

THE CHUB HUB, BIG, BOLD, LIGHT AND UNIQUE - JUST ONE OF THE HIVE'S QUALITY PRODUCTS.



THE FIFTEEN.G CRANKSET SHOULD HAVE HIT THE UK SHORELINE BY THE TIME YOU TURN THIS PAGE.



THE HIVE

Intro: Steve Jones
Interview: ed Haythornthwaite
Photos: Steve Jones & ed Haythornthwaite

Head north over the Golden Gate and it doesn't take long to get into wild country, Highway 101, a day away from hitting the Pacific at Eureka...ka...ka. Snuck in a sneaky corner in a Petaluma suburb is the company 'The Hive', a busy and contemporary brand bringing new products that are not only packaged well, but backed up with solid engineering principles.

I was part way through a three week trip through the US and a few days previously, a little further south, had been spent with slope style rider Andrew Taylor; he and his boss at Marin, Mark Vanek, had put me onto the boys at Chub up in Sonoma County and here we were heading north in the hundred degree heat. Taylor has been using the innovative super size Chub hubs for some time, whilst Vanek is a good friend of the 'other' company north of the bridge, playing in a band together. A modest building, located adjacent to a sculptors workshop and redundant railroad, the building is roofed with epic galvanised zinc sheets and walled from classic mottled red brick. It smells good in here, the pungent aroma of artist's paint leaching through into the Hive workshop. Chris and Charlie ...Costello and Schneider...are on it. >>

DIRT: I SUPPOSE IT'D BE BEST IF YOU STARTED OFF BY TELLING US WHO YOU ALL ARE, AND WHAT YOU DO?

Chris Costello: Well, first and foremost, we are a group of cyclists. Mountain, road, DJ...anything with pedals and two wheels gets us excited. After that it can be a bit hard to define who we are. Espresso junkies comes to mind, as does scotch aficionados, but in reality we are a small group of people with different talents and a passion for making cool looking and technically beneficial stuff. Our group is diverse not only from the talent standpoint, but also from our backgrounds in the industry. Some of us have been designing parts that have been raced in the Tour de France for years, others have been involved in successful retail ventures, yet another has lived in Taiwan during the heart of the bicycle manufacturing boom, speaks Chinese, and was an integral part of the success of companies you are all too familiar with.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU ALL TOGETHER TO FORM THE HIVE, AND WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

Before we started The Hive, there were two parts to our business: Managing the Formula Disc Brake brand in the US and also engineering/manufacturing consulting. Our own brand has been in the works for quite some time, but we were looking for the right time and scenario to launch it. We picked the biggest economic downturn in the last 80 years and said GO! Ha. Well, honestly the puzzle pieces fell together in early 2008. We developed some products we were really excited about and had a few additional tricks up our sleeves that were ready to go shortly thereafter.

ARE WE RIGHT IN THINKING THAT CHUB HUBS WERE YOUR FIRST PRODUCT?

Yeah, Chub hubs were the first product line we launched for The Hive. We followed up shortly thereafter with our Fifteen.G cranks and now our Revl Carbon Road Brakes. More proper goodies soon to follow...

THE HUBS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY UNIQUE LOOKING, BUT THERE MUST BE A WHOLE LOT MORE TO THEM THAN JUST THAT?

One of the things we try to avoid is to make something just for the sake of looking different. Yeah, the hubs look very different, but it's for a good reason: The hubs use huge alloy flanges that are joined by a directionally laid carbon torsion tube. The big flanges and stiff laid carbon tube contribute to building an incredibly strong and stiff wheel. The carbon keeps the weight of the hubs to a minimum and we spec custom grease filled Japanese bearings. We are very engineering heavy so our products reflect that with the technical benefits they bring to the table. A review in a US mag recently called a wheelset we built for them as "one of the most responsive and crisp feeling wheelsets we have ever ridden". Big flanges translate to greater spoke triangulation, shorter spokes, and ultimately a stiffer and stronger wheel. The nice thing is that you can use a really light rim and keep the rotational weight on the outside of the wheel to a minimum.

WE SAW YOUR REAR HUBS WITH A FREEHUB BODY AT EUROBIKE, BUT WHEN DO YOU THINK RIDERS WILL ACTUALLY BE ABLE TO GET HOLD OF THEM?

Ah yes, the question of the month. The geared hubs will be available in early 2010; most likely late February or early March. We will have three different models: XC (295g), Enduro/AM (329g), and DH (349g). They all utilize large flanges and the carbon torsion tube. The DH hubs in particular look really amazing. The drive side flange is actually larger than the largest cog on the cassette! It has a very strong visual impact.



HAVE YOU USED A RELATIVELY CONVENTIONAL FREEHUB DESIGN, OR HAVE YOU DEVELOPED SOMETHING AS UNIQUE AS THE HUB SHELLS THEMSELVES?

Since they are not totally finalised, I don't want to let the cat out of the bag just yet. I will say that we designed them from the ground up and they take the strongest features from a number of different engagement methods. We primarily focused on three things: Hub weight, hub durability, and engagement speed. Our current version has a 6° engagement, we are happy with the weights, and the durability is very promising thus far.

THE HUBS ARE PRETTY DAMN LIGHT, BUT DOES THAT MEAN THAT THERE ARE LIMITATIONS TO THEIR USE?

Ha ha! It is always funny watching people pick a hub up for the first time. Your mind tricks you into thinking they will be heavier than they actually are. One guy at Sea Otter this year literally almost sent a Chub into orbit when he picked it up. Honestly, as light as they are now, they're still overbuilt. For our single speed rear hub we offer a Dirt Jump version with a steel axle, but Andrew Taylor and Phil Sundbaum have been riding the version with the alloy axle all year with no problems. Have you seen how big Phil actually is in person? Or how big Andrew actually sends it? Those guys really put our stuff through the ringer...so we are very confident about strength and durability. Also, we do lab testing in Taiwan for things like flange bond strength and other critical factors to ensure quality.

CHARLIE SCHNEIDER (LEFT) AND CHRIS COSTELLO TAKE CARE OF RUNNING THE HIVE UP IN PETALUMA, JUST NORTH OF THE GOLDEN GATE.

AS FOR YOUR EQUALLY UNIQUE FIFTEEN.G CRANKS, THEY'RE OBVIOUSLY AIMED MORE TOWARDS THE XC END OF THE SPECTRUM, BUT WILL WE BE SEEING A MORE GRAVITY INSPIRED VERSION ANY TIME SOON?

Logic says that is a common progression, but 'any time soon' is relative! Keep an eye on the website, and your local DH track!

WHAT IS IT EXACTLY THAT MAKES YOUR AXLE DESIGN SO SPECIAL COMPARED TO THE OTHER DESIGNS THAT ARE OUT THERE?

It really boils down to two things: Our interface and our alloy axle. The polygon interface we use is based on a DIN standard and has many manufacturing applications for press fits. It was also commonly used in tank transmissions in Europe. The big advantage is that you get 100% surface contact, which maximizes the area carrying drive torque, and more importantly minimizes the possibility of fretting corrosion. Fretting corrosion occurs when the crank arm is removed and reinstalled, displacing material into the open gaps of the interface and compromising the integrity of the press fit. Most of us have seen this occur on the ISIS interface and other splined systems. The axle/arm interface has to be very precise for this to work properly, and that is why we CNC both interfaces.

The alloy axle is the second part of the equation. It is a 30mm alloy spindle which has been bead blasted and heat treated. The fact that it is alloy translates into an incredibly light system, and the large diameter makes it stiff. Also, the size of the spindle requires that we use larger bearings in our BB's, which ultimately results in better



BB durability and life. The bearings in our BBs can take a 20% greater static load than any other external system on the market. So, with our system you gain almost all the advantages of BB30 but you don't have to have a frame made specifically for the system...that is the beauty of it! There are hundreds of thousands of bikes already on the market that can benefit from this system.

WHERE ARE YOUR PRODUCTS MADE?

Our products are all made in Taiwan...by people who are still people. Hard working humans that get personal gratification from making nice things. Kinda like you or me.

HAVE YOU GOT ANY OTHER PRODUCTS IN THE PIPELINE THAT YOU CAN TELL US ABOUT?

Is 10 plus products in one year not enough? Ha! Actually, we do have a few things, but nothing I can discuss right now. I can assure you though that you will never catch us using an open model part and putting our name on it. Everything we release will be engineered from the ground up and fit in a special place in the market.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE COMPANY IN FIVE YEARS TIME?

Most importantly we want to continue to release products that are high quality, unique looking and improve the overall cycling experience. We are growing quickly, but it is a natural growth for a company of our size. I can't say we want to be the next big XXXX (insert big faceless corporation name here) because it probably means we won't be able to wear t-shirts and flip-flops as frequently (OK...the engineers DO wear big white lab coats!). I hope in five years we will all have a bit more time to ride, are still putting out category-defining products, and keep building great friendships in this crazy bike industry.

WHAT BIKES DO YOU GUYS RIDE THEN WHEN YOU DO GET CHANCE TO GET OUT?

Ah, during which day of the week? Actually we are pretty diverse. Joel Peters rides a lot of road in Taiwan, as the road riding is amazing there. George Dubois and myself are more into mountain riding (Enduro/DH/SS etc.), but dabble in road occasionally. Greg Thrash is into XC and AM riding, and Charlie Schneider is a DJ grom converted to road racing demon. We are close with the guys at both Santa Cruz and Soulcraft, so we each have at least one of each of those bikes in our quivers.

ANY LAST WORDS?

Where is my espresso? Our Chubs are HUGE!...And yes you can touch them...for the right price. ☑

AVAILABLE FROM JUNGLE PRODUCTS: 01423 780 088