



There are a new breed of British-based companies that are making a difference and pushing new ideas into the – more often than not – straight laced and rather boring UK mountain bike market. They could be classed, rather badly, as the 'New School'. Companies like DMR, Revell, 24/7, Curtis (OK they've been around forever), 2&B, Howies, Royal and co have all been trying to give UK mountain biking an injection of life that it desperately needs. There are a number of things that bind all of these companies together, all of them are young and full of ideas, almost all are (or have been) heavily influenced by BMX, most are rider owned and all are fanatical about bikes. But New School is not quite right – more often than not these people have been involved with bikes for a long time, most of them have been riding for years and seen the ups and downs that the industry has gone through.

# newschool

Words: Mike Rose Photos: Mike Rose and Styley

One company that is very much part of this is Pashley. They emerged on the scene as total newcomers a few years back nobody really knew who they were or where they had come from but they had immediate impact on the scene. They appeared a little aloof at first but since those early days Pashley have built themselves up to be one of the most respected bike teams, riding on one of the most sought-after bikes. But the Pashley we know is only the tip of the iceberg. It is no secret that they are a traditional bicycle company and actually make and supply all the bikes that the Post Office use. So the bloke that delivers your mail is a lot cooler than you think, he's riding a bike that was built in the same small factory in Stratford Upon Avon where all of Pashley's bikes are made. But there is no point in talking about Pashley in just mountain bike terms, BMX has a huge influence on anything that they do. This is one of the main reasons that I like Pashley, they wholeheartedly embrace mountain bikes and BMX together. Of course each bike has a different job but there is no negative mentality, no BMX snobbery, the two survive side by side at Pashley. Their 24" Trail frame sums up their whole attitude and philosophy. It is, for all intents and purposes, a BMX cruiser frame. But its beauty lies in the fact that it can be built up with either rigid 24" cruiser forks run with a single speed rear wheel or you can fit it with 100mm suspension forks and stick gears on the back. A cruiser frame with a built-in mech hanger, simple, effective and multipurpose. I was lucky enough to be able to go and have a look around Pashley factory. It was the usual mixture of stacks of metal tubes, welding equipment and boiler suited men. There were work bays full of the buzzing of TIG welders, tubes being cut and in one section row upon row of finished brightly painted Post Office bikes. This new model is amusingly called the 'M star'. What I was witnessing was a triumph and success for British engineering and industry. It has long been the norm for bicycle products to be made overseas, the British manufacturing industry has not had it easy for a long time but Pashley are succeeding where many have failed. Demand is high, you will see many boxes of Pashley BMX and mountain bike (the TV Series) frames on the shelves of the factory, as soon as they have been made they are off to the shops. Lee Prescott is pretty much the man running the TV Series side of things at Pashley, I managed to talk to him to get the low down on the Pashley deal.

### DIRT: Can you just introduce Pashley to us?

LEE PRESCOT: Pashley is one of the oldest bike companies in the world. It was started in Birmingham at the turn of the century and then moved to Stratford Upon Avon after the War. We make all sorts of niche products like the bikes for the Post Office and recumbent bicycles.

### How did you get involved with Pashley?

I did a degree in Product Design at Coventry University. At the end I took part in an exhibition, displaying a couple of suspension bikes that I had designed and built. Then I went to Cornwall for a few months of being a beach bum. By the winter I was starting to think about getting a proper job and then got a phone call from Adrian (Managing Director of Pashley) asking me to come for an interview. It seems that someone high up at Pashley had seen my exhibition stand and thought I might be useful. Bit of luck really.

### How long have you been with them?

About five years now.

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Top: 24" Trails frame  
Bottom: 26MHz Dual frame

BMX is at the heart of Pashley boys at Bournemouth. Photo: [unreadable]

### What is your job description?

That's a hard one. In a small company like Pashley there are a lot of jobs to be shared between a few people. At the moment I manage the brand, design all of the TV Series products, run the team alongside Dylan (Clayton), do the ads and PR work, organise the shows and make the tea.

### Did you always want to work in the bike industry?

I've always wanted to be a designer, for as long as I can remember. My little brother and me got into mountain bikes in the early eighties. You couldn't really get any small frames for us then, even Zinns or Overburys were too big. I've always been around manufacturing, with my dad making his own motorbike trials frames, so I just decided to make frames for us with his help. I was about eleven at the time, and I've been doing it ever since.

### What is your background in bikes?

Started out in mountain bikes in the eighties. Doing everything, as was the norm then, XC, DH, even hill climbs. Then it seemed to get a bit too serious. It started being about what bike you had or what purple widget was on your cranks, so I started riding road and took up surfing. Then someone gave me an original PK Ripper albeit with a broken chainstay. One welding job later and I was in love with BMX. I have gotten back into MTB with the emergence of BSX. It reminds me of what was right with MTB.

### Can you tell us a bit about the TV Series frames/bikes?

Never ask a designer about his designs unless you are ready for a long answer... In short we set out to produce bikes that were

designed for the rider, not to make a profit. The whole concept behind the products was to design them to be the best with no corners being cut. No gimmicks, just frames that solve problems and keep the rider riding longer. With the BMX's we went light because I was fed up of seeing kids with bikes heavier than they were and with the trials bike I set out to make one that lasted longer than the rest. People seem to be satisfied so far but there is a lot more to do yet.

### What are the reasons for only producing bikes made from steel?

Catastrophic failure. Aluminium suffers from it and steel doesn't. You can see well beforehand if a steel frame is going to break or crack, but with an all one it just goes. I have been to too many races and seen people walking down the hill with unicycle front ends. I am not prepared to risk it, so I wouldn't make a product like it.

### It seems a little strange that a traditional and long established company such as Pashley would have the foresight, interest and passion to take onboard producing BMX and mountain bike frames. How did this come about?

It was a matter of coincidence really. I was designing work bikes at the time but was keen to utilise the skills of some of the workforce. I saw that we could make BMX's in a small volume and wanted to give it a go. Then Matt Tongue (trials rider) was working on the shop floor in his year out from education. We had a look at his trials frame and thought that we could definitely make something better. Nick (Larsen) was working on a logo to promote the website, which was a little cartoon TV. We put it all together and the TV Series was born.

**viewed at both BMX and mountain bike events?**  
All of the team are skilled, all-round bike riders, and they are really cool people to hang out with. I think that everyone that has met them will agree. Dylan (Clayton), Toby (Forte), Keri (Edgworth) and Eddy (Carr) enjoy racing MTB because it is a change after riding BMX for so many years. It is always fun when you are learning something new. People at the BMX events know the backgrounds of our riders and kind of expect the results that they get which applies a little more pressure. At MTB events they are still quite anonymous so they can go out and ride for fun without any expectations.


### What will Pashley be up to in 2002?

More shows, more products, more racing, more road trips, and for me more weekends on someone's hotel room floor.

### If there was one thing that you could change in mountain biking, what would it be?

The temporary BSX tracks built for shows that the public see, should forget about trying to make multiple lines. There is always a faster one that everyone goes for which makes a bottle neck and slows down the racing. This is fine on permanent tracks were they can be developed so that all of the lines are as fast as one another. On temporary ones just go for big doubles and berms etc., so that the emphasis is on the riders skills and not the tracks limitations. I think that this would make the spectating more exciting and be better for TV. In BMX I am not too down with little kids from the age of five only learning to ride a bike with clips (SPD pedals). I see a future of knee problems for our up and coming riders.

### Any thanks?

Thanks to my boss Adrian for putting up with me, and Mark and Michael who make my designs look so good. I'd like to thank Nick (Larsen) for all the work that he did on the TV Series while he was here, good luck with Gate Eight. The team for making the weekends so fun, and the team sponsors - DC, Land Rover, Nokian, Marzocchi and DMR. Everyone I ride with, Chico at 2&8, Gunner, Rikki, Gwerty, Adi, Muzza and Kez. And finally Miss Harris, she knows why... 

### All the frames are handmade in your Stratford upon Avon factory, can you give us a quick run through the process of producing a frame?

Firstly we get the tubes from Reynolds and inspect them. Then some go away to be bent and shaped. On their return they are set up in a milling machine and milled to fit together precisely. Then the tubes are transferred to the frame jig where Mark or Michael fit them and then TIG-weld them. The welds have to be done in a specific order to ensure that when the frame comes off of the jig it is perfectly straight. Then the braze-ons - cable lugs, etc - are silver-soldered on and the frame is checked, reamed and faced. Then they are shot-blasted to provide a good key for the paint. Then they are degreased and given two coats of powder coat. They are checked again and then transferred and boxed.

### Is there anything special that you are working on for 2002 that you can tell us about?

I've been working on the complete bikes for a while now, going through specs to make sure that they can be ridden hard straight out of the box. More components, and there might be a new frame next year that will surprise a few people. **Pashley are part of a new movement in British cycling: small, 'young', clued up companies producing mainly steel, hard tail jump and dual bikes. All have been heavily influenced by BMX. How do you feel to be part of this 'new wave'?** I think that we are leading the world right now in this aspect. It is nice to be able to go to the races and set up next to Revs (Revell Bikes), Fraser (24seven) and Tom (DMR) and all get on so well. It is like a little family at the races and we all help each other out. It feels good to be able to put a bit of fun into the sport and show the world how it's done.

### What are your views on the cross-over between BMX and mountain biking, Pashley more than most seem to be up for it?

We have always been about having fun on a bike rather than saying you have to have a BMX or a MTB. That was the main premise behind our 24" bike. It isn't a BMX or a MTB, just a fun bike.

### The whole of the Pashley race team is from a BMX background but they have all made the move to race both disciplines. How do you think the team is



The Land Rover hook up.



Dylan Clayton@Decoy BSX.



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