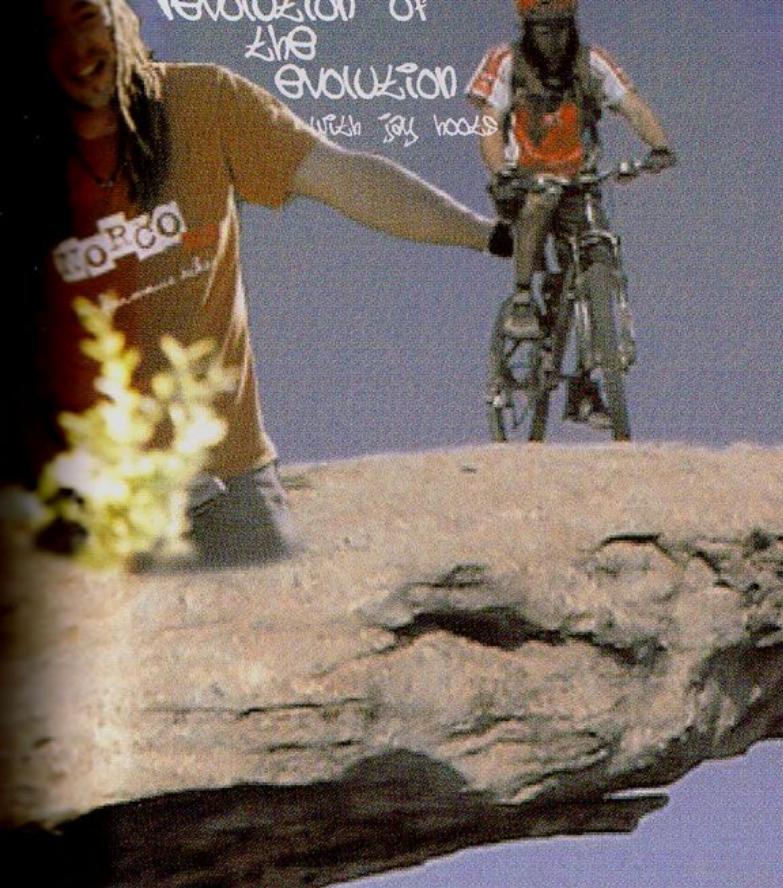


Evolution of The Evolution with Toy Hooks



There are articles up the ying yang these days that document the history of mountain biking and I guess closest to me, The Shore. While many proofs and arguments document who did the first biggest drop, built the first ladder bridge or rode the highest skinny, I know without a doubt there has been a huge contingent of riders who didn't cook mainstream or sock corporate walg dang doodle in order to continue the true passion of mountain biking. Very few of these riders are highlighted in articles or movies but we know the local ripper who constantly forrows down inspiring all of us to the next level. I have been in the middle of it all enjoying every saddle sore gouged shin, blown ACL's and punched out spleen. One thing is for sure, I have watched everything around me develop and until now have never been able to express my freak until now.

I have been in the sport for some time now, but not the beginning, and I can only imagine the first mountain bikers in the forest enjoying brilliant moments in time where trees, green leaves and sweet mother nature came together as a religious moment. No parking issues, bitchy single minded neighbours or environmental concerns, just sweet riding heaven.

It seems so normal to me that XC should be born followed by the immediate creation of spandex and oily to be matched with racing, what a combo. Being clipped in and riding endless singletrack is not something we are familiar with on the Shore but sure enough it was starting to happen in other communities complete with organized racing on trails that were illegal to be on. Technology arrived in the cycling world and soon none of us would be caught dead without purple anodized parts (including bar ends) on our rusty steeds.

Here on the Shore things weren't so easy for riding these XC type bikes so all of a sudden different techniques were being used to get around. Everything from ladder bridges and suspension forks to bunny hops and trials moves were born and soon pathways never before understood as trail soon became the norm. Soon it became apparent that steeper was better and ladder bridges could get real 'skinny like' and combining them together well that was the shiz. Earlier filming, the recording of a movement, the invention of riding superstars most who had never experienced a structured professional athlete environment, oh what a cast of characters.

GAME ON!

Years went by and bike manufactures and parts companies all tried to keep up to the demands of an ever busy warranty department. The development of personal protection for mountain biking yielded a huge explosion in style and attitude both on and off the bikes. More and more communities started catching the mountain bike bug and were inspired by films and soon trails reminiscent of The North Shore were springing up in the strangest of places globally.

Through all of this D/A racing went through the roof. Big squishy bike technology seemed to inspire riders to spend their hard earned bling on saucy low bottom bracketed high speed machines and soon racing took riders all over the country, even the world. Soon riders were getting experience on tracks that offered more than just a trail but also the inclusion of jumps and drops and it wasn't long before the superstars were sending it high speed again inspiring us all to help fund the coffers of the companies that could support pro rider six figure salaries.

Enter the DIRT jump. Coming straight from bmx dirt jumps made a slow and tedious entrance but when it finally caught on riding went ballistic! Soon trails were all incorporating sick air style jumps, there were contests that could be held in front of crowds that didn't have to be at elevation on the mountain and every kid and their buddy could make one mini just like jello. All those big shiny companies that could afford it contracted bmx riders (hired guns) to come and destroy jump comps and soon the only choice mountain biking had was to allow bmx influence on the dirt.

Film, video and magazine promote mountain biking with a whole new jump specific angle and almost as if the blood of mountain biking boiled the emergence of the Red Bull Rampage assured everyone on a dually that mountain biking was pure at heart, shit, Utah dirt under fingernail, huge exposed cliff lines and what? Dirt jumps??? I think it may have even inspired XC riders to get back on the saddle and stored grut.

Without even a drunken burp, the rides turn even again and street park riding which was traditionally a 20" sport now had grown and the most talented riders all be it ex bmx'ers started ripping hard on 26". After all those years we endured the onslaught of bmx rhetoric at the local skate park some capital is! Little bike riders have the nerve to step up and join the world of layback mountain bike? Well, Trials did it, and quite frankly anyone on a bike has the same opportunity, I just find it amazing at how many doors open because a 26" wheel can roll through it.

So evolution of the wheel, style and technical range of ability has taken us several paragraphs later, what now? Slope style, Mountain bike had it's chance in the TV time light back in the days of spandex clad D/A racers but nothing holds a candle to slopestyle. The incorporation of freeride and bmx less spandex, from tricks and skinnys to bmx and hired guns, slopestyle kills it. Mainstream finally gets a real chance to see mountain biking, or does it?

Where does that put mountain biking today? Of dread says this, mountain biking has gone through its painted adolescent growth sports and it has flourished under many flags, but still the glue that binds is trail builders, riders and passion. Superstars come and go, but the real deal is the passion. I have many friends turn away from hucking and go to technologically superior 5" bikes to get back to roots riding. Many friends abandoned biking all together but I know I will see them again when their kids turn riding age. Mountain biking provides a buyers market creating easy, affordable, accessible, fun, short bikes and through the passionate efforts of organized groups, more and more trail is becoming accessible.

I ride with all sorts of talented riders these days, locals on their trail, pro trials and world cup racers and street destroyers, a gift I very much appreciate but a detractive from the trail gods that no matter who holds the handle bar we all celebrate the same values...