

Maddog Unleashed

Ain't But One Way Out, Baby—Lord, I Just Can't Go Out the Door

When your bird is broken

Will it bring you down?—The Beatles, "And Your Bird Can Sing," from "Revolver"



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Be careful what you wish for, as the saying goes. You might just get it. I certainly did.

After a short but bitter cold spell in late fall I was complaining that if I had to be freezing my ample ass off, I'd like some nice, deep snow to do my shivering in.

So we got some, and I crashed on it, and when our traditionally pleasant Colorado fall weather returned I was nursing a dislocated and splinted bird finger on our Giant Tempo trainer, watching glumly through the living-room windows as those less clumsy than I rode actual bicycles in the sunshine.

Then we got even more snow, with a weeklong stretch of single-digit and sub-zero temps to keep it company, and my long Tempo rides to nowhere were augmented with one-handed snow-shovel repeats.

One day I saw a guy skate-skiing up our street, sans poles.

"That looks like fun," I thought. Then I thought about how well I skate-ski, and how many fingers I have yet to dislocate (eight). And I clambered back aboard the Tempo, fan and iPod both cranked to 11.

Lord, I Was Born a Ramblin' Man. This long stretch of indoor cycling reminded me of the bad old days spent atop a windswept rockpile outside Westcliffe, Colorado, where Herself and I passed many a wintry day huddled in our bearskins by a red-hot woodstove, sipping whisky from Camelbaks, our fingers buried in the ample guts of a freshly killed trophy homer to prevent frostbite.

It was there, in 2002, that I decreed the best "Symphony for Wind Trainer" ever scored was The Allman Brothers Band's "A Decade of Hits: 1969-1979."

I wrote then that it was basically an hourlong interval workout, "from the high-cadence warm-up of 'Statesboro Blues' through the brutal seven minutes of 'Jessica' to the leg-breaking pinnacle, 'One Way Out.' 'Midnight Rider,' 'Melissa' and 'Blue Sky' provide recovery between efforts. And what better way to wind up a ride to nowhere than with 'Whipping Post,' the final tune on the CD? 'Good Lord, I feel like I'm dyin.'"

Tryin' to Make a Living and Doin' the Best I Can. Naturally, when I first got back on the trainer I called upon my old pals Gregg, Dickey and Duane for inspiration. But when I blogged about it, and posted the original column lauding the CD, I was quickly called to account by my small, deeply disturbed fan base.

A New Mexico lab rat preferred Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Rossini (didn't they used to open for Crosby, Stills and Nash?). A Chicago librarian weighed in for Spirit, the old Randy California-Ed Cassidy outfit. A Colorado geologist pushed Frank Zappa (and just in time for Zappadan, too).

The Who had more than one proponent, as did the Stones. And one musicologist weighed in with a 50-song playlist that covered a sizable cross-section of rock 'n' roll history—Beatles and Byrds, Cranberries and Cream, Steely Dan and Steve Earle, Gin Blossoms and Jethro Tull. You ever see me spending that much time on the trainer, it's because the oil-based economy has finally collapsed and I'm trying to generate enough electricity to boil a pot of beans.

Perhaps the best recommendation came from a fellow wiseass who suggested cycling to John Cage's "4'33'." It's a favorite of mine, to be sure, but I only listen to it when I'm riding outdoors.

I can't wait to hear it again.