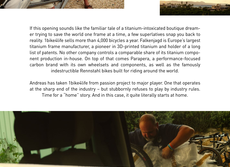
TEXT: FRAPPIN PHOTO: MOTOREVIVER

Falkenpagel, Rennstall. Words like forpost steel – hard, precise, unmistakably German. It's the first Sunday of Advent. Motorreviver.com MIs are taking over the windscreen. Photographers, journalists and the three Mercedes 300 SLs. Mr. Ulrich Schaller, the owner of the Rennstall, has invited us to a glamorous "Ladies and Gentlemen Campagnolo T-shirt, shorts, Not very German for December." It was warm and "wet where," he says, half apologetic, as we stop in front of a yellow house above a very blue sea. Tomorrow, he'll lower left the sea. Welcome to Cyprus.

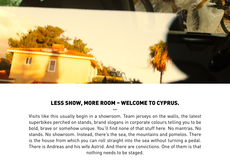
Cyprus has been home to Andreas, his wife Astrid and the brands Falkenpagel, Parapera and Rennstall since 2021. Together, they form Tilskeiklik. A blur lip – Tilskeiklik is Cypriot for "Tilskeiklik." Tilskeiklik is a family affair. Andreas's parents helped the way. From the moment Andreas pucks me up at the airport, I get the feeling this trip might be about more than just the wall thickness of bulled tubes. Andreas has a message. What exactly that message is, I can't quite pin down yet. Perhaps he cannot either.



Andreas, Astrid and the kids – Tilskeiklik is very much a family affair.

If this opening sounds like the familiar tale of a titanium-intoxicated boutique dreamer trying to save the world one frame at a time, a few superlatives snap you back to reality. Tilskeiklik sells more than 4,000 bicycles a year. Falkenpagel, Europe's largest titanium frame manufacturer, a pioneer in 3D-printed titanium and holder of a long list of patents and a long-standing partnership with Lamborghini. Parapera, a composite company based in house. Six tip of that comes Parapera, a performance-focused carbon brand with its own wheelsets and components, as well as the internationally celebrated bikes built to that end by around the world.

Andreas has taken Tilskeiklik from passion project to major player. One that operates at the sharp end of the industry – but stubbornly refuses to play by industry rules. Time for a "home" story. And in this case, it quite literally starts at home.



LESS SHOW, MORE ROOM – WELCOME TO CYPRUS.

Walls like this usually begin in a showroom. Team jerseys on the walls, the latest superbike parked on stands, brand slogans in corporate colours telling you to be bold, brave or somehow unique. You'll find none of that stuff here. No mantras. No stands. No showroom. Instead, there's the sea, the mountains and potatoes. There is the house from which you can roll straight into the sea without turning a pedal. There is Andreas and his wife Astrid. There are his parents. One of them is their cooking needs to be larger.

The closest thing to a display is the bike rack outside the house. Around ten bikes dangle beneath an olive tree. Carbon. Titanium. Gravel. Road. MTB. The concentration of Campagnolo Super Record groupsets is striking. I do a quick calculation and arrive at roughly € 70,000. Dusty € 70,000. These bikes get ridden. When they aren't, they hang here. And if someone wanted to steal them? They can. But nobody is going to.

Over the next few days, we will talk a lot about bikes. About what a bike is and what it may become. About loads and limits, stress peaks and strain. About the move to Cyprus. About cable routing and citrus trees. About where all of this could lead. And, inevitably, about where it all began.

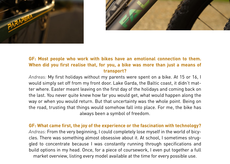
GF: Most people who work with bikes have an emotional connection to them. When did you first realize that, for you, a bike was more than just a means of transportation?

Andreas: My first holidays without my parents were spent on a bike. At 15 or 16, I would simply set off from my front door. Lake Garda, the Baltic coast, it didn't matter. Easter meant lowering on the first day of the holidays and coming back on the last. You never quite knew how far you would get, what would happen along the way or when you would return. But that uncertainty was the whole point. Being on the road, trusting that things would somehow fall into place. For me, the bike has always been a symbol of freedom.

GF: What came first, the joy of the experience or the fascination with technology?

Andreas: From the very beginning, I could completely lose myself in the world of bicycles. There was something almost obsessive about it. At school, I sometimes struggled to concentrate because I was constantly running through specifications and build options in my head. Once, for a piece of coursework, I even put together a full market overview, listing every model available at the time for every possible use.

„OF THAT BIKE DOES NOT EXIST, I'LL MAKE TO BUILD IT MYSELF."



GF: Because it would be worth a small fortune today, or because you lost something important back then?

Andreas: When it was discontinued, I was devastated. Nothing else like it. The geometry, the cable routing, everything was exactly how I thought it should be. The cables ran cleanly, without compromises. Elegant. Functional. And once it was gone, I realized I could not get back what I was really looking for. That was the moment I thought: If that bike does not exist, I'll have to build it myself.

GF: You then started developing titanium MTB frames and having them welded in small numbers, initially for family and friends. When did you ever think it might turn into something big?

Andreas: Not for a second. I just wanted to build the bikes I wanted to ride. That's still my motivation today. I build bikes the way I would build them for myself – not Astrid, or for my kids. And if someone else wants that bike, I am happy.

GF: In 2000, you and Astrid founded Tilskeiklik. Was there anyone you looked at and thought, they are doing this right?

Andreas: I was reminded of something recently. I must have been 17 or 18 when I met a mechanic who had built a bike for a friend of his father. He has figured it out. He braced his first frames himself, then moved to California. Good weather. Swimming. Mountain biking. He designs the bikes, has them built by people who really know what they are doing, and lives exactly the life he wants.

Only recently did that thought come back to me. And that is when I realised that, in a strange way, I am exactly where I wanted to be back then. I get to do something that fulfils me and that I genuinely enjoy. Thinking about bikes, talking about them, developing them, questioning them and, occasionally, probably, going a little bit mad in the process.

What Andreas calls madness turns out to be a highly productive version of it. Every bike shimmering in matte titanium beneath the olive tree has sprung from Andreas' drawing board. And, according to him, every single one of them makes sense.

The result of this constructive consistency, or productive madness if you prefer, is a frankly intimidating range of models. The Falkenpagel portfolio alone includes more than 30 options, all waiting to be configured into a personal titanium dream bike. Almost everything with drop bars goes by the name Arinos. Only true aficionados can decode the cryptic suffixes T, S, SL, DT, GTR, RS or RSR. These are our specialists, but entirely functional bicycles. Bikes that have accompanied their owners on the kind of journeys believed to a specific purpose. And if, after a few hours of studying the Arinos family tree, you feel ready to win at titanium tube-set bingo, be warned: the game starts all over again with the Hopil hardtail MTB.

The same complexity carries over to the carbon sister brand Parapera, where Andreas has added a few linguistic hairpins on the road to the perfect bike match. Almos, Aeninos, Ovinos, Ovinos Aeninos, Almos Aeninos, Almos Ovinos, Aeninos Ovinos. Andreas is keeping plenty of time and a glass of retsina might help untangle the mental knot. Or you could visit the Tilskeiklik test centre in Maroki. Because in Andreas' mind, a bike deserves to be touched, ridden and understood before it becomes a companion for life.

For any product manager or production planner, this mammoth portfolio would be an economic nightmare. Andreas contemplating each other: capital tied up in small production runs, hardly any economies of scale. Thankfully, there is no product manager and no production planner. Or rather, Andreas is all of them rolled into one. And more often than not, the bike builder Andreas overrules the production planner Andreas.

And the product manager Andreas? He barely gets a word in. Word of mouth is Andreas' primary Marketing? "Not that important," Sponsorship? "Why?" Trade shows? "I feel like a monkey in a cage," says bike-builder Andreas, who he occupies a highly enormous share viper out of the hibiscus and carefully carries it into the neighbouring orange grove.

GF: A lot of brands are very loud, very bold, very aggressive. Compared to that, your approach feels almost quiet and contemplative. Is that a conscious decision?

Andreas: No. We are very deliberately not sales-driven. Our website is text heavy. It takes time. There is no "buy now" yelling at you. If you engage with it, you do so consciously. And that fits our bikes perfectly. They are not short-term consumer goods, but an expression of freedom, attitude and a certain timelessness.

GF: What makes a good frame in your opinion?

Andreas: It's a question of balance. Titanium is lightweight and strong. A good frame can take forces through carefully shaped structures, distribute them and absorb them. It has to be stress peaks as possible. Titanium is also very forgiving. It rebounds, offers more compliance and, in the end, makes it more durable. That is exactly what many people mean when they talk about steel or titanium frames and say, "the frame feels alive". When they are describing is a frame that can give when it needs to, and be stiff when it has to be, for example under power.

GF: I counted them up. Across all your brands, you have around 80 models and variants. If you were only allowed to ride one bike, which would they be?

Andreas: In the MTB world, it's very clearly the Hopil. 80 for the right tree. Even though hardtail MTBs are having a tough time in the market, I am completely convinced by the concept and I believe they will come back. On the road side, the Parapera Almos Masterpiece gives me a huge amount of joy as a performance-focused race bike. And on a personal level, the very first Falkenpagel Arinos RS titanium road bike was a real milestone for me.

„BIKES LIKE THESE DON'T START WITH STRATEGY, BUT WITH AN INNER QUESTION: WHAT IS TECHNOLOGICALLY POSSIBLE?"

GF: Titanium has always carried a sense of exclusivity. You yourself described it as Olympus. With the Arinos GT, you have at least left Olympus in pricing terms. How do you make a titanium bike affordable?

Andreas: For Falkenpagel, the Arinos CR was hugely influential even before the GT. The CR was one of the first Falkenpagel frames produced in Taiwan. It was a bike that combined everything with drop bars, triple butting, rack mounts, a carbon fork. A tourer bike. But it also came with a price tag well north of € 6,000.

With the Arinos GT, we made a very conscious move towards the mainstream. A carbon fork instead of titanium, a simpler tube set, double-butted rather than triple-butted. Slightly more complex, conically shaped tubes, but uniform diameters with targeted forming where it matters. Power hydroformed lugs. The end result is a bike that is around 30 per cent cheaper to produce, without losing substance or quality. Added to that are symmetry and economies of scale.

GF: At the other end of the price spectrum sit bikes like the Parapera Aeonos/ Ti Masterpiece with titanium lugs, or the fully 3D-printed Falkenpagel Omega.

Andreas: Bikes like these do not start with strategy, but with an inner question: what is technically possible? Production numbers are secondary. Yes, and for me personally, production numbers are not the point.

The latest titanium tech demonstrator greets me, casually leaning against the television in the Kirschner family's living room. It's a new Arinos road frame that blends 3D-printed lugs with the classic virtues of traditional frametubing. Elegantly butted tubes, a beautifully shaped seatpost clamp, clean, flowing lines. The whole thing is rounded off with a forged titanium crankset, a titanium fork and a titanium stem that nudges all cables internally into the frame.

„Shame I'm not allowed to take any photos," I say.

„Well, the bike hasn't been officially launched yet."

„Nonsense," Andreas replies. "If it's finished, it's finished. Then we can show it."

„Why not?" Andreas asks.

ISLAND INSTINCT – SINCE 2021.
TIBIKELFLE HAVE BEEN DEVELOPING FRAMES IN CYPRUS

Frames made in Asia. Assembly in Greece and Munich. Company headquarters in Cyprus. Despite this globally scattered setup, Tilskeiklik have somehow remained remarkably agile. Frames can be developed, prototyped and produced in a few three-sided sans handle sash, IT and keep the assembly side running smoothly. And Andreas? He designs frames, keeps production moving, invests in 3D-printing technology, sorts out financing, negotiates with suppliers and signs off contracts. Jobs that, in most companies, would be spread across several departments.

That morning, while I'm still trying to make sense of Campagnolo's shifting logic, Andreas is on the phone with Taiwan. He's trying to get a production manager back working on a seven year old customer bike. The customer has written to Andreas directly. Day-to-day, Andreas juggles up to eight jobs at once. Some days, he can't find a single one.

Should the CEO of a company selling around 4,000 bikes a year be personally dealing with a gearbox issue on a bike that has long been out of warranty? Probably not. But if you build bikes the way you would want to ride them yourself, these problems tend to feel personal too. Letting things simply bounce off him is not really Andreas' style.

PURPOSE DRIVEN CYCLING

AN ISLAND GIFT TO ARLKEN WOOD, VENTURA & CO.

Later, I suggest reassigning the Campa shifter buttons. Andreas is immediately on board. Had I known that this enthusiasm would nearly cost us dinner, with firmware updates here and app updates there, I'd have kept my mouth shut. Andreas: *Ein bisschen Geduld, bitte.* — *A bit longer.*

If there's a problem to solve, Andreas wants it solved now, and there in the landscape he shows us is his head. And keeps him there.

GF: Why is titanium, as a material, so fascinating to you that you have devoted almost your entire life as a frame builder to it?

Andreas: A titanium frame has the same material properties after 20 years as it had on day one. That's where titanium fundamentally differs from almost every other material we use in our industry. Titanium is the only thing that I can guarantee you, whether that is temperature swings, UV exposure, or salt or moisture, that a piece, part of a piece, a 20-year titanium frame is just as good as a new one. There is no moment where you have to say this frame is now reaching the end of its life.

GF: Stripped back to construction, what are the fundamental requirements to obtain the ultimate performance from a bicycle?

Andreas: Basically, there are three routes you can take. You either build a classic welded frame from drawn tubes. Or you use 3D-printed junctions and combine them with tubes, which is what we do on many of our models. The third option, like with the Origin, is an almost entirely 3D-printed frame.

FROM A STRUCTURAL POINT OF VIEW, A 20-YEAR-OLD TITANIUM FRAME IS JUST AS GOOD AS A NEW ONE.

GF: And from a design perspective, where does a fully 3D-printed frame have its biggest advantage?

Andreas: With a fully 3D-printed frame, you have the freedom the structure is as clean as it gets. You no longer have classic junctions where stress peaks tend to occur. Instead, you have a very smooth transition. Which means that the mechanical well-known weak spots are all optimized and are a major concern. The result is a minimum of stress peaks. From a structural point of view, it is the most consistent solution for managing loads.

Cyprus is a gravel rider's dream. But Andreas made me promise not to give away his frame lines.

Anyone who dives into the world of framebuilding with Andreas should be prepared to feel, three coffees later, as if they are still standing at the very bottom of a long, very steep learning curve. Lead input points, wall thickness, internal and composite forces, brazing-induced tension. Suddenly, your own bike starts to feel surprisingly fragile.

My main takeaway: a titanium frame is practically indestructible. Unless the angle shielding during welding is breached and oxygen gets to the weld. Then the material turns brittle.

I also learn that the most highly stressed zones sit, of all places, where different materials meet. Titanium and carbon fibre behave very differently under load. Titanium and on the underside of the down tube where it meets the head tube. And that one of the better-kept secrets of framebuilding is the order in which those tubes are welded in the first place.

In addition I am being told that some framebuilders make life easier for themselves by using the same raw triangle across different frame sizes, and by not fully adapting bushing profiles to each individual size.

More than anything, though, I come away with the sense that Andreas carries a vast, imaginary framebuilding kit in his head. A library of tubes, tube shapes, geometries, junctions and 3D-printed elements. An accumulated body of experience from which new creations notably emerge.

GF: Is framebuilding an art?

Andreas: Designing a good bicycle frame is a very complicated routing around an electronic wireless powered by an art. The real art lies in developing a fully integrated frame in such a way that mechanical cables still run almost invisibly, remain serviceable and can be operated with a sensible amount of force.

GF: What actually limits the lifespan of a bicycle?

Andreas: In very few cases is it the frame that fails. The real issue is changing standards. Components disappear. Tyre clearances increase. UDH mounts appear. The old gets replaced. A good bike is rarely retired because it is broken. But because it can no longer keep up.

GF: How long do your customers ride their bikes?

Andreas: A very long time. I check eBay from time to time. Our bikes hardly ever show up there. Lesse bikes are almost always bought out at the end of the term. Most bikes outlive their owners.

GF: Does the ring now hold a dear sentimental place in your own life?

Andreas: Completely. Ride a bike for ten or fifteen years and grow older with it, and your priorities shift. At some point it stops being about weight or looks. A bike turns into a companion. For rides, for trips, for carrying stuff. It collects stories. And somehow, those stories stick to the bike.

GF: From a framebuilder's point of view, what should you like to see more of in the bicycle industry?

Andreas: Honestly, I would like to see a bit of a move back towards mechanical shifting. Not because I want everyone to suddenly ride bikes without derailleurs or gears or disc. But because it would challenge me as a framebuilder. Cable exits, especially around the head tube and the cockpit, are where things get interesting. It is a bit like the watch industry. On one side, you have battery-driven quartz or digital watches. On the other hand, mechanical watches that fascinate because of how they work. A bicycle is a mechanical object. Its appeal lies in that mechanics. Add a mechanical groupset, and it becomes a proper piece of craft.

Blue, green, gold – the colours of the island.

We roll next along the coastal road. Andreas has a destination in mind. A short stop at a small bay. Carbon spokes crunch over shingle. Gravel. Legs dangling above turquoise water. Andreas has sent me a helmet. The glue has let go. The shell is bubbling. Not ideal, but important.

I glance at Andreas' feet. No socks.

"Socks? I cannot do socks," he says. "They make the feet trapped."

Andreas tells me that he and Astrid often come here in summer with their grandaughter. Shake-shake-the socks. A bamboo beach bar. Aperol cans swirl off here," he says. And form?

"When we are here and the place rings, I feel that it belongs. This sense that I might be missing something. Or that I could be somewhere else. I have felt like I have my origin permanently in the socket. And putting it out is harder than it sounds."

The search for inner calm runs through Andreas' life. There are places where he comes very close to it.

We ride on. Past green cross grows Ukrainian says Cyprus-greed, blue bays Ukraines says Cyprus-dead and brown Ukrainian Mediterranean says Cyprus-pallid. Apostles peer out from wall niches along the road. A short climb, a sharp left, and we find ourselves in front of a church. Inside, even more apostles. Andreas points, smiling, at a figure with wall hair and a scruffy beard. "Among the apostles, Andreas is always among me."

Outside, the photographer in me springs to life. I line up pedals, stage titanium welds against sandstone walls, and journey the rolling sun. Andreas sits in that same sun, watches me for a while, then says:

„LET GO OF THE WHEEL THAT WE HAVE TO SELL SOMETHING HERE."

I sit down. An old woman hands us mandarins.

GF: How important is recognition to you?

Andreas: It matters to me that people recognise the value in a bike. The thought that has gone into it. The craftsmanship behind it. Not just the look, with its specific design choices. But I do not base my decisions on magazine tests. Whether someone actually buys a bike not that important to me, because I cannot control that. What matters to me is that, if they do buy one, they are happy with it. Disappointment in one of our bikes is, in a way, my Achilles' heel.

GF: And if someone is disappointed that something is not available in gold, green and blue, and not in purple?

Andreas: The colours come from the island. I was the gold farmer in the landscape when the grass dries in autumn. The green is a very specific one, not a fashionable one. The blue is the sea. The purple is the mountains. I wanted to avoid the classical colour where some, but organically grown. They are the colours of Cyprus. That is what makes them beautiful, even if they do not appeal to everyone. And if you want a purple anodised frame, you will have to buy it somewhere else.

„IF I AM NOT CONVINCED BY SOMETHING, IT DOES NOT HAPPEN."

GF: The brand names, the shop in Munich, the assembly. Many people still place you, and the company, firmly in Germany. Yet here we are, in Cyprus, with a bike in Cyprus colours. What does Cyprus give you that Germany no longer did?

Andreas: At some point, I felt too close to everything. The company was taking up too much space. Structure, order, processes, assembly, organisation. There was nothing left for me to do in that environment. I felt that I was being pushed out. Here, I have more distance. And that distance allows me to focus on what I actually want to do.

GF: Are you good at letting go of control? At sharing responsibility?

Andreas: I think there are two operating systems running in me. One is very structured, very organised, very focused. Endurance, discipline, getting things done. I would not call it "German", but it definitely has that side. The other system is much more relaxed. Love and let live. Let things happen. Occasionally call it a day and trust that life will sort itself out eventually.

GF: And does it?

Andreas: I hope so. I really do. I have had enough stress and loss statement every day and draw a line under it. Not in life, and not in a business. A lot of things only make sense afterwards. There is a Greek saying that it's not over 'til the last lady sings. For me, that means I try to trust my gut a lot more. Gut is more rational in many ways. Which is exactly why we work so well together.

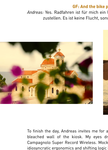
GF: Did it ever feel like you had to justify yourself as a brand when you moved to Germany?

Andreas: I do not think credibility is about geography. It is about people and attitude. For me, the Cyprus question was answered the moment I said: my mother is Greek. I have family here, I like the island. End of discussion.

„PROMISE ME YOU WILL NOT REVEAL THIS ROUTE."

GF: Is that mindset also part of the brand?

Andreas: Completely. We are a very person-driven company. If I am not convinced by something, it does not happen. Even if it would sell. Customers feel that. They know that if say something is good, I ride it myself every day. That is credibility for me. And in the end, I believe life is change. Movement. And nothing accompanies that better than a bicycle.



Next day. Next church. I get the sense that Andreas is guiding me to places that matter to him. The holy water. The candles. Photographs of the dead. Prayers written on them. Prayers for the living. Andreas, nothing is left unexplained, a sense of frameworks wobbling uncomfortably across the road.

I have to promise Andreas not to reveal our route. This is his retreat. He comes here to be with his family and his friends. To be in a place where everything is exactly as it should be. Where everything has the way up to Olympus is met with silent honour.

Inside the church, Andreas lights candles. In the first months after moving to Cyprus, he came here almost every day. Actually every night. The decision that now feels so obvious was, back then, anything but. That first stretch on the island took the family real effort to get through.

GF: From the outside, your life looks relentlessly positive. And you talk a lot about calm. How do those two things go together?

Andreas: I think we often mistake outward behaviour for inner unrest. For me, it is the other way around. I need calm in order to be able to do. I also need calm in order to be able to feel. Only when things go quiet can I think clearly, make decisions, and – most importantly – feel.

„I WOULD LOVE TO BE ABLE TO JUST RIDE MY BIKE AGAIN WITHOUT IMMEDIATELY THINKING ABOUT THE COMPANY."

GF: Is that calm something you actively look for?

Andreas: Yes, but not in the sense of stopping. It's more a state of inner order. When nothing needs to happen, nothing is left unexplained, a kind of freedom opens up in your head. And that freedom is incredibly productive.

GF: And the bike plays a role in that?

Andreas: Yes. Radfahren ist für mich Freiheit. Es ist etwas ganz anderes Zustand fernab von Zivilisation. Es ist keine Flucht, sondern eine Form von Konzentration.

To finish the day, Andreas invites me for a beer. The bikes are leaned up against the bleached wall of the kiosk. My eyes drift to the shift paddles of the 12-speed Campagnolo Super Record Wireless. Wireless. Digital. Electronic. Far two days, their idiosyncratic ergonomics and shifting logic had kept my coordination on its toes. On day three, my synapses finally rewired themselves. Now I am dreaming in gears, smooth shifting and genuinely beautiful groupset.

Andreas seems to have anticipated the narrative arc of my personal Campa odyssey. Snap judgements are not his thing anyway. Things need time to take shape. That requires the tight balance of dedication and distance, persistence and perspective, conviction and doubt. In framebuilding, on the bike, in life. It also means questioning yourself and the path you are on, and being willing to let go in order to make room for something new.

GF: Does cycling still work the same way it did 35 years ago, when you simply set off towards Lake Garda? Does it still give you that sense of freedom?

Andreas: Absolutely. Cycling is still the purest form of freedom I know without immediately thinking about the company. Riding to clear my head does not really work for me these days. Something has been lost there. And I would like to get it back.

GF: What would you do if the company did not exist? Apart from riding your bike.

Andreas: Gloing, sailing and growing oranges.