a steep trail in Los Gatos on a mountain bike with a sturdy arrangement of mountain unicycles. The lone wheel is necessary, he says, to get into the woods, but he spins it freely, trying to keep his feet on the pedals. He has straps for "handles," a small carbon fiber seat under his seat, fenders, and a rear rack for a tent on the side of the trail. He looks at the last second, falling nearly two feet off his perch. He remains in one fluid, graceful motion.

"People can't simply pick up a unicycle and pedal it," he says. "They have to dedicate at least 10 hours to learning how to properly ride the thing."

A YOUTUBE FAVORITE

People watch equally parts in awe and confusion by unicyclists, especially on YouTube. Posting unicycle stunts and predictable comments and questions.

"Where's your other wheel?"

"Hey, I think you lost something."

To which unicyclists often respond, "I just got rid of my missing wheel."

Mountain Unicycling, or MU, for short, hasn't exactly reached mainstream status. The thanks to YouTube and the Best Mountain Film Festival, MU has recently gained some wider exposure. "MU has probably

attracted more press than any other form of unicycling," says John Posa, founder of California Mountain Unicycling, a festival held every year since 1996.

The bike club and Vancouver native Ken Hahn has brought MU to much of its notoriety. "I'm unicycling like a Tony Hawk," he says, says Posa. With a mix of trials, freestyle and downhill techniques, Hahn has shown that unicyclists can go anywhere a bicycle can go—and many places a bike can't. "Watching unicycling is like watching a gymnast perform and watching a triathlete swim," says Posa. "It's like watching a triathlete swim."

Mattias Hervert, a Los Gatos engineer, has ridden in Thailand and Mexico with Hahn. The focus of their adventures, says the Pioneer Digger, about their trip to Mexico, and Llanillo, which recorded their descent of the third highest mountain in North America, Mexico's El Picacho del Diablo, demonstrates that mountain unicyclists can hold their own in any terrain.

"We can stop on a dime, go backwards, spin on our axis, hop up stairs and curbs," Posa explains.

Essentially a unicycle operates in a 360-degree plane.

ONE-WHEEL MENI REVOLUTION

So one is common nearly most unicycling gear to men. But an early geometric concept that has been around since cyclists began to experiment with one wheel came from their parents' bicycles in the late 1800s. They found that unicycles from a wheel was sufficient, while the rest was mostly a decorative add-on. However, many riders grew cynical at Mountain Unicycle Park for really getting unicycling serious, in the late 1990s.

In the mid-'90s, Posa, considered the "godfather of MU," started using his unicycle on some of the local dirt trails and offroad unicycling was born.

A decade later in California, Posa discovered great MU riding on the trails around Sacramento and Astoria. He got the idea to hold an "all-day convention" and the MU in weekends were born. The convention proved so successful when Bruce Smith, an engineer from South Creek, last week in 1997 and returned from his trip, brought enough people unicycling, better gear and ideas to start a tight-knit group of riders in Nor Cal.

Unicycles used for mountain riding at the time were typically made with either a 24" or 26" wheel, which were versatile on technical



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unicycles had sufficient over long distances. In the late '90s, Caliber Cycling Company introduced a 30" unicycle, which quickly captured their attention. In fact, unicycles from riding (and unicycling) on the 30" size that they produce are the most popular. The unicycles, which are made in the USA, are long travel, with a 30" wheel and 26" axle, and a 30" wheel diameter and 26" axle diameter. The unicycles are made in the USA.

With their own, more recently, Posa and Smith started the world's first unicycle park, Mountain Unicycle Park, in the late 1990s. The park is located in the town of Ukiah, California, and is the only unicycle park in the world.

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