



Portland's Internet-Only Ensemble Comedy

By Sharon Jameson

Portland's vibrant bike culture is central to its unchained urban identity. This bike savvy city is the birthplace of an internet-only video series called *The Bicyclist*, an ensemble comedy initially seen through the eyes of Conrad Miller, a transplant to Portland from Middleton, Wisconsin.

The first series begins when Conrad — jobless and carrying a shiny new English degree — drives into town. Despite his very un-bike-friendly antics he lands a job as a bike mechanic at The Recyclery, a used bike shop in the heart of the bike culture. There he meets his new friends: Steve — a female

bike mechanic and love interest, Zack — the ultimate bike mechanic and antagonist, Lissa — a counter culture hottie, and Jose — a local filmmaker with a flair for the dramatic.

There are a host of other characters inserting their separate, but sometimes intersecting, biking stories. The DUI Rider who only rides a bike because he is not allowed in a car anymore. The Lady Dive Bombers swoop down on unexpected bikers and pedestrians who get in the way of their mission and there's Mr. Weekend Warrior for whom the image of an expensive bicycle is more important than the fun of the ride.

Portland's diversity of bike activities and enthusiasts lends itself to a multitude of situational possibilities. It's a satirical urban hipster Portland 97210 — a cycling soap opera.

With the first season under their belt the producers, cast and crew of *The Bicyclist* are excited to take what they've accomplished to the next level. Stay tuned for season two.

The Bicyclist is best viewed at <www.thebicyclist.tv>.



Bicycle Law in Austria — a Status Report

We asked Johannes Pepelnik — author of the only legal bicycle commentary in Austria and legal representative for the Austrian critical mass movement — for a status report on Austrian bicycle law. There is currently no active legal discussion in Austria regarding the rights of cyclists. Here Johannes tackles two of the most common issues faced by his firm. — SF

Is it compulsory to use a cycle path if present?

Yes. You are obliged to; otherwise you are liable to be fined. In reality though, cycle paths are often unusable in which case the obligation is waived. These cycle paths are often separated from the street causing safety problems at intersections. If the cyclists do use the street they may upset car drivers but they are at least seen and accidents are avoided, as many studies and field experiments have concluded. Cyclists are misled about their security if they use cycle paths divided from the street, because on every corner the danger comes from cars that have not had the chance to see the cyclist and can no longer securely stop. Cyclists are usually the ones with the law on their side but this does not help in rehab. Austrian street planners have routinely dismissed this danger by regulating the traffic at these intersections in such a way that cyclists have to give way to crossing cars. This regulation is not understandable and against every expectation of cyclists who are, as a result, held responsible for any damage to their health in the event of an accident.

These absurd regulations continue even when it comes to children being towed by bicycles. If a bicycle-trailer is wider

than a certain threshold the cyclist must use the street. This is recommendable anyway to caring parents because they run a lower risk of being hit by cars. However, if these child-towing cyclists want to use the cycle path because they feel more secure they face the same penalty as a lone cyclist on the road.

This is only a small piece of the mosaic comprising the irritating world of laws regarding one's obligation to use a cycle path. Most of the cyclists that receive penalties seem to pay them, because neither they nor members of the courts know much about these inconsistencies.

Is it obligatory to wear a helmet?

No. In the administrative laws it is not obligatory to wear a helmet. The helmet may be obligatory in the civil law field if you participate in a private race or a downhill mountain bike rally. From an administrative law perspective, if you wear no helmet there are no consequences to face.

There are far more drastic consequences for the cyclist in a typical car-to-bicycle accident on civil law grounds. The car driver usually argues that the accident would have caused less harmful damages if the cyclist had worn a helmet. In such cases it is extremely important that the cyclist has good legal advice in order to get the argument across the court bar and in the verdict it is made clear that he/she is not obliged to wear a helmet. In most cases the helmet would have had no impact on the accident.

— www.pepelnik.at

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