

**COOL BUILDER**

**SOULCRAFT BIKES**



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**OWNER:** Matt Nyiri (l) and Sean Walling (r)

**MOUNTAIN BIKE: How did Soulcraft get started?**

**Sean Walling:** Matt and I were both Salsa employees. I was with Salsa for 10 years and Bruce Gordon (where I did a variety of preparation work) for a year before that. By the end of my time with Salsa, I was the main framebuilder. It was just me and a welder.

**MB: Some readers may not be familiar with**

**Soulcraft. What kind of frames do you make?**

**SW:** We make mountain hardtails, single-speeds, road, 'cross and full-suspension bikes based on the Titus/AMP design. Oh, and road fixed gear—not track bikes, but road bikes designed for fixed gear. We're actually selling a lot more road bikes this year, but we sell a lot of mountain hardtails and 'cross bikes, too.

**MB: What materials do you use? Steel, mainly?**

**SW:** Steel, definitely. But I'm not the kind of framebuilder who talks down other materials. Full suspension, for instance—you've got to be really careful with extra material when you use steel, so aluminum can be good. I'm a little hesitant to get into other materials mainly because of the reaction from steel enthusiasts, but I'd probably do aluminum next. Titanium is a different issue. What can I contribute? Would I do something better than Ibis or Seven or Merlin?

**MB: So what do you bring to the table in steel that's special or different?**

**SW:** Good design and good execution. Our bikes handle! They're business-like—no fluff, no S-bend stays, nothing for the show-off. They just work. Our bikes are biased toward agility and durability. This is basically the same bike I wanted to offer at Salsa, updated based on what I learned there with the Ala Carte. We also make a bike called the "Title 9." It's our cut at a women-specific design. We do them a little different, but we think they make sense. We feature two-coat powder coats, but we can do custom powder coats (and custom geometry), too. We talk a lot to our customers to try to find out what they like or how their favorite bike fits them. We can measure them here or tell them how to do it over the phone. Our frames are \$1,050 for a standard design and \$1,200+ for a custom. They take three to six weeks for delivery.

*by John Olsen*