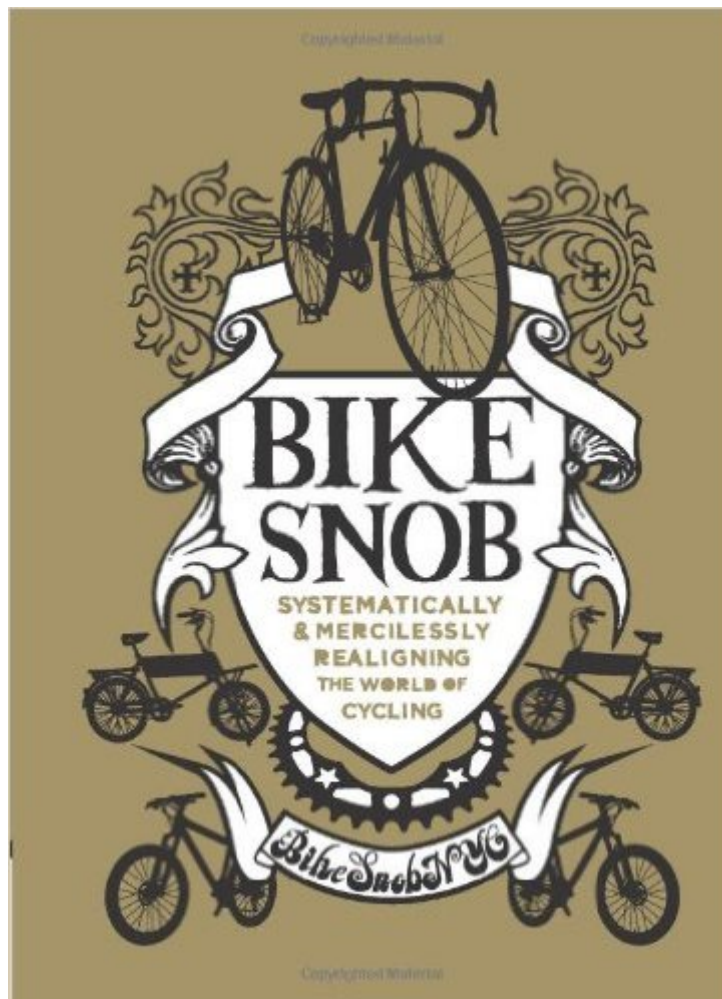


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Bike Snob: Systematically & Mercilessly Realigning The World Of Cycling



Synopsis

Cycling is exploding in a good way. Urbanites everywhere, from ironic hipsters to earth-conscious commuters, are taking to the bike like aquatic mammals to water. BikeSnobNYC cycling's most prolific, well-known, hilarious, and anonymous blogger brings a fresh and humorous perspective to the most important vehicle to hit personal transportation since the horse. Bike Snob treats readers to a laugh-out-loud rant and rave about the world of bikes and their riders, and offers a unique look at the ins and outs of cycling, from its history and hallmarks to its wide range of bizarre practitioners. Throughout, the author lampoons the missteps, pretensions, and absurdities of bike culture while maintaining a contagious enthusiasm for cycling itself. Bike Snob is an essential volume for anyone who knows, is, or wants to become a cyclist.

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Customer Reviews

The Bike Snob writes a wickedly funny blog poking holes in practically every pretension in the cycling world. His blog careens unexpectedly between the worlds of pro cycling, hipsters, fixed gear bikes, Craigslist ads and the indignity of bike commuting (especially in New York). He never runs out of targets -- the studied poses of various cycling subcultures has given him an unending stream of targets. In print -- both in his columns in Bicycling Magazine, and now in this book -- he's a bit toned down. In order to reach a broader audience, his writing is a little more accessible, with fewer self-referential, super-inside jokes that propel the humor in his blog. In print, the satire is still there, but the very sharpest edges have been softened a bit. What's left is a still-funny survey of the world of bicycling in America -- from a brief history of cycling, to a tour of the various cycling subcultures,

to some guidance on how to perform basic bike maintenance tasks. The Snob also addresses the "real world" of urban cycling today: what it's like to try to control your temper when a car nearly kills you in traffic, or how to stay warm and dry in a winter rain. And although The Snob avoids organized "bicycle advocacy" efforts (and explains why in his book), he manages to deliver some solid pro-bicycle messages of his own: "Telling cyclists to get out of the road is like telling women to get out of the voting booth and go back into the kitchen, or telling Japanese-American people to 'Go back to China.' The ignorance inherent in the statement is almost more offensive than the sentiment behind it." While he's at it, he tries to knock some sense into cyclists themselves -- questioning the sanity of riding brakeless track bikes on the street, for example, and poking fun at the marketing-driven compulsion of "roadies" to endlessly upgrade their bikes (especially those that are most likely to get stolen anyway). Some overall themes that emerge are encouraging to the newcomer ("get out and ride"), while persuading the cycling-obsessed to take themselves (and their bikes) a bit less seriously. (He holds a special disdain for "bicycle fetishists" who are more focused on their gear than on riding: "They keep their bicycles clean all the time, they fear scratches like they're herpes, and they don't ever ride in the rain...so their bikes won't get dirty or rusty. They're like the people who collect toys but don't remove them from the package so as not to diminish their value.") The book is a must-buy for fans of the blog, and great gift for the cyclist in your family.

I don't read BikeSnobNYC's blog, and the few times I've checked it out it was a little too all over the place for me to really get into. The Bike Snob book, on the other hand, is nearly as much fun as riding itself. It's relatively brief but will leave you satisfied with a solid little knowledge of the history of bicycles and bicycle-related subcultures, why to do certain things and not other things on/with your bike, and how to maximize the fun (and utility) of cycling. BikeSnobNYC is enormously clever, makes plenty of fun similes ranging from spot-on ("In a lot of ways, being a cyclist is like being a vampire. ... Both cyclists and vampires are cultural outcasts with cult followings who clumsily walk the line between cool and dorky.") to a hilarious stretch ("The Urban Cyclist is one of the very few groups of cyclists among whom cigarette smoking is not only acceptable but considered "cool," which is sort of like being really into performance cars but driving around with rags shoved up your tailpipe."), and overall just seems like a good guy. He has clearly thought about every in and out of cycling more than pretty much anyone, and really does make some strong arguments for being conscientious about your life with a bicycle, as well as life in general. The author isn't out to make you feel stupid, or to give you a step-by-step on how to become a bike snob. He doesn't have any brands or particular types of bikes to push (although you've got some explaining to do if you ride with

handlebars chopped more narrow than your own hips). He seems genuinely interested in getting more people on bikes, and the people who are already on bikes to be on their bikes more often. Overall it's just a very enjoyable read, and will encourage you to bike more and to think more. My only complaint is that the included stickers are not very waterproof. Where would I stick one but on my down tube?

My expectation was that this book would be anecdotal with the author essentially making fun of cyclists at a very shallow level. And yes, there is quite a bit of that (and why not, it's fun); but the book had much more depth both in content and execution. This book is witty, insightful and relevant; though I would speculate that with all the popular culture references, it may not age well. I found myself acknowledging and laughing at a lot of his observations. This is a book about cycling by a man that clearly and obviously loves every aspect of it. It allows us cyclists to see ourselves and confirms (at least for me) many of the thoughts I've had on a bike. It also gives the burgeoning cyclists and/or non cyclists a glimpse of the cycling universe. Here's one quote that articulates how I feel about cycling, "But cycling is less a hobby than it is a discipline with the potential to transform you. It brings balance." No, not all cyclists are this esoteric or heady, and I admit this quote misrepresents the tone of the book; but for me, it sums it all up. This book was an unexpected pleasure.

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