

WIND AT YOUR BACK AND A WORD IN YOUR EAR

JACK THURSTON AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL PLEASURE OF BIKE RADIO

BY JUSTIN BERGER
PHOTO BY FIFI FONTANOT

PEOPLE TURN TO Jack Thurston for analysis: you can read him in the *Manchester Guardian*, or hear him on *BBC Radio Four* talking about agriculture, trade, and the European common market. But Jack Thurston has other theories too, including this one about creativity and bicycles:

“It’s natural that people who are creative ride bikes. The sort of prosaic reason is that artists don’t have a lot of money, but the more exciting dreamy reason is that there’s something about being on a bicycle which is thrilling and stimulating to people who are creative, and who are oriented visually particularly. It’s sort of a collage, a real-time collage of sights you see as you ride around the city.”

But Thurston’s own creative cycling project is all about sound.

“You’ll hear the birds in the trees or the rustle of leaves blowing around or that kind of sticky sound of the wheel—the rubber on asphalt, or you’ll hear the clanking of my bike if it’s not been very well maintained. What you don’t hear, amazingly enough, is wind: it’s an amazing talent of the RE-50 Microphone that it seems to insulate pretty well against wind even up to about 20 miles an hour.”

The sounds recorded with Thurston’s microphone are broadcast on *The Bike Show*, a half-hour radio program that airs Monday nights on Resonance FM, a community station in London, England. Thurston points out that he sees a connection between the bicycle and the radio.

“I think they are both subtle technologies, and gentle technologies.”

“Television shouts, whereas radio is just a word in your ear. I think a bicycle compared to a car is the same kind of thing. There’s a subtlety the bicycle shares with radio.”

There are dozens of radio shows and podcasts devoted to bicycles and bicycling, but *The Bike Show* is perhaps unique in the way it uses the stimulating effect of cycling to make stimulating radio. Many of the show’s best moments are recorded while riding. Thurston explained why this approach makes for better listening.

“You get somebody into a studio, and they see a whole bank of technology and they are stuck there. They get terrified. They start talking like a kind of scared rabbit. People suddenly think they are on radio and suddenly stop talking in a conversational way. They start talking like talk show hosts, which is not what I wanted. I wanted to have a conversation like it is in real life.

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You can find the complete archives of the Bike Show at thebikeshow.net

You can also find the Bike Show podcast on iTunes or Podcast Alley

