

# pedalling the look

LOOKING GOOD IN THE SADDLE IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE BIKE ITSELF. **KEVIN BRADDOCK** REPORTS ON THE NEW CYCLING TRIBES

**T**o ride or not to ride? That, as it happens, is no longer the question. Cycling may be booming in the UK – some 500,000 bike journeys are made every day in London alone, and Team GB's success in Beijing put the icing on the cake for a spectacular national effort – yet, as cyclo-culture proliferates, it's increasingly a case not of whether you ride, but how you look when you're doing it.

You may have admired Chris Hoy's iron thighs and Victoria Pendleton's zippy style, but it's a safe bet that you were less taken by the Lycra ensembles the gold medallists were wearing. However, there is an aesthetic arm to the cycling fraternity, as seen in the country's emerging cyclo-tribes, who are busy carving out thrillingly distinct and individual identities. From tweedy neo-retro classicists to Day-Glo fixed-wheel chicks, they are united as much by a look as an attitude.

### THE TWEED CYCLING CLUB

"Most cycling attire is unpleasant to look at," says Jack Thurston of the Tweed CC, the club that is to cycling what Slow Food is to gastronomy. "It is great cycling to beautiful places, but you don't want to spoil them with ill-matched clothing. In the golden era of British cycle touring, people wore elegant clothes. When you're stopping off at old churches and nice pubs, you add to the beauty if you're also dressed elegantly."

Chiming with the resurgence in classic Anglo cycle brands such as the saddle-maker Brooks and the frame-builders Pashley and Mercian, the Tweed CC's principles go deeper than mere whimsy. They espouse the virtues of elegance and contemplation en route to a decent pub lunch with a pint of ale and a pleasant view. "When you're riding for friendship and leisure, you don't need to go fast," Thurston says.

Recent rides, on restored British roadsters and touring bikes, have taken the Tweed CC to Essex to enjoy oysters, and around the Isle of Wight Randonnee route, while dressed in tweeds, Trickers brogues and argyle socks. "I used to be a mod, and was into scooters and dressing," says Jean-Marie Orhan, the club's co-founder. "Cycling and dressing is the same thing. It is in the blood." To join, go to [tweed.cc](http://tweed.cc) (postal applications only) ▶



Plus-fours and pints The Tweed Cycling Club

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The Trixie Chix; below, the Road Rouleurs

## THE TRIXIE CHIX

It emerged from the underground cycle-courier circuit and has become the year's hot trend in two-wheeled cool. But while plenty has been made of the perceived dangers of fixed-wheel bikes — gearless and sometimes brakeless — less has been said about the fact that "fixed" culture is doing to monochrome urban cycling what those candy-coloured iMacs did to the greige world of PC design.

It would be wrong to suggest the Trixie Chix, an all-female group of riders based in London, dig fixed-wheel bikes purely for their aesthetic pleasures. But, seriously, what bike nut wouldn't be thrilled by Velocity Deep V rims paired with matching orange Michelin tyres, or, for that matter, fluoro-green mag wheels on a fuchsia refurbished Fausto Coppi frame? "The point is these bikes are so easy to customise," says Emily Ezekiel. "My bike is pink and green."

While fixed remains an cliquish scene, steeped in protocol, the Trixie Chix aim to encourage more female riders to join, and the central spoke of their manifesto is persuasive: to have lots of fun. Accordingly, they get together to play bike polo near

Brick Lane, to compete in "roller-race" events such as Rollapaluzza (the Chix's Agata Woznicka is a current champ), to pull up at notable "fixed" boozers such as Hackney's Cat & Mutton and the John Snow in Soho, or to enjoy the occasional cycle date. There is no shortage of offers, it seems. "We always get a second look from guys," says Estelle Rogers. [trixiechix.com](http://trixiechix.com)



## ROAD ROULEURS

They ride dreamy European race machines by Colnago, Bianchi and Pinarello, devour *Rouleur* magazine and are fans of the cult road-racing apparel brand Rapha.

Stand at the traffic lights at 7.45am on any weekday morning, and you'd be forgiven for thinking you were watching the Tour de France. The lights change and, possessed by the spirit of Eddy Merckx, the Road Rouleurs surge away, as far as the next junction. Come rain or shine, the 40-mile round trip is worth it: after all, they're training for the L'Etape du Tour or the punishing Marmotte events again.

Sleek, speedy and, in all likelihood, working in the City or a profession (those bikes cost a pretty penny), the more modish of them eschew ProTour strips in favour of Rapha's tastefully restrained kit. "Team jerseys have branding all over them," says Quinn Hawkins, a criminal barrister and Rapha devotee. "Rapha colours are smart and reference famous climbs such as the Mortirolo in Italy."

Even for these cycle obsessives, it isn't just about the bike. □

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