

Atomic Zombie™ Extreme Machines

Build it yourself bikes, recumbents, trikes, tandems, choppers and more.



August 2, 2011

AZ newsletters



The Trail of the TimberWolf!

By Brad Graham,
August 2, 2011

What a month it has been! With some the hottest concurrent days on record and storms that pop up without warning, we have really seen what Mother Nature has to offer. Of course it's not all bad since we are living in what can only be described as a barely touched wilderness with a night sky that looks like a photograph from an astronomy book. At the end of a hard day of welding and grinding, I head to the gravity fed solar shower, clean up and then watch the blazing sun diminish behind the mountains, creating a spectacular and always unique sunset. An hour later, the sky lights up with brilliant stars in all directions, often showing a spectacular band of glittering blue light band along the Milky Way.



A pair of tents and a camper have been home for a few months now

Coming from the city, we have never seen such an amazing sky, and out here in "the boonies" there are no ambient lights to ruin the view.

If you have been following our exodus from the concrete jungle, then you know that we have packed up our life and moved to a secluded 120 acre plot of wilderness way up in the surrounding mountains. In order to make this transition, we had to sell and move while the real estate market was booming, so a camper and a few tents are what we are calling home while we await the delivery of a modular home. This move has left me without a garage and all of my 10 year collection of bicycle junk (treasure) hiding precariously in an old rotten house that at any minute could collapse. It has been an interesting journey to get the 2011 bike building season off to a start, but after a few major roadblocks it seems that the race to build fast and furious has begun!

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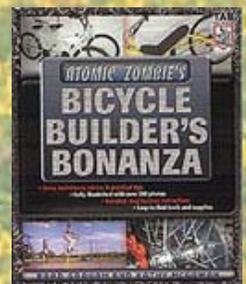
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This old trailer has been a great place to carve out new bike projects

I managed to get another old outbuilding completely tarped from the elements and moved some of my more important bike parts and tools into the small rooms. I ran 400 feet of extension cords down the hill to the old construction trailer and began cutting up tubing for a new trike called the TimberWolf. The name was fitting since we have packs of Timber Wolves in the 'hood who howl some evenings just a few fields from our campsite. Hearing a pack of wolves 20 or more strong howling only

hundreds of feet away is an experience that brings both awe and respect, so my new trike will pay homage to their strength and veraciousness.

Once I was all set up in the old construction trailer with a pile of junk to cut up, a few hand tools and a large fan to stay cool things really progressed well. I took the rear portion of our DeltaWolf Trike and re-constructed the main frame, steering system and transmission into a slightly more upright ride with rear suspension and under seat steering. I made good progress on the TimberWolf plan, but did not yet have any way to weld as the extension cord could only carry 115 volts, and my welder is an old-school 240 volt AC only rig. I now had tubing ready for welding and no way to weld!

To solve this dilemma, I cracked open out temporary hydro service box and jacked in a 240 volt plug right on the wood stand so I could plug in my welder. This certainly solved my welder problem, but now the welder was up a steep hill almost 500 feet from the old trailer I was working in. On the days where the temperature soared to more than 40° Celsius (more than 104° F), it was no easy task to get a frame built since I had to cut the tubing at the trailer and then carry the frame up the hill to do the welding in the middle of an open field with no escape from the sun overhead. Add to this the fact that every single step of a plan has to be set up and photographed in another area, it meant the progress was a bit slow.

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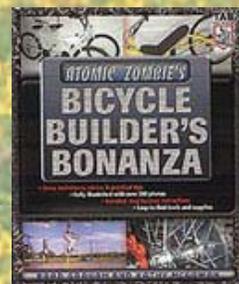
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New stuff in the
Builders
Gallery!

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The TimberWolf just before adding the cargo box and paint job

Am I complaining? No way!

After leaving behind a completely organized garage with everything in one space, I knew I'd have to adapt to really find out what I was made of. I always enjoy a challenge. Carving the TimberWolf out of these conditions has been more rewarding than any other bike I have made, and I am extremely satisfied with the quality of the final project.

Call me crazy, but things seem to be mean more when they are done with less. Surviving kneeling in the dirt surrounded by swarms of pesky noseems and black flies while making a decent weld is a great feeling! And, deer that strolled through our meadow seemed interested in my outdoor welding work. In fact, I had a lot of critters, including squirrels, hummingbirds, falcons, woodpeckers, foxes, dragonflies, chipmunks, and snakes come by to check out my progress.

It took about three weeks to build the TimberWolf from scratch, which is about a week longer than what I could have done in the urban garage, but there were days when it was just too hot to do anything. The summer seems to be letting up a bit now, so the next project will probably seem easy.

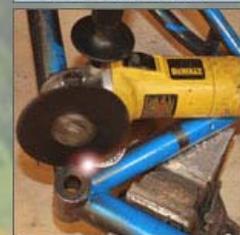
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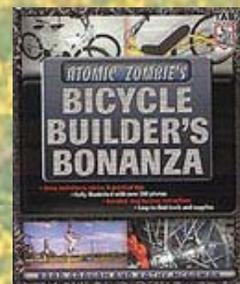
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My new temporary facilities do have some surprising benefits though - all you can eat Saskatoon berries, raspberries, crab apples, a variety of birds checking in on me in the makeshift workshop from time to time, fresh air, perfect lighting from the sun, and a million dollar view. I may miss this setup once I am set back up in an enclosed garage!



Hanging on to get that perfect video shot

So, once the TimberWolf had three wheels installed, things became a lot easier as I could drag the trike up the hill for welding rather than carrying it over my head.

The last week went quickly and I progressed from a rolling frame to a fully working trike, ready to be painted and photographed. In my usual manner, I found an old tree limb, string it across a ladder, and used spray cans to paint the trike as the deer looked on curiously from across the field. Seems the deer like to sleep near the door of the old trailer once the sun goes down, so maybe they are studying the design process and will jump in to help me out soon. Hopefully, the huge black bear doesn't get the same idea, though!

Once the TimberWolf was painted and had a day to cure, we took a few photos with our mountains in the background and then loaded it up on the truck to hit the bike trails back in the city we left behind. It's always fun to get glory photos and videos of a new ride, and the process often gives the bike a great trial workout at the same time since I like to climb on the back and get a shot of the pedals and steering in motion. The suspension really worked well, even when we bombed over the curbs and off the road, sometimes with two on the trike at once.

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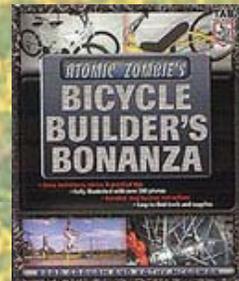
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My brave stunt driver, Adam, took the TimberWolf through its paces as I acted like paparazzi with video camera and digital camera in hand. I decided this year that I'd rather my mug not be in the bike photos as I have had enough of the limelight! From now on, I will look for new AZ models and simply take the photos and videos.



Dude, see how close you can drive past me while I shoot!

I always try to get that magic camera angle, which often means hanging on precariously with one hand on the camera while I drive or sit tandem on the bike. There is probably more than enough footage for an AZ bloopers reel now, with some highlights including branches in the face, running over feet, crashing bikes, and of course test runs that went horribly wrong due to forgetting bolt or weld. This time, everything went perfectly and I only ate a few pine needles as Adam raced under a tree branch while I looked through the viewfinder at the front of the bike. Hey - it's all for the cause, man!

Oh, I almost forgot to mention - the TimberWolf Delta Trike is now available for download! Yes indeed, the first AZ project of 2011, carved out of the wilderness high atop a span of a northern mountain range using simple tools like a hand held angle grinder and a \$120 dollar welder can be rolling out of your own garage in as little as a few weeks. If you have been thinking about leaving the car in the driveway a little more these days then maybe the TimberWolf is the vehicle to set you free!

The TimberWolf video will be online in about a week. Stay tuned for announcements.

Thanks to all who have supported our adventures and contributed to this amazing growing community of bike builders from around the world! We hope to see your own projects and hear your ideas in our forum, so drop on by and say, "Hey"! ~ RadicalBrad



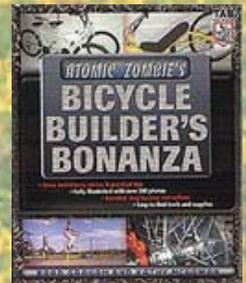
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