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Holy Spokes: A Biking Bible for Everyone

Rob Coppolillo
Todd Telander, illustrator
Zest Books (Jan 22, 2013)
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For the relative beginner or the casual rider who wants to ramp up participation in the activity, *Holy Spokes* is a good fit. Rob Coppolillo serves as an ambassador and an advocate, selling the activity of biking as fun, cheap, healthy, and earth-friendly. And while “holy” and “bible” are ambitious claims for the title—this does not have the depth or scope of a reference book—Coppolillo presents an informed, broad overview of bikes and biking today.

An expedition guide with a racing background who has contributed pieces about biking to several publications, Coppolillo writes with authority, yet without a hint of pretense. The volume will help readers with the choices and issues involved in purchasing and owning a bike. Though Coppolillo does not get into specific brands, different bike styles and frame compositions and their suitability are covered. Categories include “townie” bikes (for shopping/commuting); mountain, touring, and racing styles; “lifestyle” bikes (usually bought strictly for comfort by seniors); and the in-vogue “fixies”—stripped-down city bikes with no gears (and no brakes!) that were popularized by big-city messengers.

Coppolillo delves into every area of bike ownership, from the many individualized adjustments that fit riders to their bikes, to light maintenance tips, bike safety, and sporting activities such as racing and adventure cycling, a novel approach to seeing one’s state or country, and beyond.

While not in color and not, at first glance, packaged for adolescents and young adults, the material here works. Putting some emphasis on racing, adventuring, and trendier biking pursuits, Coppolillo also writes in engaging, energetic, teen-friendly prose with short chapters and clear, helpful illustrations. His short resources chapter will lead interested readers to a few books, websites, and films that will, along with this book, take them deeper into biking.

Also appealing is the way Coppolillo varies page presentation for less-patient readers with footnote-like asides. An example is a contrasting white-on-gray, quarter-page insert in his “What’s Your Bike Type?” chapter that describes folding bikes, now popular in Europe. Another insert introduces a young Scotsman who has become a YouTube sensation with his jumping and trick-riding abilities. Each chapter also includes a one- or two-page article on a related topic by a biking expert.

Not a book for the reference shelf that holds dusty repair manuals and handbooks, *Holy Spokes* belongs in libraries, bookstores, and in the hands of young people, where it can be read and enjoyed, start to finish.
JOE TAYLOR (March 14, 2013)

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