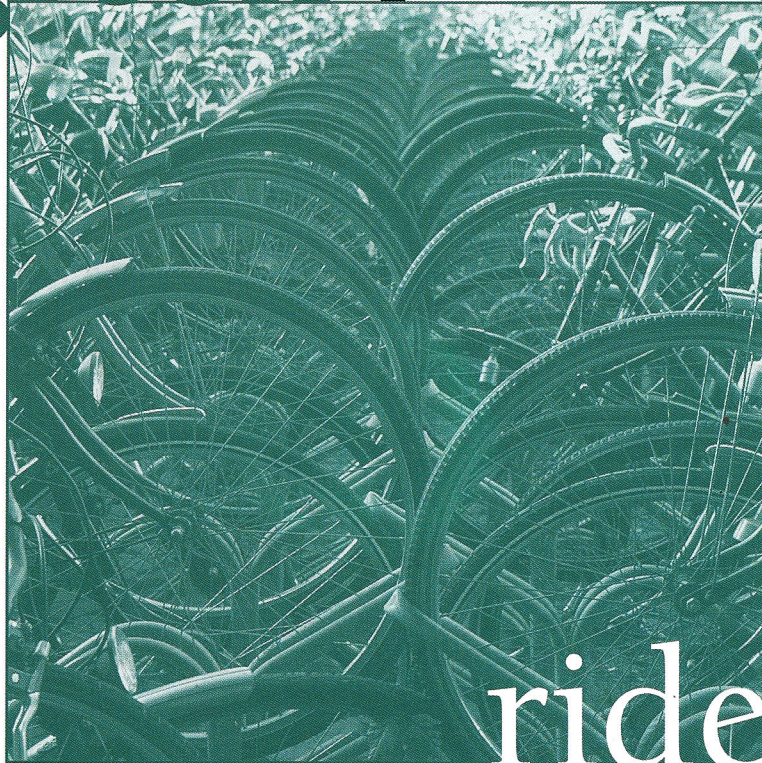


cleaning up
the sport

green



your

ride

cleaning up the sport

by Joshua Liberles

MODEL COMPANIES

Calfee Design

Craig Calfee was among the first to build carbon fiber bike frames. Greg Lemond and his Team Z called attention to Calfee's Carbonframes when they rode the bikes to victory in the 1991 Tour de France. As carbon's popularity exploded, Calfee remained on the leading edge, catering to the high-end and custom markets.

Calfee began playing with the idea of bamboo bikes in 1996, and has had a production model on the market since 2005.

Although it started as a whim, "the feedback on the smooth ride quality was too good to ignore, so we decided to go into production," said Calfee.

"I became interested in bamboo after my pit bull mix dog demonstrated how tough bamboo can be. We built a few for fun and quickly realized the excellent vibration-damping qualities."

Bamboo is a renewable resource, growing quickly without fertilizers and needing no repainting. While growing, it converts more carbon dioxide to oxygen than trees do. Already used in construction to replace timber, make fibers for clothing and floors in homes, bamboo has found its niche in the cycling world.

When asked about traditional frame materials, Calfee said, "I don't know which is most environmentally friendly. They all take a lot of energy to produce with a certain amount of toxic residuals. Bamboo is about as good as it gets in that regard. It actually absorbs greenhouse gases and there are no toxics involved."

Other manufacturers have experimented with bamboo frames, but they've all been expensive one-offs. Calfee's models are race-worthy production bikes available in road, mountain and cyclocross models. The frame tubes are literally grown. The stalks are cut to size, smoked and heat-treated. Customers can choose between carbon or hemp fiber lugs for the ultra-green machine.

Calfee is also turning his bicycle and bamboo savvy in a humanitarian direction. The Bamboo Bike Project, a collaboration with the Columbia Earth Institute, brings inexpensive, quality bikes to poor, rural people in Africa. Rather than shipping inadequate complete bicycles from India and Asia, locals make frames from native bamboo. Entire frames can be put together with a Swiss Army knife.