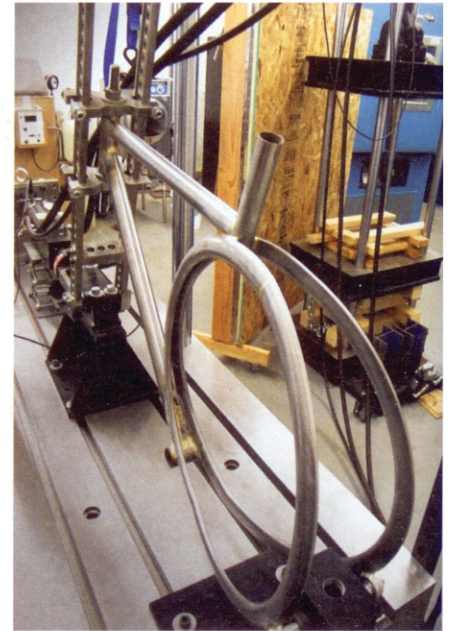


HOT WHEELS

The bike frame gets a revamp with Roundtail, an all new ride that is better at absorbing bumps on the road

BY WILL JONES



WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, the diamond-shaped bike frame has dominated since the early 20th century. But a couple of years ago, an aching back from cycling hundreds of miles got entrepreneur Lou Tortola of Windsor, Ontario, thinking about changing the design to make it more comfortable. "With the conventional frame geometry, the jarring vibrations from bumpy roads travel straight up the rear forks to the seat and the rider's spine," he says. "Bicycle companies have spent millions developing composites to reduce impact and increase shock absorption, but they haven't changed the frame shape."

Tortola's concept, which he developed in 2011, does away with the seat tube and stay - two rigid, straight elements that transmit vibrations directly to the base of the spine - and replaces them with a pair of tubular circles, to better absorb bumps without

compromising performance or lateral rigidity. In just four months, he made his first prototype, the Roundtail, in collaboration with Montana frame builder Paul Taylor. At its launch during the San Diego Custom Bicycle Show in April 2011, it set the frame-building world alight. "People loved it," says Tortola. So he began full manufacture of the bikes, and started selling them online last summer.

Meanwhile, he has developed four new models, as well as an upcoming carbon fibre mountain bike, and has been in talks with European distributors. "Years ago, the diamond frame was the way to go, because of limitations in manufacturing ability," says Tortola. "But today we can radically alter the design of a bike frame to produce a better, more comfortable ride for everyone." roundtail.ca

↗ ↖ **The Roundtail frame consists of two tubular circles, rather than the traditional straight, rigid seat tube and stay, which gives a more comfortable ride.**



THE MAGAZINE

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