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Front & back cover photos: kamil!

**Contributors:** Keith Gambrinus, Jane Healy, Vic Herrera, Gin Kilgore, kamil!, Bob Matter, dan moran, Johnny Payphone, Pippy, Vic Sholis, Don Sorsa, T-rat, and mary xmas (via Travis D.). Thanks for your support!

**Submissions Needed:** If you would like to contribute articles, photographs, illustrations, ideas, etc., send them to TheDerailleur@gmail.com. Complimentary copy available upon publication (sorry, no payment).

The Derailleur is an unofficial publication of Chicago Critical Mass. [chicagocriticalmass.org](http://chicagocriticalmass.org) This issue was compiled by willow naeco (Rachel) and edited by Robert Wright. Send compliments, complaints, and contributions to TheDerailleur@gmail.com.

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### What is Critical Mass?

Critical Mass is a free, fun bike ride that happens on the last Friday of every month in different cities all over the world.

It's also a movement to promote the use of bicycles as a viable means of transportation.

It's an open event that invites individuals to express themselves creatively, socially, politically, artistically, vocally, etc. to an audience of their friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow citizens.

It's a wonderful bike party parade that celebrates the freedom of traveling under your own power and being part of the environment of the places you pass through.

It's a reclamation of space, a demonstration to show that the city belongs to people, not machines.

Critical Mass is a free market of ideas so Critical Mass is whatever/whoever is at it. Critical Mass is a fantastic, fun time, so come join the ride!

(The Derailleur, June 2003)



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## Announcements

**MeetUp Mass** - Friday, October 6, 2006. Evanston Critical Mass and Oak Park Critical Mass join forces for the first-ever Chicago-area MeetUp Mass. Ride through the North Side with Evanston Massers or ride through Pilsen and the Loop with Oak Park Massers. Everyone will MeetUp at Billy Goat Inn (1535 W. Madison St. near Ogden/Ashland) at 8:30 p.m. All ages are welcome for the rides and the party at Billy Goat Inn. Bike parking available. See Evanston Critical Mass and Oak Park Critical Mass listings for departure locations and times. Route maps and info: [meetupmass@gmail.com](mailto:meetupmass@gmail.com)

**Evanston Critical Mass** - First Friday of every month. Meets at 6:30 p.m. at Fountain Square (Davis/Sherman/Orrington); departs at 7:00 p.m. Info: [ecm@bikechicago.info](mailto:ecm@bikechicago.info)

**Oak Park Critical Mass** - First Friday of every month. Meets at 6:00 p.m. at Scoville Park (Lake St./Oak Park Ave.); departs at 6:30 p.m. Info: [oakparkcriticalmass@gmail.com](mailto:oakparkcriticalmass@gmail.com)

**Wander Indiana Ride** - Saturday, October 14, 2006. Chicagoland Folding Bike Society's 2nd Annual Wander Indiana Ride. Itinerary: <http://geocities.com/rjmatter/>

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## Don't Let Bike Fall Get You Down!



The days are getting shorter and the temps will be fluttering down like crunchy leaves, but that's no excuse to stop riding. In fact, if you can survive the crazy variability of Bike Fall, riding through the winter will be a breeze.

Tips for October:

- Always carry a pair of thin gloves and ear covering for those post-sunset, windy temperature plummets.
- Carry rain gear and/or install fenders (summer showers are charming; autumn showers can be bone-chilling).
- Get some rear and front blinky lights.
- Visit [bikewinter.org](http://bikewinter.org) for tips and information on upcoming classes and events.
- Ride in Chicago's Critical Mass, a fun, free bike ride on the last Friday of every month, which leaves from Daley Plaza at 6 p.m. We'll be passing out free gaiters (fleece ear and neck coverings) at the October ride.

HOPE TO SEE YOU ON TWO WHEELS IN JANUARY!

--Gin Kilgore

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## Preserving Our Way of Life

Although Frances Willard (Chicago's first cycling sister and a prominent temperance advocate) might respectfully disagree, beer and bicycle advocates share an important common vision. For many, the Critical Mass rides are a portal into bicycle activism. Increasingly, the rides are also launching a new generation of drinking advocates who see the synergistic relationship among beer, bikes, and restoring America's greatness.

Beer and public houses played a crucial role in the birth of our republic. In fact, the American Revolution was planned and fomented in colonial taverns, with frothy mugs in hand. Today, barreled-beer and taverns continue to be central in building dynamic, vital communities, offering public gathering spaces and promoting hospitality. Similarly, the bicycle today plays a crucial role in re-democratizing our cities, making our streets safe for human interaction.

Thus, it is no surprise that bikers and drinkers are natural allies in working to further our participatory democracy by protecting public beer drinking facilities and working to eliminate cars from the city so that our streets are safe for cycling.

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How we take the street is not a form of civil disobedience or civil war. I believe that the violence we find in the city is already there and latent to a car-centered city. On the last Friday of every month we should think of ourselves as the frontline of peace.

Critical Mass will deflate aggression the same way that it lessens congestion. The aspect of Joy that we bring to the ride acts on the psyche of motorists, the same way that our economical machines act on the congestion of a street. The color and the expressiveness of a Critical Mass should be thought of as a model for emergency as well. Joy needs to inform how we handle aggressive motorists.

Our antics in the intersections, our creative bikes, our colorful shirts serve dual functions which are offensive and defensive, equally. Both visible and friendly, we are an expression of a safe, sustainable, industrially transformed environment.

--T-rat



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### *The Veil of Darkness*

From October to April, Critical Mass does most of its riding under the veil of darkness. Just as we must think of the motorists as though they are audience members standing at the apron of a stage, we must think of darkness as the biggest antagonist. There is no theater if we are not seen! Show up, and in the winter get BRIGHTER! That will help with safety.

When motorists turn on their headlights, they expect to be in conflict with whatever is in front of them: bikes, people, and anything else. Under the veil of darkness, the mass becomes more hectic and accidents become more likely.

### *In Conclusion*

JOY UP the ride! Make it happy, make it foolish. It is a technique of post-modern warfare as basic as putting paint on your face. Joy can sometimes be the only distraction that will prevent a weak-willed person from losing control of their authority. Once a potentially dangerous situation has crossed the line, it is important to react appropriately because you are the person in charge of the boundaries. When the peaceful mechanisms fail, and violence breaks out, you are going to be at the other end of it, and it may be a long time before a friendly police officer is going to be there to help you. It might even be a police officer that is causing the difficulty.

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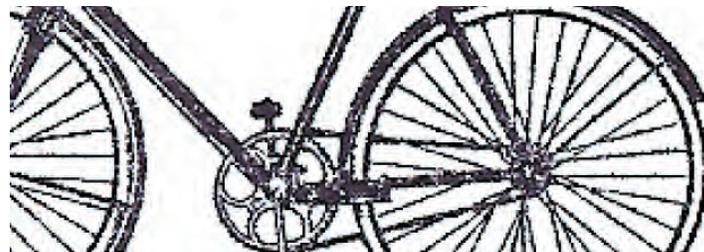
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Each time a cyclist raises a beer can during a Critical Mass ride, I'm reminded that preserving our freedom requires constant vigilance. And, I am grateful that draught activists and cycling advocates are working together to preserve our bountiful way of life for future generations.

--Keith Gambrinus



### **HOMEMADE MUD FLAPS**

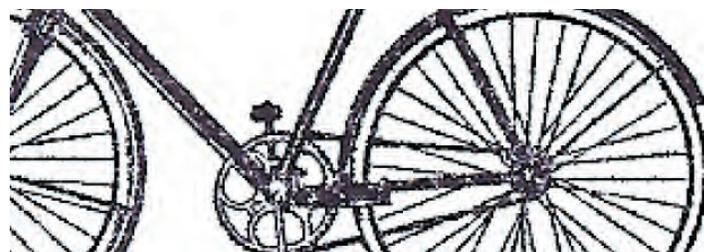
THE ARRIVAL OF FALL MEANS BIKE WINTER AND ITS RAIN, SNOW, AND SLUSH IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER. DO YOU HAVE FENDERS AND MUD FLAPS TO KEEP THE MUCK OFF YOU? HERE IS A TEMPLATE OF A COMMERCIAL BIKE MUD FLAP YOU CAN TRACE AND CUT OUT OF A LARGE DETERGENT BOTTLE: [HTTP://TINYURL.COM/QKYY7](http://tinyurl.com/qkyy7). DRILL A SMALL HOLE IN YOUR FENDER AND FASTEN THE MUD FLAP ON THE INSIDE WITH A NUT AND BOLT. COLOR COORDINATE YOUR MUD FLAPS WITH YOUR BIKE!

--BOB MATTER

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Photo: Don Sorsa

## What CCM has done for me

I have always wanted to do a bike tour in Mexico. For the longest time I knew that physically I was able to do it, but my mental game just wasn't in it. That was until I started my connection to CCM about four years ago. I have met many great people and have encountered some great programs (West Town Bikes and The Recyclery, for example) through CCM and have only come across very few assholes. It's really not a bad ratio, considering how crazy this world is. Anyhow, I wound up taking a bike trip in Mexico last year, cycling from Morelia, Michoacan to my mom's village. The trip was done during The Day of the

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and then walk out into the intersection. The intimidating spectacle would bring cars to a halt and the mass would cheer the original "Chicago Hold-up!" Then the rest of the ride would proceed on its happy way. Looking back, I think that the reason that those hold-ups worked was that we used a large scale to signal to motorists and we moved in tight packs.

It is the perpendicular aspect of the intersection that becomes the scene of conflict in a Critical Mass because motorists see us at our thinnest. When one or two people step into the intersection to make sure there is no problem, those two people can attract more antagonism. There must be so many riders in the intersections that they begin to cork themselves.

For that reason, I think it is important to consider how the tornado-like maneuvers, circling in the intersection, can help cork intersections. By making a little tornado of bicycles in the middle of a large intersection, the motorists cannot tell where the mass will be going next. Motorists become very timid when hundreds of people are whirlpooling into the middle of an intersection without a clear intention. Instead of massing up, it's massing in. The "leaders" of the mass get recycled into the body of the ride, new leaders emerge, and the stage is set for talking to motorists. That is the stage, and I believe in taking that chance to speak your mind.

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Continued from p. 15

balances of a social order, and will sometimes defy all social sense by driving through a Critical Mass. It is important to know if someone appears intent on doing this, because it is then better to help than to stand in their way.

If you allow a conflict to be exacerbated, you will need photographs, witnesses, and court dates to defend yourself. There simply comes a time when the car should be surrounded by bicyclists who carefully walk the angry driver to the other side. These days, we are having rides that are so large that this may happen more often.

If you can get a car through an intersection without disturbing the mass, be sensible and help them through. Remember that while we want their attention, we do not want their anger. If you are a good usher and can escort them to the back of the theater, do it, because as a mass, we're only trying to stay alive and have a good time.

### *The Tornado Effect*

Chicago has always been an innovator when it comes to blocking traffic, and I think it has something to do with the in-your-face style of Chicago's all-year bikers. In the past, as the mass would come to a red light, and grow impatient, cyclists would lift their bikes into the air

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Dead celebrations. I wanted to honor my grandmother by doing the whole thing by bike. That included not walking any part of the two mountains that I climbed, buying her a corona (not the beer; it translates to "crown") and looking like a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle with this wreathlike thing attached to my back (bungee cords rule!). I also got to visit Patzcuaro, Michoacan for some of the Day of the Dead festivities. I took many, many, many photos, and a couple of them came out pretty nice. The point of this ramble is that five photos of mine will be shown at the Mexican Fine Arts Museum from 9/22 to 12/10 for their Day of the Dead exhibition. I NEVER would have imagined that my cycling experience would take me that far, so I would like to give a gigantic shout-out to that indefinable (as hard as you try to define it) force we all call CCM.

For more information on the Mexican Fine Arts Museum,\* here is the link:

<http://www.mfacmchicago.org/>

From the bottom of my heart, "Thanks!"

--Vic Herrera

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## I ride in the critical mass because it is REAL FUN!



Photo: Pippy

I ride to the critical mass on the last Friday of the month from Hammond, Indiana so I can maintain a mileage base to keep me in good condition for my imaginary bicycle-racing career. This keeps me from pulling imaginary hamstrings or blowing out an imaginary knee. When I get there, I sit on a very real marble bench, eat a real banana or something, and admire the real mass of massers massing. I look at real

girls. I see many very real reminders of why I started biking in the first place.

Every once in a while, I remember the message that someone posted to rec.bikes.rides (remember USENET?) sometime in June of 2001. It said that there was a free, fun ride that met at Daley Plaza on the last Friday of each month at 5:30 p.m. I remember how, at that time, I was just getting strong enough to be able to ride the 50-mile roundtrip to Navy Pier and back. I remember how

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**I ride because...**

- I want to feel safe on the streets of Chicago.
- I love the feel of the wind in my face.
- I want to remind car drivers that bikes really are a lot more fun.
- I like smelling fresh air.
- I want to get exercise.
- I don't want my kids to become addicted to cars.
- I need freedom.

**I ride because I can.**

by Jane Healy



17

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**Critical Mass\***

Hey, move it. Hey, shove it.  
My bike is rad, I love it.

Hey, move it. Hey, shove it.  
My bike is rad, I love it.

Your car stinks. I don't think  
that we should breathe more of it.

That toxic shit hangs in the air,  
it's never gonna go anywhere.

Why you wanna spend all your money,  
just to give us all cancer, honey?

Move it! Hey, shove it!  
My bike is rad, I love it!

Hey, move it! Hey, shove it!  
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Hey, move it! Hey, shove it!  
Critical Mass is rad, we love it!

--mary xmas

\*Additional Critical Mass cheers can be found online.

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gracious the mass was to have ended at the South Shore Cultural Center, leaving me in a very good position to return home. You were nice to me that day and I thank you.

Sometimes I remember asking the listserv about how hairy it would be to ride up Halsted from 175th to downtown. It was a good (and interesting) ride in, and a better ride around town. Pausing atop the bridge on LSD was a nice "high point" for me. Again, a very real experience and something I would have never experienced if there were no Critical Mass.

The memories I have of masses past aren't my only reason for showing up and biking around town with you people. I've found that YOU (yeah, you reading this thing here right now and all the others like you) are the biggest reason why I keep coming back to ride. The friends I've made, the characters I've met, and the women I've (hopefully unobtrusively) ogled, all MASS UP to form this very real thing that is vastly larger than me. From this very real thing that is vastly larger than me, I derive a sense of something, a feeling that is, for lack of a better word, real.

In short, I ride Critical Mass because it's REAL FUN.

Let's make some more memories.

--dan moran

gracious the mass was to have ended at the South Shore Cultural Center, leaving me in a very good position to return home. You were nice to me that day and I thank you.

Sometimes I remember asking the listserv about how hairy it would be to ride up Halsted from 175th to downtown. It was a good (and interesting) ride in, and a better ride around town. Pausing atop the bridge on LSD was a nice "high point" for me. Again, a very real experience and something I would have never experienced if there were no Critical Mass.

The memories I have of masses past aren't my only reason for showing up and biking around town with you people. I've found that YOU (yeah, you reading this thing here right now and all the others like you) are the biggest reason why I keep coming back to ride. The friends I've made, the characters I've met, and the women I've (hopefully unobtrusively) ogled, all MASS UP to form this very real thing that is vastly larger than me. From this very real thing that is vastly larger than me, I derive a sense of something, a feeling that is, for lack of a better word, real.

In short, I ride Critical Mass because it's REAL FUN.

Let's make some more memories.

--dan moran

**Stopping Them in Their Tracks:  
Notes on the Theater of a Critical Mass Ride**

Critical Mass is much like a play, and in any play there is conflict. How we handle conflict determines whether the ride becomes a comedy or a tragedy. In the eight years that I have been participating in Chicago Critical Mass rides, I have seen both. Some conflicts could have been avoided, and some could not have, but an element of theatricality serves both, protecting the people on the ride, and the meaning of what a Critical Mass is. Let's look at a CM ride as though it were a piece of theater that broke out of the auditorium. Suddenly it's not limited to a stage, or a proscenium. The mass is limited only by its size. It has a message. It has an audience. However, part of that audience has a rocket launcher underneath their right foot. They are in cars.

Unable to transcend the gridlock that they are experiencing, many people can and do lose their tempers and come pushing through the mass. They see us riding through red lights while they wait for the green, and then another green, and then another green. We have to remember that the time that we cause other people to wait is like a moment on stage, and whoever is holding an intersection should try to take that opportunity to interact with the audience.

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her car. I asked her what was wrong and she said that she was a child abuse investigator and she could be in an emergency right now. I saw her gripping the wheel fiercely. "Are you in an emergency?" I asked. "No! But I could be in one!" While another few hundred bicyclists rode past, I began to counsel the woman on relaxing. "The light is GREEN! The light is GREEN!" she raved. I said, "That doesn't give you the right to hurt anyone," and watched her breathe through her frustration.

My philosophy about traffic lights is that they don't make bicyclists any safer. Bikes can be hit from all sides, regardless of whose light is whose. It is the automobile that needs to be managed with these mechanical arbitrators of privilege, not bicyclists. I say that the tyrannical machine rules by red, yellow, green--and people need to operate more wisely. Giving up the right of way does not give someone the right to become a murderer. This is the place where the public way is reclaimed for protest, and wherever there is protest, there is theater.

*Danger*

People change behind the wheel of a car. Given the distances that people keep from each other on the roadway, they begin to feel anonymous as well. Motorists are all alone in their vehicles. They are rude to each other, unapologetic. They lack the checks and

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bring with us. By corking a major intersection we are creating a passion play of bicycle innovators whose inventions can amaze. Whatever virtue they have in the world, in the intersection they serve to make people curious. So bring out the costumes, the TV bikes, the glow sticks, the musical instruments, and whatever else you can bring. Balance your bicycle on your chin, because DUMB ENTERTAINMENT CAN APPEASE AN ANGRY MOB. Therefore, good juggling is essential to the safety of a Critical Mass ride. Bright colors and flags make motorists feel wanted. People are all alone in their cars and are therefore very susceptible to flattery this way.

Here's a tip on keeping an audience--SMILE, even when they are yelling profanities out their windows. Refuse to engage in a challenge by smiling through it. Drivers will sometimes try to push through a mass, and if they do this, remember: FUN! Promise them that if they don't calm down that another biker will join in, and they will. If a motorist is pushing into the mass, it is assault, and other bikers will see it happening and come to your aid, but you should not stop smiling. If you hit the car or break a mirror, you're getting someone very upset. In a mass, we are never arguing with motorists, we are only entertaining them.

Once I came up to a woman who was screaming in

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*The aesthetics of the intersection*

It may be helpful to think of intersections as scenes and roads as scene changes because most of the antagonism that I have seen from motorists has happened in the intersections. The people who cork the intersection need to understand that they are doing more than protecting the mass from angry drivers, they are also educating drivers about their alternative forms of transport. Sometimes the best way to settle a potential conflict is to lead the interaction yourself. The spectacular aspect of the ride depends on people seeing the sense we have in cycling. Therefore, we should be sensible and make sense to them. Drivers will appreciate an explanation for the delay, however you do it. Hand out flyers, hold your bike in the air, talk about what we're doing, and thank them for waiting.

There's no use skirting around this forever: A Critical Mass wants to stop traffic and it wants to make a spectacle of our passing. We want motorists to consider the sense of bicycling by showing them the beauty and the FUN of it. I think if we are going to delay motorists, we'd better give them something to look at. Credit must be given to so many people for their contributions in this regard: the Rats, the Scallywags, the High Wheelers, the Naturists, and so many others for keeping up the spectacle. These theatrics can be thought of as the price we pay for the delay that we

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"As I lay in a trance, with crap in my pants,



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"I've had brain damage since," (he showed me, I winced)



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