

# Los Angeles Dealer Tour

## Riders and retailers as diverse as City of Angels

By Val Vanderpool

LOS ANGELES — Sand, sun and surf. Beach cruisers, scooters and skateboards — life's a beach in Los Angeles, right? For a tiny percentage of the county's population of about 10 million who live near the water, it is. But the majority of Angelenos live inland in about 80 landlocked municipalities spread across some 4,000 square miles.

The Walk of Fame, Rodeo Drive and the Hollywood Hills. Red carpets, movie premieres and paparazzi — life in the City of Angels is all about the glitz and glamour. At least that's what the magazines will have you believe.

And while it's true that beach life, good weather and the rich and famous are all part of the region's rich cultural fabric, the reality is there's much more to Los Angeles than meets the eye.

From the eight beach cities including Malibu and Santa Monica, the Orange County and San Bernardino county lines to the south and east, respectively, the San Gabriel mountains and foothills to the San Fernando, Santa Clarita and Conejo valleys to the north — all connected by massive

Continues on DT3

To view our video from Dealer Tour L.A., visit the *Bicycle Retailer* YouTube page at [www.youtube.com/user/bicycleretailer](http://www.youtube.com/user/bicycleretailer)



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## Los Angeles Dealer Tour



**Bike Attack Electric+ has a full array of e-bikes, including electric mountain bikes.**

**E**ricson Monsalud first dabbled in bike retail while stationed on a U.S. Army base in Berlin, Germany, where he ran an outdoor store for residents. In 1994, he opened Bike Attack on the base.

“We became the exclusive distributor for Bontrager, Litespeed, Foes and Merlin, and we were also the largest Cannondale dealer in Europe. At the time, I was mostly focused on mountain biking,” said Monsalud, a former pro downhill racer.

But Monsalud would eventually tire of European winters and move back to the U.S. In 1999, he opened Bike Attack in his hometown of Venice, California. In 2004, Monsalud took on a partner, Andrew Smith, and opened a second 1,000-square-foot location in Santa Monica.

“I was a customer and a friend, and we didn’t have any kind of partnership or agreement in place,” Smith said. “But we went down and signed the lease on this spot and figured it all out later.”

Over the years, the Santa Monica market has be-

come increasingly saturated. Most recently, Giant Santa Monica opened across the street. But Monsalud and Smith welcome the competition.

“We cater to the bike culture, and I think we’ve got that going for us. We’re very Bohemian here,” Monsalud said. “I am sure we’ve lost some sales to Giant, but it’s also bringing more people to the block to shop.

“And I think we can offer a different flavor. People want different Skittles flavors or colors, and we’ve got them,” Monsalud added, laughing.

The duo closed the Venice store in 2010 because they wanted to put more focus on e-bikes, which they

had sold since 2005. In spring 2015, Smith and Monsalud opened a dedicated e-bike store, Bike Attack Electric+, a few blocks from Bike Attack. The new store is a Bosch Service Center and offers test rides and e-bike rentals.

“We already had some of the top e-bike brands at Bike Attack. People were coming from all over California to try them,” Smith said. “So Ericson made a call from Interbike and, sight unseen, we took this location and here we are. We have enough space to showcase more e-bikes, and we think there’s really a lot of potential in the e-bike market here.” **BRAIN**



**Bike Attack’s roots are in mountain bikes, but it now caters to Santa Monica’s eclectic cycling community.**



**Bike Attack and Bike Attack Electric+ co-owners Ericson Monsalud (left) and Andrew Smith.**

### Bike Attack

**Employees:** 8

**Sales floor space:** 900

**Years in business:** 21

**Emphasis:** Mountain, road, lifestyle

**Main brands:** Felt, Norco, Bianchi, Surly, Scott, Tern

**Owner:** Ericson Monsalud, Andrew Smith

### Bike Attack Electric+

**Employees:** 6

**Sales floor space:** 1,000 square feet

**Time in business:** 9 months

**Emphasis:** E-bikes

**Main brands:** Stromer, Easy Motion, Haibike, Cannondale, Felt

**Owners:** Ericson Monsalud, Andrew Smith

Continued from DT1

## City of Angels

traffic-choked freeways — the diversity in culture, landscape and demographics is as vast as the L.A. basin itself. For this reason, Los Angeles is an interesting and disjointed place.

One Westside retailer summed it up best with this statement that may encapsulate the whole of Los Angeles County:

“The Santa Monica demographic is so interesting,” said Andrew Smith, co-owner of Bike Attack and Bike Attack Electric+. “It’s like a socioeconomic experiment. You’ve got a guy with two Ph.D.s in a \$2 million condo and his neighbor next door in the same building is on Section 8 food stamps. They’re almost sharing dwellings.”

This dichotomy is also a factor when it comes to cycling in Los Angeles. Like any region with a large population spread across diverse topography and demographics, the cross section of who’s riding and why is as varied as the squares of a patchwork quilt. From wealthy weekend warriors to pro racers and avid enthusiasts to commuters and so-called “invisible cyclists” riding out of necessity, name a type of cyclist and L.A. County has it.

But because it is perhaps one of the most car-centric regions in the U.S., if not the world, L.A. isn’t the first city that springs to mind when talking about bike friendliness. Busy streets, hustle and bustle and the sheer expanse of L.A. County make most people reach for their car keys before their bike helmet.

“Since the 1950s, it’s become the land of the freeway,” said Jon Riddle, author of “Where to Bike Los Angeles” and a ride guide and volunteer for the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition. “But it’s not only the freeways that chop up the city and make building bike infrastructure difficult,

it’s the major east-west and north-south boulevards that create obstacles as well.

“They just can’t be used because of the volumes of cars. So the question becomes, where do you even put the infrastructure and how do you connect it all to get people where they need to go by bike?”

In the past 10 years, L.A. has made strides, adding bike lanes and its first separated Green Lane on Spring Street. And wildly popular CicLAvia events have not only drawn attention to the lack of safe cycling routes but also draw would-be cyclists and commuters out of the woodwork — to the tune of about 100,000 people on average — to ride anywhere from 6 to 8 miles of city streets closed to traffic.

However, as the city of L.A. proper works to make its streets safer via a number of initiatives like “road diets,” where a travel lane will be removed to make way for a bike lane and to slow traffic down, another challenge emerges: 88 municipalities all have different plans for implementing infrastructure and it comes down to who’s in charge and how they feel about cycling. In many cases, it’s a lack of a plan that’s also holding them back.

“Most of the 88 municipalities have no idea how to implement infrastructure and they can’t even get the funding without a plan in place, so creating more chapters to help them is a big goal for us,” said Colin Bogart, education director at the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition.

So leave one city and cyclists may find themselves high and dry on a busy street. “There are more than a few bike paths to nowhere,” added Riddle. “You’ll be riding on a beautiful path and it will suddenly end because you’ve crossed into another city.”

For all the infrastructure challenges facing L.A. County, life seems to be pretty good for bike retail in La La Land. With a dense population with a growing desire to escape the shackles of oppressive traffic, there appears to be ample opportunity for retailers of all shapes and sizes.

On the periphery and anywhere near mountains, like the Conejo Valley or Pasadena and the foothill communities, there are a number of mountain bike-heavy shops like Incycle, Newbury Park Bicycle Shop and the newest addition, Pedalers Fork in the wealthy community of Calabasas.

And considering year-round riding weather, L.A. County retailers don’t deal with typical seasonal fluctuations, which might also contribute to the relative stability of many of the shops Dealer Tour L.A. visited.

In Santa Monica, a couple retailers said the city’s red tape makes it difficult to set up shop. “You have to really, really, really want to open a store in Santa Monica,” said Alison Letson, co-owner of Bike Effect.

Despite the bureaucracy, there are about 13 bike shops in a 3-mile radius in Santa Monica. Most have carved out their niche and seem to be flourishing in the affluent community.

As such, it wouldn’t be a Dealer Tour in L.A. without some talk of Tinsel Town. Westside retailers in particular see so many celebrities in their stores, they start to lose track.

“Josh Brolin lives across the street, he’s in here all the time,” said Ericson Monsalud, co-owner of Bike Attack. “We have everyone: Tia Leone and Pamela Anderson, Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson — I even forget their names.”

“One time we had some super celebrity in here. I couldn’t believe it — the paparazzi were climbing on our roof and in the window taking photos. And we were like, ‘Wait, which one is it?’” added Monsalud. “There was this French family in the store and so we thought, ‘Is it the woman, the kid or the guy?’ It turned out the dude had played with the Rolling Stones and we didn’t even know. We just treat them normal.”

Such is life in the City of Angels.

*Editor’s note: Our group also visited Cynergy Cycles, but the shop declined to be part of our print coverage.*

## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

From humble beginnings as a small store on Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica, owned by Helen and Ted Throckmorton in 1936, Helen's Cycles has grown and evolved with each passing decade, but retained the name of its original founder. Today, Helen's has six stores in the L.A. region.

During the BRAIN Dealer Tour, our group visited Helen's expansive three-floor Santa Monica store on Broadway. Most of the business' inventory arrives at this location, which serves as a warehouse and distribution center for all the other stores, said Jay Wolff, who started working at Helen's Cycles in 1987, and is now the company's owner.

Wolff, who was born in Augusta, Georgia, moved to California when he was 26 after working at Capitol Cyclery — a combination baby, toy and bike store — in Lafayette, Louisiana. He knew the L.A. cycling market was growing, and saw his opportunity to run a larger business.

When he started, Helen's Cycles, then a Schwinn store under Karen and Duane Stier ownership, had only two stores in Westwood and Santa Monica. Under Wolff, the business opened stores in Manhattan Beach in 1989, Marina del Rey in 1991, and Arcadia in 1999. The acquisition of I. Martin Bicycles in 2003 expanded its footprint into Hollywood (see related story). Wolff also grew sales to more than \$15 million annually for the business, about half of which is generated at the Santa Monica store.

Wolff grew his ownership stake in the company with each expansion, until he bought it out entirely in 2010.

Helen's Cycles is known for its high-end business, but Wolff stresses that his stores cater to all types of riders, ages and budgets. "While Helen's sells many \$10,000 bikes, it also moves a ton of kids' bikes and cruisers. That range of service and product is both a challenge and a blessing," Wolff noted.

"We might have more high-end bikes in our [Santa Monica] mezzanine than most bike stores have, but we do have more of all types of bikes for everybody. I don't want to call myself a high-end store. What is great with Helen's Cycles is its ability to offer a choice of several brands. The core of our business is family and everything else branches off from there," Wolff said. "We've



Among Helen's veteran service staff, the average tenure is 20 years, owner Jay Wolff said.

been fortunate to have the size, money and foundation to achieve that."

Being in the L.A. market, Helen's Cycles does a fair amount of business with local celebrities who frequent several of its stores. But it protects their privacy — you won't see many signed and framed photos of these stars at the Santa Monica store.

Helen's Cycles has also been a strong supporter of local teams and clubs, working with about 2,000 riders in the area to provide custom kits and discounts on products. And the stores donate product to local schools, charitable organizations and groups including the Boys and Girls Club and the L.A. Fire Department.

Helen's Cycles is perhaps the area's highest-volume specialty retailer (the Santa Monica store sells 200 bikes during Helen's annual six-hour sale each July 4). But as Santa Monica continues to add bike infrastructure, new stores have opened and competition has stiffened, Wolff said, adding that about 13 stores do business



Increasing his interest in the company with each expansion, Jay Wolff took full ownership of Helen's Cycles in 2010.

### Helen's Cycles

**Employees:** 75 at all six locations; 18 at Santa Monica store

**Sales floor space:** 6,000 square feet; 11,000 square feet for entire building (Santa Monica)

**Years in business:** 79

**Emphasis:** full service six-store chain catering to all levels and disciplines

**Main brands:** Trek, Cannondale, Santa Cruz, Pinarello, Colnago, Ibis and Electra

**Owner:** Jay Wolff (became full owner in 2010)



About half of annual sales for the six-store Helen's Cycles chain is generated at the 11,000-square-foot Santa Monica location.

within a three-mile radius.

"Competition is good, but too much competition is challenging," Wolff said. "A lot of things we've done, people have come in and copied."

So Wolff is careful not to divulge many details about what makes Helen's successful.

Wolff points to areas such as e-bikes that show growth potential. And, at the end of the day, he says success comes down to his employees and the experience they provide.

"We're blessed in that our service staff, their average tenure is 20 years. Six guys have 25-plus years with us," Wolff said. "They're consistent and have a huge following. They're the foundation of our business."

Next year, Helen's will celebrate its 80th year in business, and Wolff plans to mark the milestone in a special way. **BRAIN**

### I. Martin Bicycles

**Employees:** 14

**Sales floor space:** 5,000 square feet

**Emphasis:** Full-service shop (part of the Helen's Cycles chain)

**Years in business:** 44 (12 under current ownership)

**Main brands:** Trek, Cannondale, Linus, Pinarello, Colnago, Santa Cruz

**Owner:** Jay Wolff



The shop has about 275 bikes on its 5,000-square-foot sales floor.

Serving West Hollywood, Beverly Hills and surrounding communities, I. Martin Bicycles has operated on busy Beverly Boulevard since 1971.

Founder Marty Feldberg started the shop as I. Martin Imports, bringing in European bikes and components — mostly Italian wares from the likes of Campagnolo, Masi and Fuso — on biannual trips overseas, then distributing them in the U.S.

Multi-store L.A. retailer Helen's Cycles acquired the shop in 2003, but retained the I. Martin name to preserve its heritage, store manager Jaime DeLaCruz said.

Since the change in ownership, Helen's has brought primary brand Trek into the location, given the store two extensive interior remodels to open up the space and streamline merchandising, and changed the off-road-heavy mix of bike on the sales floor. Without large trail networks nearby, mountain bikes can be a tough sell at the location, DeLaCruz noted.



Founded in 1971, I. Martin was acquired by Helen's Cycles in 2003.



Store manager Jaime DeLaCruz has been with Helen's Cycles since 1999.

"We definitely added more commuter, more city to the mix, as well as road bikes. We also beefed up apparel and shoes. For parts and accessories, we stayed pretty much the same. They were doing a fair amount of road business at that time as far as repairs. I just think the manager before us was really fixated on mountain biking too much and didn't see the big picture," said DeLaCruz, who joined Helen's flagship location in Santa Monica in 1999.

About three years ago, I. Martin increased its focus on the women's market, adding a greater selection of apparel and women's-specific bikes. "We've got dedicated women's bikes from \$699 to \$6,000," DeLaCruz said. **BRAIN**

## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

A few months after completing a yearlong floor-to-ceiling remodel at your shop, do you just sit tight and reap the rewards of your labors? Not if you're Wheel World co-owner Kyle Paulson.

"We're about to remodel our remodel," he said at Wheel World's Woodland Hills location.

And it's no mere cosmetic touch-up he's talking about. Rather, Paulson is making way for an entirely new category at his two locations, which also include a store in Culver City: pavement and off-road e-bikes.

"I feel like e-bikes are the future of our industry," he said.



As part of its remodel completed in June, Wheel World Woodland Hills tore out the drop ceiling in its main showroom to create space for 33 percent more bikes. The shop now floors more than 300 bikes.

Seeing the Bosch mid-drive motor firsthand this summer was the light-bulb moment for Paulson, whose family has owned 70-year-old Wheel World since 1975.

"It was in our parking lot, and the bike was in the back of a guy's truck. I noticed that the motor and the battery integrated into the frame, and I asked the guy if he'd let

me ride it. He pulled it out enthusiastically and let me try it," he recalled.

"I think the mid-drive motor solidified that the technology is now legitimate, and the way the electric assist is integrated into the whole bicycle package is finally right," Paulson added.

In addition to remodeling sections of its brick-and-mortar stores, Wheel World is also revamping its website to include a separate site for its new e-bike business. Paulson hopes to have all the work completed by Dec. 11. He plans to carry electrics from longtime supplier Specialized as well as Felt, Haibike and iZip.

Paulson and his staff have been getting up to speed on e-bike technology through training with Bosch, and he plans to do the same with Yamaha for the Haibike models sporting the Japanese manufacturer's motors.

"I think that our Culver City store is positioned to be strong in the commuter segment, and I think that our Woodland Hills location will be strong in the off-



The Woodland Hills remodel also included creation of a new apparel department as well as a checkout station for test rides and a separate check-in station for service.

### Wheel World

**Employees:** 8 at Woodland Hills location; 25 overall  
**Sales floor space:** 3,300 square feet in Woodland Hills, plus 4,200-square-foot showroom in Culver City  
**Emphasis:** Full-service road, mountain and family shop  
**Years in business:** 70 in Culver City (40 under current ownership); 20 at Woodland Hills location  
**Main brands:** Specialized, Giant, Felt, Electra, Haibike, iZip  
**Owners:** Robert and Kyle Paulson



Co-owner Kyle Paulson — who operates Wheel World with his father, Robert — is betting big on pavement and off-road e-bikes heading into 2016. "When that segment finally takes off, I want to be fully immersed," he said.

road segment," Paulson predicted. That mirrors the two stores' current strengths in traditional bikes.

"We're going to have a big push on the off-road stuff, and I think it's going to get a lot of attention if we can get some people out there on the bikes. I think over time it's going to be pretty significant," Paulson added. **BRAIN**

### Pedalers Fork

**Employees:** 1 (bike shop only); about 100 for restaurant, bar, café and coffee roaster

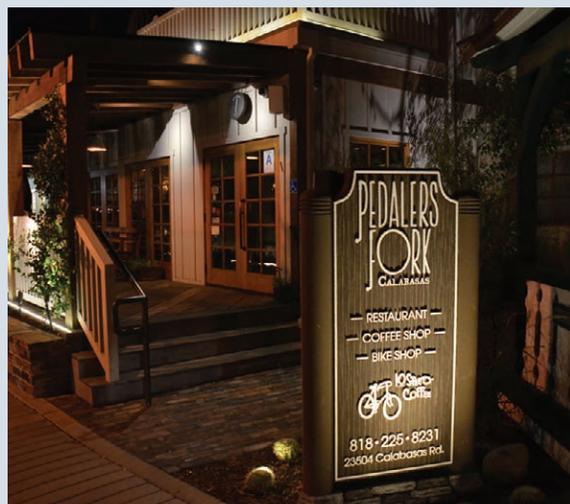
**Shop space:** 500-square-foot open-front shop facing onto restaurant patio with bike display

**Years in business:** 2½

**Emphasis:** Boutique road and mountain shop; part of cycling-themed concept that includes a restaurant, bar, café and coffee roaster

**Main brands:** Moots, Cannondale, Cielo, Argonaut

**Owner:** Robbie Schaeffer



The cycling-themed "lifestyle concept" in Old Town Calabasas features — in addition to bike retail and service — a restaurant, bar, café and coffee roaster.

Situated in Old Town Calabasas, destination restaurant, bar, café and bike shop Pedalers Fork is all about sharing the cycling culture — not just among fellow cyclists, but with the non-pedaling public as well.

"We are in the heart of the riding. We decided to open out here because the area needed great food but it also has amazing riding," owner and avid cyclist Robbie Schaeffer said of his cycling-themed "lifestyle concept" nestled against the Santa Monica Mountains, home to miles upon miles of prime road and mountain biking.

Events are a big part of the vibe at Pedalers Fork. In addition to weekly road and mountain bike rides, Pedalers Fork has hosted bicycle swap meets, pro team launches, route announcements for the Amgen Tour of California, and numerous other events.

The bike retail element of Pedalers Fork, which generates about 15 to 20 percent of overall revenue, consists of a 500-square-foot service shop and high-end boutique that faces onto a creekside dining patio. Service customers and diners can sit at bar stools at the low shop counter and watch master mechanic Mike Kalenda, the shop's sole employee, turn wrenches on their bikes or build high-end custom wheels.

The shop launched exclusively as a Moots boutique, reflecting Schaeffer's desire to highlight locally sourced products like his farm-to-table restaurant does. But the mono-brand approach wasn't what customers wanted, said Pedalers Fork co-creator Gideon Kleinman. So to complement Moots titanium offerings, the shop now



An avid cyclist, owner Robbie Schaeffer left his career in the cosmetics industry to launch Pedalers Fork in 2013.

brings in high-end steel frames from Chris King's Cielo label, custom carbon road frames from Argonaut, and Cannondale's Black Inc. line of top-end road and mountain bikes.

"The shop offers more niches now," Kleinman said. "Cannondale has beautifully completed our offering, especially with full-suspension mountain bikes."

Kleinman is quick to point out that with Cannondale, Pedalers Fork is selling only the premium Black Inc. line, and is not interested in competing with the brand's full-line dealers.

"We've always considered ourselves a boutique, and I think that's why other

shops get along so well with us — because we aren't going after their bread and butter," he said. **BRAIN**



The 500-square-foot shop at Pedalers Fork opens onto a patio and features a low counter and bar stools for diners and bike customers.

## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

### Newbury Park Bicycle Shop

**Employees:** 20

**Sales floor space:** 9,300

**Time in business:** 49 years

**Emphasis:** Road, mountain, family

**Main brands:** Giant, Cannondale, Liv, Felt

**Owner:** Ben Cox and Mike Cicchi



Co-owner Ben Cox became a partner in Newbury Park Bicycle Shop in 2007.

Now in its fourth location in the same shopping center since it opened in 1966, Newbury Park Bicycle Shop may have found its forever home. Following an extensive renovation of a former Post Office, owners Ben Cox and Mike Cicchi moved the store into its new digs in April.

The design and build-out took about 14 months, but the wait was worth it. The new store — nearly twice as big as the previous space at 9,300 square feet — is open, airy and armed with state-of-the-art, energy-efficient technology.

Several solar tubes drop down from the store's ceiling, reflecting the sun's rays captured in domed lenses on the roof and piping in natural light. Long overhead lights look like fluorescents at first glance, but they're all LEDs.

Most utilities — from lighting to temperature to music — are controlled by the computerized Savant system, which Cox and Cicchi spent about \$250,000 to install.

"When we add other stores, everything can be controlled remotely from one system — that's why we did it. I can shut everything off with my phone," said Cox, as he powered down all the lights in the store. "And the computers regulate light levels that change throughout the day and control the lights automatically."

Even though the store's square footage has been doubled, utility costs are lower. Sections of block wall were also cut out to add more windows, and a shipping and receiving area was built at the back of the store. An employee eating area outside also doubles as space for clinics and other events.

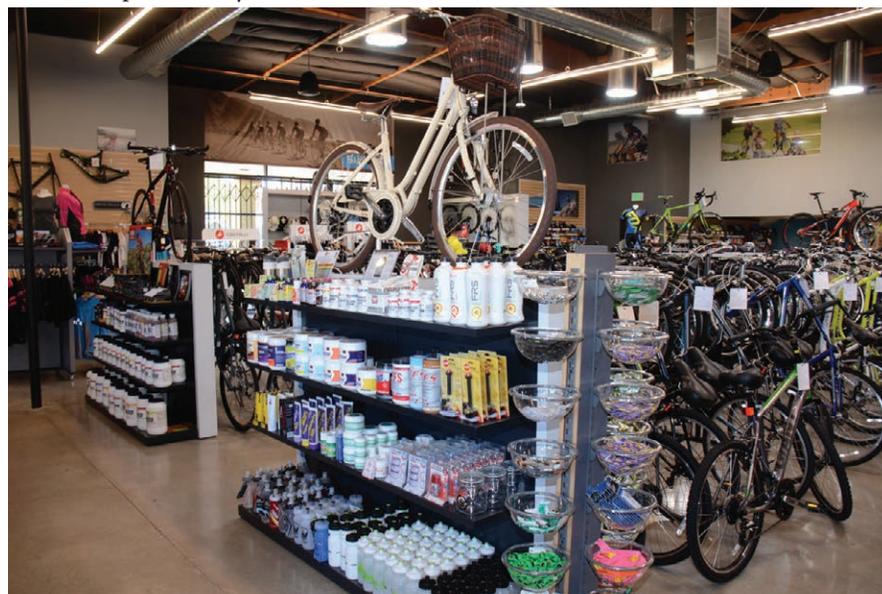
An upper level features a meeting room, showers, storage and offices, and downstairs, a water bottle refill station is plumbed into the wall next to the shop's training room, which will be powered by the shop's data room. Once complete, it will have computrainers and a Hypoxico system, allowing riders to simulate training at altitude.

In its former space two doors down, customers could choose from about 500 bikes on the retail sales floor at any given time. In the new building, NPBS stocks the same number, but with more room to breathe.

"In our old store, we had to go up with the bikes," Cox said. "Now we have nice lines of sight and it's open, but we didn't have to reduce the number of bikes." **BRAIN**



Newbury Park Bicycle Shop recently moved into its new building a stone's throw from its previous location.



Renovation of the space included adding energy efficient solar tubes to pipe in natural light and LEDs, all controlled by a smartphone.

## Mavic's La Maison Jaune reconnects brand with US racing

It's not actually located in a yellow house, but the interior of Mavic's La Maison Jaune (Yellow House) in Newbury Park, California, is bathed in the iconic company color. Everything is yellow, down to the custom Italian espresso machine. A garage bay in the back houses trailers, workstations, the yellow support car and motos, and everything else necessary to provide neutral support for local races and events.

"Mavic invented the idea of neutral support in 1973," said brand manager Mike Wilson, who started at the company six months ago. "We may be 126 years old, but we have a new attitude. We want to put yellow vehicles out there to be able to support riders in all kinds of events."

Mavic recently supported the Mike Nosco memorial ride in Newbury Park and Bicycle Retailer's L.A. Dealer Tour. Riders and guides agreed that crossing Los Angeles with an impossible-to-miss canary yellow car loaded with bikes and wheels tailing the group made the trip feel safer.

Wilson also said that Mavic will soon announce a new partnership with USA Cycling and its sponsorship of the Tour of Utah.

"We will provide official neutral support," he said. "We are excited to be going back to racing, back to our roots. It's important to us."

Mavic will also launch the Mavic Surprise Ride pro-



Mavic's Yellow House in Newbury Park bleeds le sang jaune (yellow blood). It serves as headquarters for the historically French brand's West Coast neutral race support operations.



All manner of Mavic product is on display at La Maison Jaune.

gram for retailers. It will select 12 to 15 rides with at least 40 participants across the country that start and finish at a dealer. The yellow motos and car will make a surprise appearance to provide support.

La Maison Jaune also includes a bright showroom where all manner of Mavic product is on display. Mavic is

also working on unifying its branding, starting with a new logo that all products will share.

"Our products are evolving rapidly. Three new full-carbon wheels will land in the next nine months, things we've never done before," Wilson said. "We've been doing our homework and are putting it all together." **BRAIN**

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**cannondale**

## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

Steven Carre compares his role as a bike fitter to that of a top chef at a gourmet restaurant. “We strive to be the Michelin three-star equivalent in fitting,” Carre said.

A former Cynergy Cycles employee and a renowned fit guru in the L.A. region, Carre opened one of Santa Monica’s newest shops — Bike Effect — to offer bike fit-



Originally founded as a dedicated fit studio, Bike Effect has expanded into service and retail.

ting services and custom bikes. The 2,000-square-foot store, which recently celebrated its fifth year in business, has expanded beyond its “fit studio” origins. Now the store has an expanded service area and stocks some Parlee, Moots and BMC bikes — its “anchor” brands — and a sliver of others like Guru that offer customizable geometry.

Like the bikes it custom builds and fits to clients, Bike Effect stands out for its sleek merchandising and fixtures. From bamboo floors to its espresso bar, powered Park Tool repair stands to a custom water fountain for riders who drop in to refill bottles, the store exudes a luxurious shopping experience and aesthetic.

“We both like clean, modern design — this was a fit studio,” said Alison Letson, co-owner. “We never wanted to have a bike shop. This is a boutique and we build relationships.”

Carre uses an array of fitting tools but said ultimately the process relies on the knowledge of the person doing the fit. “The term bike fit is used incredibly loosely these days,” Carre said. “There’s no magic system. It always comes down to person doing it. I have an understanding of human anatomy and dynamics. These tools make my job easier and more fun and allow me to communicate to the client what I’m doing.”

Fits range from \$250 to \$400 — a four-hour process that includes an extensive cleat and shoe fit.

Carre served as a tank manager in the Marines in Operation Desert Storm. When he returned, he trained as an EMT but at the time there were no openings in Southern California. He worked as a rock-climbing guide until he took up cycling. While working for Supergo in Santa Monica he trained on the bikefitting.com system, which was the start of his disciplined ap-

### Bike Effect

**Employees:** 5

**Sales floor space:** 2,000 square feet

**Emphasis:** Boutique specializing in bike fitting

**Years in business:** 5

**Main brands:** Moots, BMC, Cervélo, Guru, Parlee

**Owners:** Alison Letson, Steven Carre



Owners Alison Letson and Steven Carre — the latter a noted L.A.-area fit expert — recently celebrated their fifth year in business at Bike Effect.

proach to fitting.

“Whatever he does, he does it the best he possibly can and he will take you there as well,” said Letson. “People come here to see Steven because of what he knows and does.” **BRAIN**

Despite the store name, which speaks to committed riders, Serious Cycling owners Scott and Jennifer Johnson are passionate about welcoming newcomers to the sport and growing cycling in the Conejo Valley.

The Johnsons have implemented various initia-

### Serious Cycling

**Employees:** 11

**Sales floor space:** 2,250 square feet in Agoura, 3,000 square feet in Northridge

**Emphasis:** Premier lifestyle, high-end road and mountain shop

**Years in business:** 7

**Main brands:** BMC, Scott, Pinarello, Cervélo, Cipollini, Sarto, Pure Fix, Electra

**Owners:** Scott and Jennifer Johnson



Husband and wife Scott and Jennifer Johnson opened their Agoura Hills store in 2008, and last year expanded to a second location about 20 miles away in Northridge.

tives in their store to make it easier for people to get started on the bike. Its Smart Start Cycling program includes everything riders need to roll, including riding safety lessons.

“There aren’t really any big challenges or barriers specific to this area, not that are different from what the industry faces in general. In fact, we’ve got a community rich in cycling and more people are discovering it all the time, in part because of our dedication to growing the love of cycling,” Scott said.

A former executive in the video game industry, Scott was a junior cyclist who grew up racing and training. He quit cycling in college but returned to the sport in his late 30s. He and his wife, Jennifer, opened Serious Cycling seven years ago in a location that had previously been a bike shop, Agoura Cycling.

Jennifer, who rode a tandem with Scott for two years before getting her own bike, now is one of four staff members with a USA Cycling coaching license. She leads beginner rides and helps teach etiquette, road skills and safety clinics with their head coach, Kathy McCormick.

When their three daughters got into riding as well, Scott realized the store needed to also cater to women. “I’m surrounded by women in my life, so including their perspective in what we do is natural, easy,” he said.

Serious hosts rides for all levels including a “Birds of a Feather” women’s group ride Tuesday mornings right after school drop-off. “A lot of us moms can’t ride on weekends,” Jennifer said. In addition, Serious hosts weekly beginner no-drop rides and a Saturday ride that



The mandate is simple at Serious Cycling, which, in contrast with the shop’s name, is committed to bringing newcomers into cycling while also serving hard-core riders.

splits into three groups, and sponsors an active club whose members sign a credo pledging they will ride responsibly.

As a newcomer to retail, Scott said data management of more than 15,000 SKUs has been a challenge. “I’ve always worked a lot. But I’m surprised by how much work retail is,” he said.

But he’s not scared off. A year ago, the Johnsons opened a second location in Northridge in a mixed-use building. The new store has a swanky modern design and — like the Agoura Hills location — has its service area in the middle of the retail floor. “That’s the heart of everything,” said Scott, comparing it to a sushi bar. **BRAIN**

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## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

While working at Trader Joe's together in the early 1990s, Mark Smits and Dominic Galenti started mountain biking in their free time. Not only did the sport lead to a lifelong love for cycling, it morphed into a new career.

"We started looking around at local stores and thought we could do it a little better. I was young and dumb and thought, 'Why not?'" said Smits, who was 19 at the time.

They opened Incycle Bicycles in San Dimas, California, in 1991. Since then, they've expanded to four stores in L.A. and Riverside counties, most recently in Chino Hills in 2010.

"It's been a fun ride. We had no idea what we were doing, but we took care of every customer and we kept them happy," Smits said. "And we kept riding."

Smits and Galenti dub the store as "rider owned and operated," and the name Incycle is a play on being "into cycling." Smits said they also strive to stay in touch with trends as they evolve. Though it started as a mountain bike store, Incycle is now a family store "that's not afraid of the high end."

"It's an exciting time in the industry," Smits said. "Lots of one-off designers are coming in and you see some small guys getting a shot at it, garage companies getting a shot at it because some of the bigger players took their eye off that ball, whether it be an MTB platform or whatever. And a lot of consumers are looking for that, wanting something unique."

Incycle's brand mix has shifted over the years, but it has been a longtime Specialized and Cannondale dealer. The Pasadena

store, located in an old train station, is Incycle's largest at 12,000 square feet, and it stocks about 400 bikes on the floor. A team of 30 keeps the store running, from merchandising to service, which comprises about 14 percent of its business.

Bike building for all four stores is done off-site at a 12,000-square-foot warehouse in San Dimas. And while Smits admits that having a warehouse



**Incycle Bicycles co-owner Mark Smits opened the store in 1991 at age 19.**



**Incycle is a family bike shop, but it also caters to the high end, stocking an array of road and triathlon bikes and gear.**

### Incycle Bicycles

**Employees:** 85 (across four stores)

**Sales floor space:** 12,000 square feet (Pasadena); 8,000 square feet (San Dimas); 6,000 square feet (Rancho Cucamonga); 6,000 square feet (Chino Hills)

**Years in business:** 22

**Emphasis:** Mountain, road, lifestyle, family

**Main brands:** Specialized, Cannondale, Pivot, Intense, Colnago

**Owners:** Mark Smits, Dominic Galenti



**Located in a former train depot, Incycle's Pasadena store is its largest. It moved into its current space five years ago.**

to feed all four stores isn't a perfect system, it works.

"We do a lot of transfers, but I think we can keep customers happy," he said. "If a customer is spending a lot of money on a bike, I don't want them to have to wait a week to get it." **BRAIN**

Hrach Gevrikyan started racing road bikes in his native Armenia when he was 12 years old. His success would bring him to the U.S. in 1980, where he raced alongside Greg LeMond in the 1981 pro Coors Classic.

"He finished 15th in that race, a few spots ahead of Andy Hampsten," said Matt Gevrikyan, Hrach's son who runs the day-to-day at Velo Pasadena. "He might brag about that a little."

But injury sidelined Hrach, and in 1988, he opened

Velo Pasadena with his wife, Nevrick. From day one, it has been a family affair. Matt handles all the buying and daily shop operation, while Hrach does the books and tends to customers or wrenches as needed. Mother Nevrick, who also grew up in Armenia, bounces between Velo Studio, which opened in 2010 near Los Angeles' Griffith Park, and Velo Pasadena to take care of scheduling and anything else that's needed.

"I was pretty much born in the shop. I've spent my whole life here," said Matt, now 24. "I appreciate it more now that I've started riding more seriously. And it's cool because I get to spend more time with my dad."

Hrach's interest in racing was rekindled in earnest when Matt began racing three years ago. Now 56, Hrach helped Matt win his class at the Manhattan Beach Classic in 2014. "It was the best race of my life, leading him out and helping him win," said Hrach.

But Hrach's passion for the sport is perhaps best expressed by his love for collecting vintage bikes. A handful of Hrach's complete bikes — about 110 strong and growing — are on display in the store. He also has



**Part museum, part bike shop: A fraction of Velo Pasadena owner Hrach Gevrikyan's collection of vintage bikes is on display.**



**Matt Gevrikyan, owner Hrach Gevrikyan's son, handles the purchasing and manages daily operations.**

### Velo Pasadena

**Employees:** 10

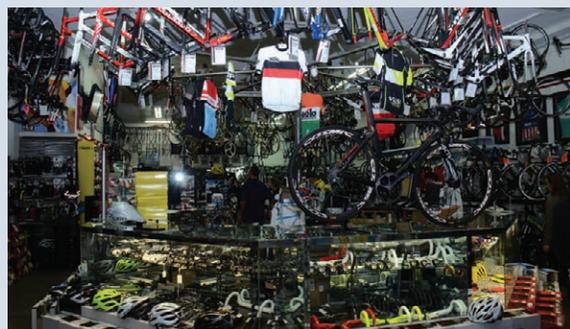
**Sales floor space:** 7,500 square feet including basement and storage (Pasadena); 2,200 square feet, Velo Studio (Los Angeles)

**Years in business:** 27

**Emphasis:** High-end road

**Main brands:** Felt, Specialized, Colnago, Time, Pinarello, De Rosa

**Owner:** Hrach and Nevrick Gevrikyan



**Velo Pasadena caters to road cyclists, offering high-end service, Retül bike fitting and stocking a full array of apparel and accessories.**

a vast collection of frames and components, many of which are still in their original packaging.

"A few years ago, Mr. Colnago walked into the store and just kept saying 'museum, museum' over and over. He couldn't believe it," Hrach said. "He wanted to sign all the restored Colnagos I have."

And Hrach said it's this very commitment to the road market — even during cyclical downturns — that sets Velo Pasadena apart.

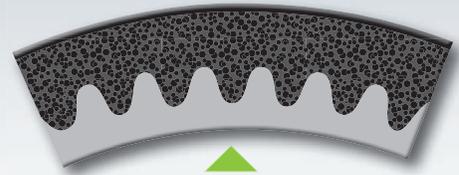
"We've never forgotten it. Triathlon came on strong in the 1980s, mountain biking was big in the early 1990s, and everyone forgot the road," he said. "But we never forgot the road market. It's what we like to do and what we love."

"It's in our hearts and souls, working in our community," Hrach added. "It's not just about being a bike shop. It's about being there for everybody." **BRAIN**

## CANNONDALE'S PEAK PROTECTION IN ACTION



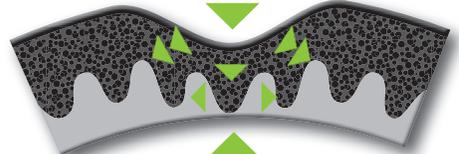
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**OUTCOME**



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**cannondale**

# In downtown, shops focus on commuters, repair business

By Toby Hill

After El Maestro Bicycle Shop's building in the Pico-Union district of Los Angeles got taken over to create new parking around the Staples Center arena, the retailer moved all of its business to its second location on Main Street in central downtown in 2003. For several years, the shop specializing in service, commuter bikes and custom builds had no competition nearby.

But before the "aughts" wound down, new bike retailers had started moving into the downtown core, and the area is now home to a handful of shops coexisting in their own unique niches.

"Here's where we discovered and jumped on the whole fixie scene, around late 2005. Fixies caught everyone's attention with the way the bike looked — so simple," said Manny Sosa, El Maestro's manager.

Rodney Masjedi, owner of DTLA Bikes, also saw the rise of fixies and singlespeeds as a catalyzing moment for cycling in Los Angeles. "I fell in love with bikes going to school in the Netherlands and seeing how the Dutch used them in their daily lives. People didn't ride in L.A. back then, but then singlespeeds really brought riding onto the scene," he said.

Working in commercial real estate at the time, Masjedi was trying to lease out a 10,000-square-foot basement on Broadway downtown when, in 2008, he decided to take the space for himself and open DTLA Bikes — complete with an indoor test track.

"The track was perfect for first-time riders. One customer brought her husband in twice a week to learn to ride because she was already a cyclist," he said.

Masjedi built his business around sourcing his own Chinese-made fixies and singlespeeds under the DTLA Bikes brand. He lined up his first supplier after attending the China Cycle show in Shanghai. Today, Masjedi sources aluminum and steel bikes from three different factories overseas. He attends the Shanghai show every year to keep up on trends.

"I'm naturally an importer. I like choosing all the parts and looking after the quality," Masjedi said.

He also carries Cannondale, Bianchi, Pure Fix, Raleigh and recent addition Orbea, but still sells 10 DTLA-branded bikes — priced from \$299 for his flagship steel fixie up to \$650 for an alloy hydraulic

disc brake model — for every other bike moved out of the shop's front door.

Masjedi estimates that about 80 percent of his customers are regular bike commuters, riding singlespeeds, 7-speeds, folding bikes and e-bikes. But he's also seen his road sales come on strong in recent years, as that core base of transportation riders expands into recreational riding on the weekend — much like Masjedi himself.

At El Maestro, the average bike sale comes in at \$280 to \$300, Sosa said. Top brands include KHS, Redline, Leader and local Southern California labels Aventon and Pure Fix. The shop also orders in Bianchi frames for higher-end custom builds topping out around \$1,000. And a commuter-heavy clientele keeps the register ringing with sales for pumps, lights, locks and tools.

At commuter and road enthusiast shop Just Ride LA, which opened in 2010

on Hill Street next to the Santa Monica (10) Freeway, the sweet spot is road bikes under \$2,000, plus hybrids, owner Danny Farahirad said. Customers won't find any road bikes over \$3,000 on the sales floor.

"The working class is really our clientele," said Farahirad, who carries brands including Giant, Felt, Specialized, Jamis, Dahon, State Bicycle Co.

and SE Racing.

He has also dabbled in e-bikes for the past year. "I haven't sold a lot, but it's something I've got to have," Farahirad said.

## WRENCHES AT THE READY

The downtown shops rely on service as a major revenue center.

Half of El Maestro's sales are derived from repairs and service, said manager Sosa, son of "El Maestro" himself. That's shop owner Jorge Sosa, a Salvadoran immigrant who earned the nickname from his mastery repairing bikes before he even opened his first shop.

Service also accounts for half of sales at DTLA Bikes, where owner Masjedi has two or three mechanics working full time every day. Half of his mechanics are Shimano certified, and all have many years of experience, he said. To retain them, he pays above market rate, Masjedi added.

Los Angeles' thrice-a-year CicLAvia open-street events bring a rush of business to the downtown shops' service departments — especially for the "Heart of LA" version held in the city center, as it



Opened in 2010, Just Ride LA specializes in road bikes under \$2,000 and hybrids.

was this October. Even shops outside of downtown benefit from the five-year-old event.

"It's been really good for me every time they do the downtown one," said Josef Bray-Ali, owner of Flying Pigeon LA in the Cypress Park neighborhood northeast of downtown. "The pressure the neighbors feel like, 'Oh, I've gotta go to CicLAvia,' really does boost my business. It's substantial for me. Not only do I go to the event all the time, I feel it immediately at the shop."

At DTLA Bikes, Masjedi does a tidy business renting out bikes for CicLAvia. He recently imported a container of Chinese city bikes to add to his fleet, and estimates he sent out 300 rentals for the CicLAvia in October.



DTLA Bikes owner Rodney Masjedi shows off one of his shop-brand singlespeeds in his 10,000-square-foot basement space, which also houses a test track.

## EXPANDING SPACE, SERVICES

In only five years, Just Ride LA has expanded twice to fan out over a total of 4,000 square feet. About five months ago, owner Farahirad built out a new fit studio, where he employs Specialized's BG Fit method and also incorporates his knowledge from working as an instructor

in both yoga and the martial arts to increase customers' flexibility and improve comfort on the bike.

"A lot of runners come into cycling and they're tight. In cycling you don't have to be super loose, but it can help," he said.

Farahirad also recently expanded his rental fleet, adding Giant's Momentum city bikes to his lineup of road bikes, tandems and singlespeeds.

To augment its service business, El Maestro launched a mobile repair van a year ago. In addition to calling on individual customers at their homes, the van provides on-site service for corporate clients including Hollywood production studios and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. It also offers pick-up and return of bikes for more complex jobs.

After opening in his massive basement space in 2008, Masjedi expanded DTLA Bikes two years later to the ground floor of the building, which now houses his main showroom. Several hundred bikes are stored in the basement, currently undergoing renovation.

He's also in the midst of expanding into the building's mezzanine, upping his total space to 19,000 square feet. When the expansion is completed, Masjedi will have a 4,000-square-foot high-end road and mountain bike showroom in the mezzanine, a 5,000-square-foot ground floor stocked with commuter bikes and accessories, and the 10,000-square-foot basement dedicated to track bikes and the shop's test track.

He's also looking to expand DTLA to a second store, but hasn't settled on a location.

In the meantime, Masjedi's Broadway location is in the heart of a neighborhood transformation fueled by L.A. Councilman Jose Huizar's Bringing Back Broadway initiative. Launched in 2008, the 10-year plan aims to revitalize the Broadway corridor by reactivating historic theaters and movie palaces and boosting business occupancy and commerce in more than 1 million square feet of vacant commercial space.

"Broadway is going to be the retail center of downtown," Masjedi said. **BRAIN**

## Los Angeles Dealer Tour

**F**lying Pigeon LA has undergone several transformations since starting out in 2008 as a modest shop offering the Chinese transportation bikes from which it takes its name. Almost all those initial Flying Pigeons — two shipping containers' worth — are gone now, though owner Josef Bray-Ali will still occasionally unbox and build one on request.

For a time, Bray-Ali also did a brisk business selling high-end Dutch city bikes from such brands as Pashley, Bobbin and Gazelle, but saw that business dry up.

“There was a market for a premium Dutch bike for maybe two or three years. Then all the copycat bikes came on the scene and everything changed. That was 2012, and the Dutch thing was very much over,” he said.

That same year, Flying Pigeon relocated to its current space in a working-class neighborhood on the Eastern edge of Los Angeles next to a café that serves as the shop's de facto waiting room for service. A one-man operation, Bray-Ali gives priority to his strong customer base of daily commuters, who often need repairs right away to get to work.

“Those customers pay my bills in a lot of ways,” he said. “A big part of this shop is being able to quickly assess and repair bikes.”

Stocking the right bikes has been a long learning process, Bray-Ali admits; if he brings in the stuff that's cool to him but it doesn't sell, what's the point?

“The high end, I just have no interest in anymore. I'm more interested in serving the community I'm in rather than the community I might wish I were in,” he said.

So now Bray-Ali's main line is Taiwan brand XDS, which he likes for its strong margins and broad selection of city bikes and hybrids at affordable price points.

He also offers cargo bikes, but not to the extent he once did. A single Babboe front-loader takes up a significant portion of his small sales floor.

“People come in and try it out. Based off that one cargo trike I've sold three or four others. That's the model I've been working with. Same with Yuba: I've got one Boda Boda and one Mundo here, and people come and take them for test rides and I order based on that, because I can't afford to have five of them here, unfortunately,” Bray-Ali said.

Flying Pigeon became famous for its dim sum rides and art gallery bike tours, but Bray-Ali recently discontinued the former and handed off the latter to a friend when the rides stopped attracting new customers. Now he's considering relaunching foodie, architectural and historical tours, but working on the back end of the operation rather than guiding them himself.



After shifting away from premium Dutch city bikes, Bray-Ali now stocks affordable hybrids and city models from Taiwan brand XDS.

### Flying Pigeon LA

Employees: 1

Sales floor space: 600 square feet

Years in business: 7

Emphasis: Commuter/transportation, cargo

Main brands: XDS, Brompton, Yuba, Babboe

Owner: Josef Bray-Ali



Flying Pigeon LA owner Josef Bray-Ali with daughter Valentina and pooch Rosie in the family cargo bike

“I'd have people who are the art-house or cool kids doing the tours that they're experts in. And I would provide the bikes, do the logistics support, the online booking system, the money collection, paying out the money. I have a lot of friends who could do an excellent tour on a monthly basis,” he said. **BRAIN**

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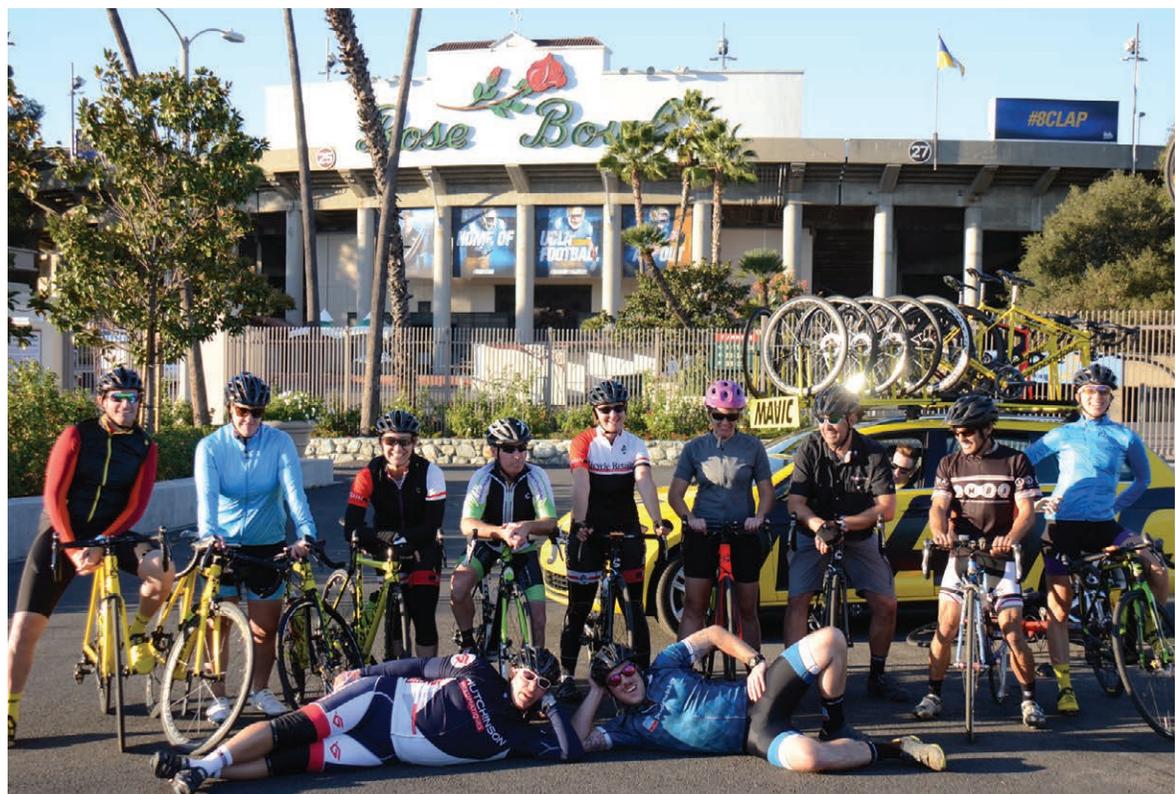


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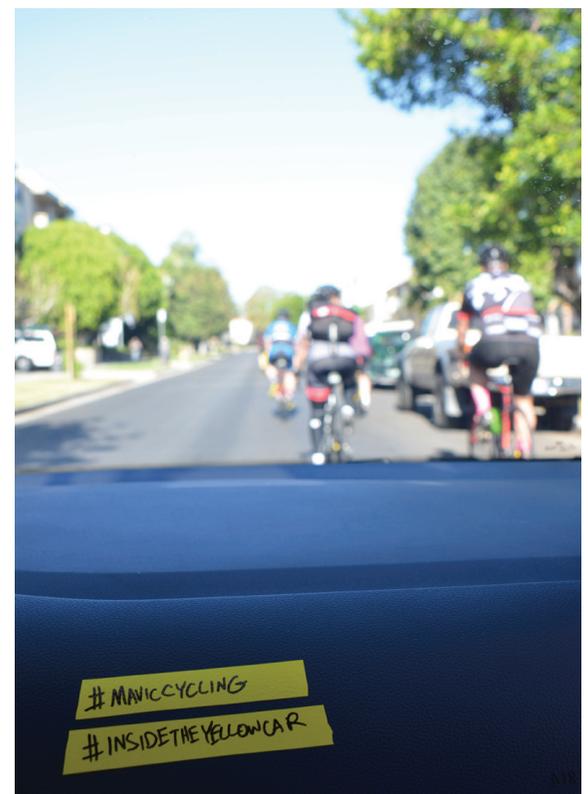
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# Los Angeles Dealer Tour



Hutchinson's Roy Hough (lower left) and PeopleForBikes' Mitch Marrison turn up the sexy for Dealer Tour L.A. in front of the Rose Bowl in Pasadena.



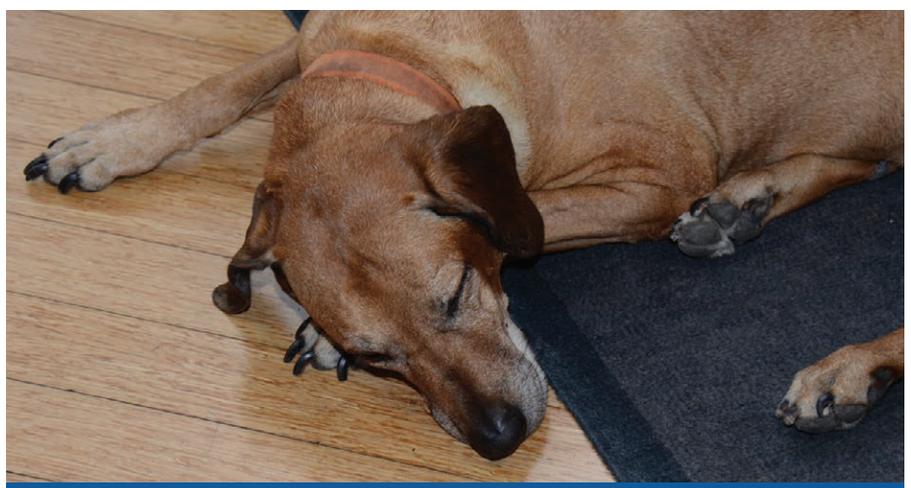
The view from inside the Mavic neutral support car as the Dealer Tour crossed L.A.



L.A. love proudly on display at Bike Attack in Santa Monica



Rims, spokes and bike chains make for eye-catching chandeliers at I. Martin Bicycles.



Shop dog Toast takes a break the torrid pace of retail at Bike Effect in Santa Monica.

Photos by Gary Newkirk

# Los Angeles Dealer Tour



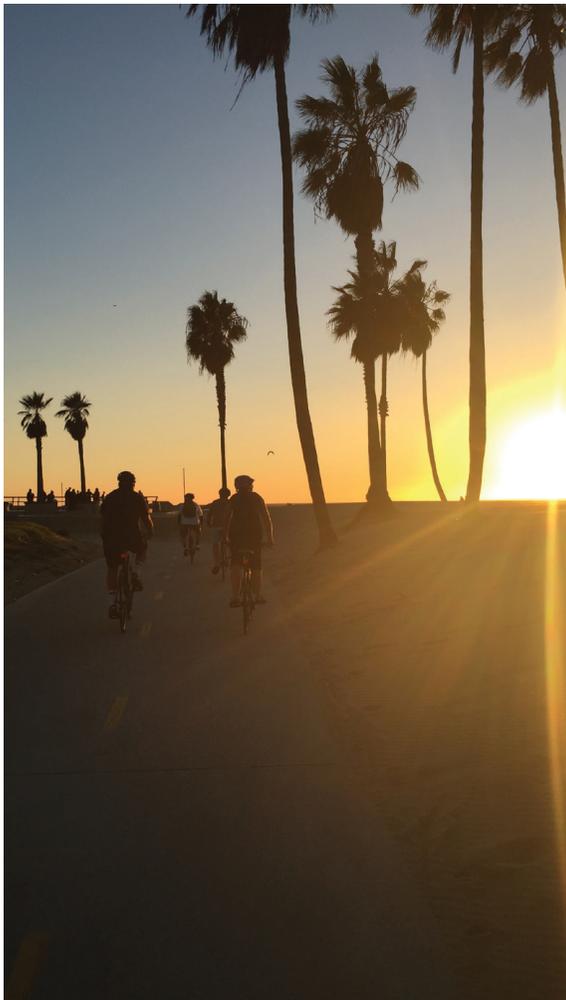
Warming up the cup is key when Bike Effect co-owner Steven Carre when he prepares espresso for guests.



Just another dreary day on Los Angeles' Westside. How do Angelenos ride in this weather?!



Velo Pasadena owner Hrach Gevrykian, an Armenian national road champion, is immortalized on T-shirts at the shop.



Sunset cruisin' on the bike path in Santa Monica



Day 2 of Dealer Tour L.A. paused on Hollywood Boulevard to let a Veterans Day protest march pass by.

## Savvy retailers flip the script throughout the City of Angels

Sometimes in the industry, we spend so much time studying specific products, intense competitors, emerging trends and how to respond/lead, we find ourselves less connected to the real point of contact: “where the rubber meets the road,” aka our partner dealers.

This was my first BRAIN Dealer Tour and I was thrilled with the opportunity to be present in my new role as brand manager of Mavic in the Americas. The idea of riding along with the editors and industry colleagues and mixing it up with retailers in their home environment was pretty exciting.

Cutting to the takeaways, we know retail is evolving. A constant topic of the week was the Trek decision to begin direct online sales to consumers. While the retailers’ reactions and comments were as diverse as the shops we visited, the common threads were the most thought-provoking: retail experience and consumer specificity.

What I saw was retailers changing the conversation. No matter whether we were in Beverly Hills, Pasadena or Newbury Park, it was clear to see retailers who are becoming true, professional marketers. We’re talking about sharply merchandised selling floors portraying experiential stories for their consumers.

Example: Most retailers have clearly moved away from having a “women’s area of the store,” but rather mixing women’s-specific products throughout all aspects of the floor — so that no matter where you might look (as a consumer), you’ll see a compelling brand or value product proposition.

So little of what I discerned on the retail floor was value-related. Rather, we saw across

all categories the recurring theme of “we’ve learned who our current and potential customers are in our community and we’re targeting them from every reasonable angle.”

I heard several retailers discussing their efforts to lower the barrier of entry to various bicycle categories — and not just price-wise, but also playing down the “chichi” nature of being a road or mountain biker. They want to make it easier for customers to make correct buying/brand decisions while not necessarily having any previous experience.

We saw retailers specializing in helping customers make easier decisions — something the Internet seems to be complicating more and more with dozens, if not hundreds, of product reviews, etc.

I think there are more than a few people in the industry who are quick to point to the demise of local retail — or to point to retailers’ future profitability being built on service and emerging segments like e-bikes.

While there’s certainly some necessity for this, I believe there’s also opportunity for smart, focused retailing around ongoing, local experience-based purchases (first bikes, learning to group ride, indoor training sessions, bike tuning 101, etc.). At least that was the lesson I learned from the far-ranging retailers in the City of Angels.



**Mike Wilson**  
Regional marketing  
manager, Americas  
Mavic

## Tour was an eye opener in sponsor’s own back yard

Los Angeles was my first *Bicycle Retailer* Dealer Tour. I’d like to think of myself as a veteran of riding bikes in the L.A. area; I grew up racing BMX in local parks and commuting to school, and have participated in several gran fondos. However, this Dealer Tour opened my eyes to the amazing roads this city has to offer.

The cycling culture in L.A. is unique in that it has something for all riders whether it is riding the bike path along Venice Beach, rolling down Hollywood Boulevard or climbing canyon roads through the Santa Monica Mountains. The culture is also expanding, and I noticed how most people were in support of sharing the road with our group and other cyclists.

Santa Monica is leading the way when it comes to that expansion. The city recently launched a new bike share program, and it has also done a great job of developing green lanes to promote safe cycling.

Riding the city streets through Venice, Beverly Hills, Highland Park, Eagle Rock and Pasadena was an unforgettable experience. I’ve driven the famous Hollywood Boulevard countless times, but it isn’t the same as it is on two wheels. Taking in all of the landmarks by bike was amazing. Add

in witnessing a Veterans Day protest march, pedaling across the Shakespeare Bridge near Franklin Hills, and taking in a lap around the famous Rose Bowl — only in L.A.!

All the great riding aside, visiting the different dealers along the way was the most memorable. It was refreshing to see their positive outlook on the industry and their enthusiasm for it. The L.A. area is rich with dealers who cater to every niche and need of cycling. Most impressive is how many dealers understand where they fit into their marketplace as well as the many ways they support the cycling community from hosting charity rides and gran fondos to sponsoring race teams and triathlons and supporting NICA.

I’ve been a part of Cannondale and the cycling industry for more than 18 years. I’ve had the good fortune of riding in some of the most amazing places in the world, and L.A.’s cycling community is at the top of my list.



**Bill Rudell**  
Public relations  
manager  
Cannondale

## LA is well on its way to being a great bicycle city

Los Angeles may be known internationally as the entertainment capital of the world, but after this edition of the BRAIN Dealer Tour, it’s safe to say that bicycling can give it a run for its money. The city’s vibrant culture and rich history served as a stellar backdrop for all the retailers that we visited during our tour around the city. To put it simply, these retailers understand just how important of a role this city plays in growing their businesses.

Despite bicycling infrastructure still being built on the many miles of roadway throughout the city, many retailers in L.A. are seeing an increase in bike rides taken. With Santa Monica and Venice already having many miles of bicycling infrastructure, the rest of the Los Angeles County is quickly following suit. Groups like the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition are also

working in conjunction with local officials to make sure that Los Angeles will become a truly great city for every bike rider.

Over the course of the week, we were treated to a wide variety of retailers ranging from high-end bike fitters to road-specific stores and e-bike retailers. Through all of that, one simple point rang out during this tour: Bicycle retailers in Southern California are stronger than ever. By continuing to serve their customers at the highest level, only the sky is the limit for bicycling in Los Angeles.



**Mitch Morrison**  
Retail program  
coordinator  
PeopleForBikes

## Shops see new opportunities in challenges facing industry

The Los Angeles edition of the BRAIN Dealer Tour was certainly one that will be remembered. After over 10 shop visits in three unique parts of Los Angeles (we learned that more 80 cities make up L.A. County), we at Hutchinson left with such a positive perspective of the retail environment and what’s ahead for the industry.

From our first stop at Helen’s Cycles to our last stop at Pedalers Fork, each retailer we met with shared a fresh perspective on how they are tackling the current state of retail. Even when faced with an ever-changing environment that is creating new challenges for the industry — Internet sales, window-shopping, price comparisons, etc. — these retailers were quick to focus on the opportunities these changes create.

The retailers have used these challenges to get better at what they do. They each offer something to customers that

keeps them coming back — from custom fits to weekly store rides and community involvement. And, as simple as it may be, these retailers have each created a culture that was inviting to those who walked in — enthusiasts and beginner cyclists alike. They put forward a friendly face, a hello and the simple question, “Do you need any help?”

They say it’s the little things that make all the difference, and it’s definitely true among these L.A. retailers. A big thanks to all of the retailers we visited on our trip, to *Bicycle Retailer*, and to the other sponsors for making this journey a memorable one.



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INTRODUCING

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