Editor’s Comment: Are the chickens coming home to roost?

It’s been a while since I last shared an opinion on CyclingIndustry.News – the last coming mid-February where I discussed the now well documented rise of the [mobile mechanic](http://www.cyclingindustry.news/editors-comment-how-mobile-mechanics-are-wooing-the-direct-to-consumer-brand/).

In my former role and with a monthly magazine deadline to meet, opinion came with some regularity, but often scribbled for exactly that reason, a deadline. The result? When the magazine thumped my desk it could be a hit or a miss depending largely on a formula of days in a month divided by tendency to spend half of that time doodling skatepark designs on a flatplan.

That’s not to say that without a print product to oversee at present I’ve become lazy. Sort of. There’s been no time for writer’s block with what has been a smile-inducing response to our launch into the B2B bike media landscape. Yet sharing my take on market movement has been put on the backburner. But not for the reasons you may think.

Admittedly not for the first time I’ve struggled to make sense of emerging trends in the market. In fact, the last time I’d been this reluctant to speak on industry goings on I was 19 years old and on a plane back from Taiwan having just completed my first international press trip. The main story I generated having toured the likes of Giant and Kenda was how later that evening I walked five miles for a pizza thanks to my fussiness of the local cuisine. Why? Simply I was 19, fresh out of college and surrounded by journos who had been documenting trade goings on for a far greater period of time. The month prior I had been shadowing a local court hack and yet here I was speaking to Tony Lo about Anti-Dumping and gawping open mouthed at the mesmerising spectacle that is the inner tubes before it becomes circular.

Near ten years later and I’m again struggling to quantify the information I’m taking in from around the globe. Rumours are rampant about what might be on the horizon. The bike business is changing, that’s a fact that no one who’s been here more than five minutes can deny. Never before have I written more headlines with the word acquisition featured. The same applies to model change, consolidation, adaptation and many other phrases that weren’t even half as prominent just a few years ago.

**What we do know**

(To keep you from tearing your hair out I’ve balanced the doom and gloom with some positives)

**Overstocked industry (negative)**

Bike retail is clogged with prior model year stock. Sitting on a pile of rapidly dating stock that is highly unlikely to return the margin you signed up for is not a good place to be, no matter how you spin it.

The effect of this: a bottleneck whereby suppliers are sitting on 2016 inventory that they’ll similarly struggle to shift. There’s some genuinely great product in the market this year and there’s also a lot of marketing gimmicks that the industry may just regret inventing for the sake of keeping it fresh. Both scenarios become irrelevant when you’ve no realistic means of getting consumers to sling a leg over.

**Electric bikes are beginning to move (positive)**

By all accounts and going by some stats I’ve seen of late, the outlook for the electric market is positive. One in Eight bikes sold in Germany are now pedal assist, while the UK saw a 300+% rise in imports of pedal assist vehicles in the past year (though we suspect there may be more to that story given a startlingly low average unit price).

What is evident form the past year in particular is that we’ve only scratched the surface of this market’s potential. Bikes are slicker by design, hide the eyesores better and are on the cusp of achieving some truly stunning innovations when it comes to boosting range, lowering weight and even bringing the price down.

Unrelated to cycling, but when a company like Britain’s Dyson [invests £1 billion](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/mar/21/dyson-to-invest-1bn-in-battery-technology-thanks-to-profit-surge) in the advancement of battery technology you can be sure that won’t go unnoticed. It’s surely just a matter of time before the main barriers to electric bike adoption – price and range per charge – are met head on with new tech breakthroughs.

**We can adapt**

<http://www.cyclingindustry.news/radial-cycles-partners-redbridge-cycling-centre-in-first-for-online-retail-1213/>

**Mobile Mechanics**

What we don’t know

With a reported 70% market share of components in the sports bike market – and an estimated 50% of the complete drivetrain market – Shimano has become essential to the bicycle industry.- http://cyclingiq.com/2016/04/07/shimano-the-aso-of-the-bicycle-industry/