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# It's All About The Bike: The Pursuit Of Happiness On Two Wheels



## Synopsis

Robert Penn has saddled up nearly every day of his adult life. In his late 20s, he pedaled 25,000 miles around the world. Today he rides to get to work, sometimes for work, to bathe in air and sunshine, to travel, to go shopping, to stay sane, and to skip bath time with his kids. He's no Sunday pedal pusher. So when the time came for a new bike, he decided to pull out all the stops. He would build his dream bike, the bike he would ride for the rest of his life; a customized machine that reflects the joy of cycling. It's *All About the Bike* follows Penn's journey, but this book is more than the story of his hunt for two-wheel perfection. En route, Penn brilliantly explores the culture, science, and history of the bicycle. From artisanal frame shops in the United Kingdom to California, where he finds the perfect wheels, via Portland, Milan, and points in between, his trek follows the serpentine path of our love affair with cycling. It explains why we ride. *It's All About the Bike* is, like Penn's dream bike, a tale greater than the sum of its parts. An enthusiastic and charming tour guide, Penn uses each component of the bike as a starting point for illuminating excursions into the rich history of cycling. Just like a long ride on a lovely day, *It's All About the Bike* is pure joy - enriching, exhilarating, and unforgettable.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author's love for all aspects of bicycling is quite evident in this book: the history, its culture, the joy of riding, the challenge of long trips, and the bike itself. But most of all, he is intrigued by "old-school" bicycle craftsmen, who know virtually everything about bicycles, tend to use traditional tools and techniques, and are committed to quality above all else. The basis of this book is the

author's quest to have the perfect - for him - bike built, utilizing the knowledge of bicycle artisans/experts scattered across Europe and the US, most of whom he spends time with in the book - a process that he calls "bespoke," or one-of-a-kind. He sees these modern-day craftsmen as following in the footsteps of long forgotten bicycle innovators, who spent nearly a century from the 19th into the 20th centuries reinventing and perfecting the bicycle. He notes the development of the basic diamond bike frame in 1885, followed by the slow perfecting of steel ball bearings, headsets, handlebars, drive trains (chain, bottom bracket, free wheel, and derailleur), saddles, wheels and tires, and light weight, steel-alloy tubing. In his search for quality, he is allowed inside some of the most revered bicycle component manufacturers, such as, Chris King, Cinelli, Campagnola, Brooks, Columbus, and Continental, many being key players in component development over several decades. Beyond the perfect bike, it is the social implications of bicycling that most interest the author. The production of literally millions of the so-called "safety" bicycle in England in the late 19th century had a significant effect on, not only, expanding distances that could be traveled in a day's time but also on the emancipation of women, now more able than ever to make trips on their own.

Mr. Penn brings to this book great breadth of experience in the saddle, having cycled to some of the most amazing places on the planet. He retains the sense of wonder anyone who has ridden a bicycle has when they first achieve the wonder of moving forward without support on this most amazing two-wheeled vehicle. The bicycle is truly the most wonderful and efficient human powered machine ever developed and we are still learning about the physics of its self-stabilizing qualities. The author takes us on an adventure, grounded in his pragmatic sense of what works and what doesn't for the quotidian rider, as he pursues his dream bike, one that isn't off the shelf and that is based upon insight into the history, tradition and artisanal qualities of bicycle component production. He brings the reader along on an adventure any cyclist with a sense of wonder would enjoy, meeting the current generation of artisanal component producers. Before we meet these amazing people, we are treated to the history of the relevant component, from origins to evolution through both utilitarian and bicycle racing uses. He obtains the component of interest during a visit, frame from Brian Rourke at Stoke on Trent, headset from Chris King in Portland, OR, wheels from Gravy in Fairfax, CA, tires, steaming hot just after vulcanization from Hardy Bolts of Continental in Korbach, Germany, saddle from Brooks in Manchester...., you get the idea. Your sense of appreciation for each component of the bicycle will deepen after you read each of these engaging sections. You begin to see why the bicycle was initially greeted with the same fanfare and production facilities as the automobile later was. You also more deeply appreciate how remarkable and utilitarian this

machine is.

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