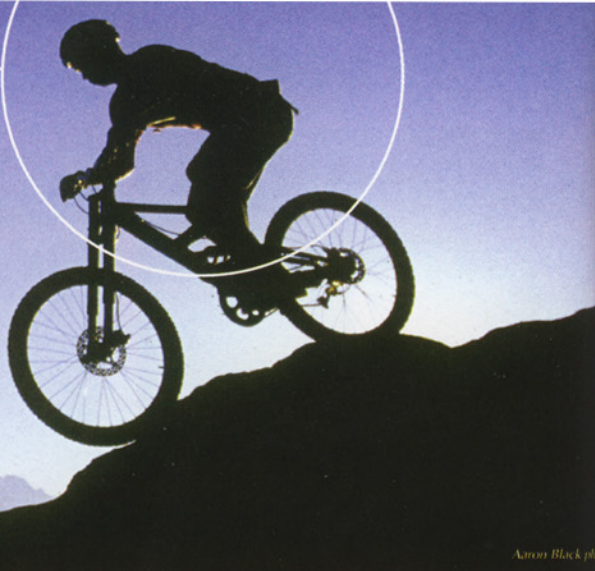


Match made in HEAVEN

Mountain biking in Sea to Sky Country



Aaron Black photo



"The only constant is change" ADRENALINE FACTOR

MOUNTAIN BIKING is one of the fastest evolving sports. Few could have envisioned the unlimited boundaries that are being pushed each year. The first stage of the sport's evolution saw rigid bikes flying through the trees with the occasional obstacle thrown in for good measure. This was a simpler time when the ride was more about communing with nature and getting away from it all. Now there's the **adrenaline factor**. They say necessity is the mother of invention, well, adrenaline is the grand-daddy of extreme sport invention.

For the most part, mountain bikes fit into three categories: crosscountry, freeride and downhill. However, in this crazy age of "veggie bacon" and "hardcore white rappers", the lines are becoming blurred. Cross-country bikes, usually designed light with very little suspension, are now sporting up to 4 inches of plush travel. Then on the other end of the spectrum you have downhill bikes which are designed with only one purpose: to go down and go down fast. Weighing in at over 50 pounds, these bikes are not designed to peddle distances and most of the time you would swear they were equipped with a motor and not just gravity. These would be the bikes you see flying through the air with the greatest of ease in the Whistler Bike Park. As much fun as they are on the way down, unless you have access to a gondola, a friend with a truck or a helicopter, they're just not suited for all-around riding. The bike that Goldilocks would have chosen for the Sea to Sky Corridor is a freeride bike. It features plush suspension on a bike that you can still peddle on those epic rides. Like anything else, where you go and what you ride simply comes down to preference.



HISTORY

Few inventions have touched as many lives and made as many people smile as the bicycle.

To many, that inaugural ride was their first taste of freedom: the overwhelming feeling as you look behind you to see that no-one was holding you up any more?

into being as the product of true cycling enthusiasts seeking something new to do on two wheels. Through fun and competition, these cyclists found that the old one-speed clunkers they were using could be improved with modern technology. One thing led to another and mountain biking "the sport" was born.

Mountain biking exploded onto the scene in Sea to Sky Country in the late '80s. Since then three community groups have developed to become the local advocates, spokespeople if you will, for the sport. Whistler Off Road Cycling Association (WORCA) led the way, then Squamish followed with SORCA and last but not least everyone's favorite to say, Pemberton's PORCA.

All of these groups share the same humble beginnings: just a couple of good-natured folks meeting at a coffee shop discussing possibilities, potentials and the nitty gritty of what had to be done. Mostly the groups began so that mountain bikers could have a voice in the area's evolving recreation industry. But more importantly, the groups aimed to forge important relationships with landowners. With literally dozens of trails constructed every year, it's been a challenge to keep everyone happy. Considering most property is either crown or private land, building and riding trails is only possible with input from all parties.

AS FAR AS TERRAIN GOES, SEA TO SKY COUNTRY HAS IT ALL.

In Pemberton you have arid temperatures with gorgeous, long descents under the watchful and breathtaking Mt. Currie. Whistler boasts a variety of trails from challenging single track to the leisurely Valley Trail as well as the Whistler Bike Park that every year, sees an incredible talent pushing the envelope on their gondola-assisted descents. And then there's Squamish with an ostensibly endless variety of trails featuring everything from rolling descents to vertical granite slopes in the shadow of the Stawamus Chief.

The origins of the bike date back to 1817 with the invention of a walking machine designed with two same-size in-line wheels; the front one moveable, mounted in a frame which you straddled. The device was propelled by the rider pushing his feet against the ground, thus rolling rider and device forward in a sort of gliding walk.

Perhaps the greatest development occurred in England in the early 1880s, when the "safety bicycle" was invented. This particular bike, which would become the model for the modern bicycle, had a chain and equal-sized wheels. The years that followed saw the development of pneumatic tires (1880s),

two and three speed hub gears (1890s), and derailleur gears (1899). Funny thing is, many of these bicycles of 100 years ago had front and/or rear suspension.

Today however the number of bicycle offshoots is flabbergasting. There are road bikes, freeride, downhill, cross-country, BMX, cruisers, single speeds, cyclecross, and there's a very good chance that another bike is being invented as you read this.

In the Sea to Sky Corridor however the biggest bicycle movement has been in mountain biking.

The origins of mountain biking were innocent: it came

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BY BRIAN RAISER

CHALLENGE & CAMARADERIE

Another evolutionary aspect of the sport is big race events. In the corridor, the two premier races of the season are Whistler's Cheakamus Challenge and Squamish's Test of Metal. But recently the trend has also included a shift towards adventure rides. More and more, you're seeing epic rides being organized in race fashion. From the 11-hour Tour de Squamish, and the technically challenging Beyond the Valleycliffe of the Dolls, to Whistler's Samurai Single Track, these rides are taking race camaraderie and applying it to a more relaxed adventure ride.

WHERE IS THE SPORT GOING?

Well until the boundaries get pushed to the limits there is simply no telling. For instance, who would have ever imagined someone throwing themselves off a 65-foot cliff with a bike? Eventually though it's up to each individual to decide what they want and how far they're willing to go. Once you get those wheels between your legs though, you realize that it's absolutely true...there is such a thing as love at first ride.

 Brian lives in Squamish where he inflicts his unique perspective on the community in the local rag. His aptly named "Beyond the Valleycliffe of the Dolls" epic mountain bike race in May explains all there is to know about him.