Another one's come and gone; summer that is. At the time of this writing, there's already some of the white stuff in our extended forecast. Before we know it, the ground'll be covered and winter's cold, brutal quiet will settle in. While many trade two wheels for a warmer set of four, plenty of us will endure the coldest days to make the rest not seem so bad. But before we start focusing too far ahead, let's steal one last glance up at the rear-view and reflect on some of this past year's journeys and escapades. This issue of the Intelligencer is a celebration of some of those experiences and of taking any opportunity to get loaded up and escape for a while.
September is a busy time of year in Minneapolis. The humidity of summer is gone and everyone is trying to do as much fun shit as possible before the deep freeze sets in. That was the case for me one late-September weekend. On deck was: Twin Cities Zine Fest, Larbnest at the Hiawatha Bowl, an opening at the Vacvym Gallery, and probably tacos. Of course, I’d be getting to all these events by bike. Not because I’m some sort of hardcore ride-or-die bike nerd, but because I didn’t want to pay for parking.

First up was TCZF (Twin City Zine Fest) in downtown Minneapolis. I strapped the Porteur House bag to the front of the Pack Rat and headed out. This is the point where I should tell you how the Pack Rat is perfectly designed for this sort of riding because geometry and, yada, yada, but that shit goes over my head. What’s important is that it got me to where I wanted to go. I made my rounds at TCZF and found the folks I was there to see. Grant Kratzer, Emily Kratzer, and Dustin Williams; bad ass illustrators/designers for Kansas City. Dustin works at a print shop called Yahalla Studios, and Grant and Emily met on Instagram. I bought some zines, chatted for bit, and suggested some good dive bars before I left. On my way out I found some really cool Riso zines by Workpress in Champaign, OH. If you’re unfamiliar with Risography, it’s like screen printing had a baby with a Xerox machine. The zines end up looking like a comic book from the 80’s, but with brighter colors. For a print nerd like me, it’s like being a kid in a candy store. I bought three.
Once I got home, I replaced the Porteur House with my skateboard and 12 pack of cheap beer. With everything strapped down, I headed east to an undisclosed location known as the Hiawatha Bowl. The Hiawatha is skateboard wonderland created by Jammin' Jay Jenson; the Willie Wonka of ramp builders. You have to “know a guy” to get in, but this night they relaxed the rules for a blow-out skate jam in celebration of Larbfig (Larbfig involves skateboarding and thrash metal, just google it if you need more details). The beer flowed, the metal music blared, and elicit substances wafted through the air as we all skated. This is what the Satanic Panic was worried about. Needless to say, it was a lot of fun.

Last on the list was the Vacvvm Gallery opening. I headed up to NE Minneapolis, stopping at a taco truck along the way. The Vacvvm is a collection of incredibly talented artists like Brandon Holt, Teagan White, and Aaron Horkey. Most of the art was pretty dark with depictions of dead animals, skulls, demons, etc., so it was no surprise that I ran into a few other Surly employees there. I had enough time to check out the art and say hi to a few of the artists before they started shuffling folks out. I love meeting artists and designers because they never look or act like you would expect. For some reason, I imagined these folks to look like Danzig circa 1998, but they were closer to the cast of Freaks and Geeks.

Most of the way home was blurry (because I was wiped from skating, not from the alcohol; calm down). The bike went to its normal resting place in the basement and I went upstairs to pass out. There is a saying that “good design is invisible.” Meaning you don’t notice it until it causes you problems. That’s kind of how I feel about the Pack Rat. Whether it’s front loaded or not, I don’t have to worry about the bike getting squirrely in corners. When my mind may be wobbly, the bike was not. It rides like a bike. At the end of the day, what more could you want?
Sometimes the best experiences are those that occur far outside your comfort zone. That was the case for Domel and I earlier this year when we hatched a plan to do a bikepacking trip around Lake Tahoe on a pair of fully loaded 27.5+ ECRs. Between the two of us, we had a number of sub-24 hour overnights under our belts but had both been itching to get out for something longer. This was the perfect opportunity to finally scratch that itch.

We landed in Reno on a Monday afternoon and, after two hearty casino buffet meals and a decent night’s sleep, began pedaling early Tuesday morning. By the time we’d clocked our first ten miles, we were really hitting our stride. Reno was behind us and the pavement had ended a couple miles back. Our view was a seemingly endless ribbon of dirt with the snow-covered peak of Mt. Rose coxing us forward, taunting us for much of the day. We were surrounded by the beauty of the high desert: from the sparse yet stunningly vibrant flora to the deadly fauna.

Before long, our desert scenery gave way to skyscraper-esque pines with their grapefruit-sized cones coating the ground. The trail continued to climb, eventually breaking into a cavernous valley that gave us our first big vista of the area. We pressed on, taking breaks when we needed and seeking refuge in whatever shade we could find. After several grueling miles up an abandoned highway bed and a couple other incredibly steep dirt roads, we found ourselves in an empty campground where we set up for the night.
The next couple days weren't without their challenges. We had to reroute on day two after receiving some intel about impassable trail conditions ahead. And right as we were about to get to our camp spot for the night on day three, the trail dead ended.

Into a fucking river.
Twice.

These types of hurdles are par for the course on a trip like this so we remained generally in good spirits as we overcame them. Our fourth day was a slightly different story, though.

It began like all the rest had: quick breakfast and coffee, tear down camp, and hit the road. About half a mile in, things got... difficult, as we turned off the pavement and onto the gnarliest jeep trail I've ever seen. Unbeknownst to us, the trail was actually closed because last winter's massive snowfall damaged the trail to where even jeeps couldn't traverse it. As we continued pushing our gear-laden bikes over boulders, it started to dawn on us this was going to be a long day. We'd hike our bikes up and over boulder-covered climbs, and then carefully maneuver them down the other side.

Rinse. Repeat.
For hours on end.
Ten and a half hours to be exact.

In all that time, we only made it about ten miles. We finally arrived at a campground, only to be turned away by the unwelcoming camp hosts because the it was “full”. Luckily, we found kindness in some folks who shared their campsite, food, and Coors Banquet with us. As we were sitting around the campfire chatting with them, we learned that we had 17 miles of exactly the type of terrain we'd just endured ahead of us - about two full days of hike-a-bike.

No thanks.

One of our new friends offered to give us a ride back to the south side of the lake the next morning. From there, we could take the road and some paved trails that ran alongside the water the rest of the way. While 49 miles of pavement wasn't exactly what we were hoping for at the beginning of this trip, when weighed against the alternative, it was the obvious better choice.

We loaded our bikes up in his minivan and before we knew it we were back in South Lake Tahoe, with only about four hours of riding separating us and our destination of Northstar California Resort in Truckee, CA. That fifth and final day was pretty smooth sailing with only a couple big climbs that were immediately rewarded with fast descents.

As we began our final descent towards Northstar, I started reflecting back on the past few days. Less than 24 hours earlier, I didn't think we'd ever reach Northstar much less arrive by bike. And yet, here we were. By being flexible with our route and schedule and ultimately, throwing all pre-determined expectations out the window, we were able to achieve the goal we set out to accomplish - albeit through slightly different means. It's hard to express the sense of accomplishment I felt when we finally glimpsed the resort sign.

We had arrived.

*This is a highly abridged version of events. For a more detailed telling of the story and to see our route, search for “The Long Way Round” on surlybikes.com.
Last July, I took a trip to Alaska to meet up with Kim McNett and Bjorn Olson who were wrapping up a kayak trip navigating the Kenai peninsula. Daniel of Defiance Frameworks, musician Ben Weaver, and I met up with Kim and Bjorn after the sea portion of their trip to ride and packraft from Seward back to Homer.

We took off late in the afternoon from Seward and rode into the Chugach National Forest. The riding was slow going and dense. Our map showed a cabin. It took a river crossing and countless bear and moose tracks to find it, tucked away and surrounded by fresh berries. Exhausted silence fell as we stained our fingers purple, eagerly filling our mouths. With no darkness, my body was confused.

We left the cabin in the afternoon after a lazy morning. We were soon slowly pushing through thick overgrown forest. We ferried our gear across another river crossing. We bushwacked through several downed trees and thick Devil's club to join back up with our trail. Bjorn's saddle and one of his pedals called it quits in the scramble. The rest of us eyed our gear cautiously. We exited the brush, riding dotted two track which eventually blurred into a solitary line in the ground, set too deep to pedal a full rotation. The flies were thick and biting. After kick-pushing and riding alongside the rutted single-track, we left the primitive trail and were on an open gravel road. A fast descent dumped us into a small campsite where we called it a day.

The next morning, we pedaled into Cooper Landing and decided to delay a bit so Bjorn could replace his pedal and find a saddle that still had a nose stuck to it. While he dealt with that, we napped, traded stories and took the rafts out. We stayed put for the night at the edge of HWY 1. The cars didn't sound much like waves, but I tried to convince myself anyway.

We loaded up the rafts the next morning and took off, putting in some eddy practice under bridges as we went. I was, by far, the least experienced paddler in the group so I tried to absorb as many tips as I could during this short paddle section. I knew the days ahead would be much longer.
Midday, we packed the rafts back onto the bikes before an energized, hilly gravel pedal into a campground on Skilak Lake where we tucked away for the night.

We crossed Skilak in the morning and navigated our way onto the Kenai River. The river was fairly mellow with small rapids and the occasional boulder to dodge. The water was lined like streets on parade day with folks of every sort wearing suspended pants that came up to their nipples — fishing season. Floating on brightly colored inflatable boats with fat bikes strapped to them, we were still the odd ones. We found an oversold campground near Soldotna.

In the morning, we pointed towards Kenai, to finish the paddle with some swift water, white tips, and boulder obstacles. We pulled out at a bridge access and made our way towards the beach, the sun beating us down. We waited for the tide to go down at a local roadhouse with plenty of plastic bottle whisky, cold PBRs and fishing talk. We ended the day by riding to Kaslo Beach where a dip-netting tent village spread itself wide across the sand.

After breakfast, we paddled across the river mouth between dip netters before beginning a day of hot beach riding — long grinding miles past fishing shacks on mostly smooth packed sand. A beachside waterfall location was the perfect location to make camp at for the night.

Onward we pointed to Diamond Gulch, where a welcoming crew met us with provisions and high-fives. We swapped stories around the fire until wind and rain drove us into our tents. We had single digit mileage to Homer, and it was sinking in that the trip had come to a close. A good mix of known and unknown, some physical and mental pushing and some of the best folks you could hope for. I'm already scheming to get back. I hear that Homer Cycling Club puts on one heck of a Big Fat Bike Fest...
A couple years back, a very large, handwritten letter was delivered to Surly HQ. It was from someone named Levi who was planning on opening a new bike shop in Edgewater, CO that would carry Surly and Surly alone.

He spoke of complete size runs along with showing additional fully customized Surlys on the floor. We were intrigued to say the least. Accompanying the letter was a drawing of a squirrel playing a banjo, which we could only assume was a self-portrait. We figured if this little guy could overcome the evolutionary lack of opposable thumbs and learn to play that banjo, then he could also probably run a hell of a bike shop.

Past forward to the now and Levi and the crew at YAWP! Cyclery have really become like a part of the family. And as it turns out, Levi is in fact not a squirrel but a real-life humanoid — something that came as quite a shock when we first met him in the flesh.

Some bicycle shops are like car dealerships: squeezy-clean, decidedly "pro" and full of expensive shit. Some bicycle shops are like Milwaukee bars: old school, full of history and frequented by drunks. And some shops are just entirely their own thing... like YAWP! Levi is about as unique a bike shop owner as I’ve ever met. He’s exceptionally introverted, but you quickly learn not to mistake his long silent pauses as disinterest or shellfishness, he’s actually weighing out his thoughts carefully and considering your point of view. This is what sets his business apart from so many — a deliberate and painstaking sense of care and honesty goes into everything that happens there. This is why he and his crew understand Surly so well. Each year since YAWP! opened I have had the distinct pleasure of joining them for an event we call “Bikepack Against the Machine”. We bike, we camp, we revel in the wonder of the mountains. We not only celebrate our partnership and all things Surly but we help remind each other of why we are in this business to begin with: to have fun with free-spirited individuals, outside, on two wheels. Thank you for helping me remember that, Levi.

Dear Surly,

I'm planning to open a bicycle shop in Denver this coming spring. For the foreseeable future, Surly will be the only bike brand I carry. That said, I have a B Plan and an A Plan, but in order for me to put the A Plan into place, I need something from you: one-year terms.

I own a stock Surly, and it was the best bike I'd ever owned until I built a couple of Surlys from the ground up. They are the best bikes I've ridden. You can find me in Fort Mac's parking lot at Anchor Point every Sunday in September. Our bikes are different from all the others I've ridden in two important ways: they've changed the way I think about cycling and the way I like my bike. I am continually challenged by my contention that your bikes are superior, but that remains my contention.

I spent almost six years working at Cannondale,

I understand that retailers need in-store Surlys, and I can see customers who are looking for Surlys but don't know it. I want lives to be transformed by bikes, and your bikes can do it. I can help.

Thanks for your time and thanks for making something that’s worth selling.

Trevor
The Trail: I was familiar with the CT route and knew it was challenging but had never done any detailed research. My friends were planning to ride the entire length from Denver to Durango over two weeks. I joined them for a week and paced off at Buena Vista. The total mileage for the route was 590 miles and primarily consists of single track with some dirt road detours around an occasional Wilderness area. The trails are high, steep and technical. Just how they should be. The biggest challenge for me was the altitude and length of climbs. The reward was the long endless singletrack downhills. We were also treated with remote camp spots and expansive mountain views surrounded by 14,000 foot peaks.

My Companions: Zach Shriver, Cass Gilbert and Michael Dammer are all strong riders and experienced bikepackers. Our group had similar expectations going into the trip: ride all day and take plenty of breaks along the way to rest, refuel, and absorb the amazing views. Stops for ice cold dips in lakes and streams to wash off the sweat and grime were frequent and refreshing. We shared shelters, stoves, and cookware to reduce equipment. I was thankful that Zach carried our Black Diamond tent. I felt a little guilty until I repeatedly watched him ride away from me on the long endless climbs. I lagged the group most days on the climbs, but was able to still stick with them on the descents. It was quite exhilarating riding the long downhills in a pack as we were all very compatible descending. Our first stop when arriving into resupply towns was always a brewery to recharge our bodies and gadgets. The conversations were always engaging and usually revolved around gear, food, bikes, or past trips.

The ingredients for an epic bikepacking trip combine like a great recipe. You need the right mix of trails, companions, gear, clothing, and a proper attitude. I recently snuck away on a trip with just the right mix that resulted in a scrumptious getaway. After receiving an email from my friend Michael Dammer inviting me to join him on the Colorado Trail, I replied with a definitive yes. Then I started scrambling to figure out how to make it happen.
Gear: My trail weapon of choice was the newly updated Krampus with a Manitou Machete front fork. The wheels require a little extra effort to wind up, but once they're rolling, they go over shit like a bus. The 29x3" Dirt Wizards were designed for this trail. They grabbed roots and rocks on the climbs and hooked up in the loose corners and lumpy descents. For gear receptacles, I went with a Surly Revelate frame bag, Revelate Viscacha seat bag and two feed bags on the stem. I also carried a small Salomon backpack for food resupply. This combination worked well to carry all the essentials. I utilized two Loop Style Junk straps to secure my sleeping bag and small clothing bag to the Moloko bars. I brought MSR Aquatabs for water treatment and carried a one liter Nalgene bottle and a 36 oz. water bottle. Cass, Michael and I went on breakfast and dinners using shared pots and Trangia alcohol stoves. We were on our own for lunches and snacks during the day. Michael brought tasty bags of dehydrated fruits and veggies from his organic farm in Ecuador for our cooked meals. Breakfast usually started with coffee or tea and followed by hot porridge made with oats, polenta, dried fruit, coconut butter and honey. A noodle soup with veggies was usually our first course for dinner. The main course was usually a rice dish with veggies and maybe some tuna added.

Clothing: The temperature range was wide and ranged from 30's to 80's so I packed multiple layers. My pack included one pair of thick tall wool and a pair of lightweight wool socks, two pair of Ibex wool boxes, Ibex wool long underwear bottoms, over shorts, knickers, short sleeve light weight Surly jersey, Ibex short sleeve base layer, Surly long sleeve raglan, Patagonia Nano air jacket, rain jacket, two pair of gloves and hiking boots. I wore all the clothes at least once time during the ride.

There were many highlights on this trip that are challenging to put into words because they never fully express the experience in the moment. The one thing I enjoyed the most was the escape from the day to day grind. A week out in the mountains away from society and technology was the most rewarding aspect of the trip. Sometimes when an opportunity arises, you need to commit first and figure out the details later.

This trip was one of those I will never regret.
Ditching the printed Surly catalog in 2015 was a tough decision. In the end, it was just too damn hard keeping a printed catalog up to date with bikes and specs. The Surly catalog was more than just a list of products, though. It was a peek into our collective consciousness. The writing, cover art, and design were all distinctly Surly. We decided to look back to our DIY roots and fill the catalog-sized void with a zine highlighting all the rad people we know, the fun shit we do, and the random stuff that interests us. Thus, the Intelligencer was born.
Making the Surly Intelligencer is a highly analog process just like the Xerox punk zines from back in the day. Glue sticks, markers, X-acto knives, and a copy machine work in harmony to create this 32-page shit-show. At first, we even typed out all the articles on a typewriter, but that was kind of a pain in the ass and folks around the office weren’t too stoked on the sound of pounding keys. We do our best to avoid working on computers until it’s time to scan everything in and send it to the printer.

As is customary in the Zine community we are down to trade. Show us yours and we’ll show you ours.

Surly Bikes
Att: Peanut
6400 W. 105th St
Bloomington MN, 55438
WHAT HAPPENS IN THE DESERT

Most of you probably recognize Trevor since his job here at Surly is to drive around visiting our dealers in the western half of these United States to talk about bikes and put on demo events. One trip he looks forward to—and we’re all a little envious of—is his annual trip to the deserts of the southwest. To be honest, we’re not entirely sure what exactly Trevor does when he’s out in the desert and every time we ask he just throws a Mad Max VHS at us and screams “Welcome to the Thunderdome, sh*tburgers!” It’s kind of endearing once you get past the fear.

On his most recent desert excursion, Trevor partook in The Great Cowtown Campout: Vol. III with our friends over at Ordinary Bikes. It’s a pretty unique annual overnight event in that the destination is a cowtown about 40 or so miles outside of Tucson, AZ. You should definitely look into it if you live in the area.

Here’s how Trevor says this year’s edition went down:

“The day started a bit “foggy” to say the least after back to back late-night shop hangouts in Tempe and Scottsdale. So, getting motivated to ride 40+ grueling miles on/off road on a loaded-up mountain bike was, let’s say, challenging. But we pulled it together with a trip to the co-op, Mexican cokes and a few Modelos. It was probably 4pm by the time we rolled out of Ordinary’s parking lot. About 50 brave souls in tow on a rather hot and sunny day. We had riders from all walks of life, levels of experience, types of bikes, genders, age and whathaveyou. It couldn’t be any more of a welcoming, “run whatcha brung” and let your freak flag fly free sort of event.

We didn’t arrive at Keeylocko until well after dark and everyone who got there early was already partying pretty hard. Karaoke was blasting from the saloon, pulled pork was smoking and everybody was just stoked to be done riding and have beers in their hands. Ed Keeylocko himself was there which was a real treat for sure. The nighttime fire jumping and race was very entertaining for sure, but the real deal was happening in the saloon when I went in for last call. A 6’9” denim clad cowboy was rapping with two homies doing backup... You just can’t make this shit up.
Some folks got rides back in morning due to unfathomable hangovers, lack of sleep or just unable to wrap their brains around how hard the ride back was going to be. I, along with a rag tag group of intrepid adventurers made the ride back via dirt roads, freeway shoulders and sandy ATV trails. We celebrated with beers and stories at a pub a block away from Ordinay before limping back to our beds to process the past 24 hours.

There were two “winners” of the weekend. One young try-hard “won” the Cowtown midnight cycling classic and went home with a Tin of Mystery full of body hair. The real winner though, was Cassandra who did the whole 66-mile ordeal in a stylish dress, camped, partied hard and destroyed the karaoke all on a clapped-out 80s mountain bike. On the way back into town, I rode up next to her and told her she’d won a new Surly frame. She chose an XS ECR.

“This event definitely set the bar pretty high for an inclusive mixed surface touring/party/campout. Just wow.”

“If you’re unfamiliar with Ed Keylocko, look him up immediately. He’s a fascinating individual and a goddamn American treasure.
INTRODUCING THE
PACK RAT

The Pack Rat is our newest offspring and is designed around our favorite way to haul shit via two wheels: on the front. Why would someone want to strap a bunch of crap to the front of their bike? Glad you asked.

Having your stuff in front of you means it's close at hand, easily accessible and allows for better weight distribution. If you're like us, you've probably poorly packed a single pannier too full only to bounce your skull off the pavement going around a sketchy turn. Those types of mishaps can generally be avoided with a front load.

The problem with many front-loaded bikes, though, is the way they steer: The weight pulls you through turns in an awkward sort of way as if the load is doing the steering and you don't even have control over your own life anymore. But not the Pack Rat. We fixed that problem so you can front load and have the outer appearance of a person who is in control. The complete bike comes with a 24-Pack Rack and the fork has internal routing for a generator hub. You can find all the other tasty details on our website.

Go on. Get Loaded.

SURLYBIKES.COM

INTelligencer
MIXTAPE #6

1. Perk Badger
Do your stuff
2. Devo
Gates of Steel
3. Ho9990
City Rejects
4. Steve Earle & The Del McCourty Band
Texas Eagle
5. Altarage
Spearheaderson
6. Real Life
Send Me An Angel
7. John Prine
In Spite of Ourselves
8. Frank Zappa
Trouble Everyday
9. Andrew Jackson Jihad
Inner City Basehead
History Teacher
10. Morphine
Thursday
11. Billie Strings
Dust in a Baggie
12. False
Anhedonia
13. Horisont
About Time
14. JLP
Never
15. Pissed Jeans
Bathroom Laughter
16. Dave Matthews Band
Tripping Billies
17. Mutoid Mad
War Moans
18. Faces
That's all you need
19. Deftones
You've Seen the Butcher
20. Soy Xo
Bomba Estéreo
MISSING

SO LONG SOV!

Keep bein' a weirdo but don't be a stranger. We'll always have some cheeseballs on hand for ya.