

culture

Gays and the Art of Motorcycling

Club has been celebrating bikers since 1969

by Joshua Ryan

There are a few great American movies about motorcycles. Consider *Easy Rider*, the classic film that sets the standard for great motorcycle flicks with a cast that includes Dennis Hopper, Peter Fonda and Jack Nicholson. The film is filled with great scenery and music, and my-oh-my can those men act. Shot in 1969, the film created iconic images that are familiar to us all: men in tight jeans and ratty tees with long hair and sunglasses, men who yearned for the open road almost like modern-day cowboys. Except they didn't have horses—they rode with a hot engine between their legs.

In 1969, gay men from Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia, joined together to create the Border Riders Motorcycle Club, a small group of men interested in recreational motorcycle touring. Since then, it has grown into a diverse group composed of more than 45 seasoned riders as well as newbies wanting to celebrate being gay bikers. Today, the club is the fifth-oldest gay motorcycle group in the United States.

Let's start with getting some things, pardon the expression, straight. First, you have to own a motorcycle to be part of this group. There are groups out there that permit other modes of transportation such as trucks and cars. The club does permit non-motorcycle folks to attend events twice a year: Victoria Days in British Columbia (referred to as VD Day) and another event in October. Otherwise, you cannot be a full-fledged member without your own bike; considering it's a motorcycle group, this makes sense. Second, this is a group for gay men only. That's not necessarily a bad thing, either, as Dykes on Bikes (sheesh—their name is even trademarked!) will quickly tell you. Lesbians have lots of options for female bikers out there.

Let's also review the proper way to pronounce motorcycle. There are those who pronounce it like bicycle—that is, motorsickle—while others pronounce it like the cycles on a washing machine. Originally motorcycles were merely bicycles with engines on them, so it's easy to understand where the "sickle" pronunciation came from. But motorsickle sounds kind of funny. The correct way is the way you want to say it—you say potato, I say po-tah-toe!



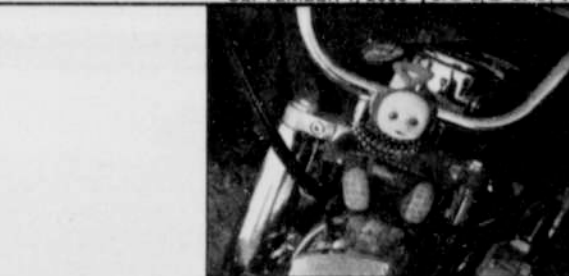
The Border Riders Motorcycle Club is the fifth-oldest gay motorcycle group in the United States.

What isn't funny is the seriousness with which the members of the Border Riders take their passion. Bill Bender, who serves as road captain for the group, looks like a biker. He is tanned with a thick thatch of black hair. His beard and mustache are peppered with gray, neatly trimmed hair, and three silver earrings dangle from his left ear. A former parole officer, Bender looks like he could kick your ass. However, when asked if he fits the stereotypical brawling, beer-swilling, tattoo-covered biker, he responds, "Uh, no, we're wussies at heart." Bender goes on to recount a story of one rider who was sitting at a campfire when sparks jumped from the pit and landed in his crotch. He jumped up to stamp them out, resulting in what Bender calls a "flaming queen." That's biker humor—and, it seems, laughing and escaping the monotony of urban life are what bring motorcycle enthusiasts together.

Last month about 43 members and guests attended a bike run at Cape Lookout State Park near Tillamook. Members came from as far away as Abbotsford and Vancouver, British Columbia. One guest—a member of the Satyrs Motorcycle Club, the country's oldest organization for gay bikers—came from Los Angeles. After dinner, the evening was spent in camp enjoying the surroundings. Typically, after a day of riding, members pitch small tents and fraternize, camp and sleep in the great outdoors of the Northwest. It should be noted that

several members prefer to—or, for health reasons, have to—find nearby hotel accommodations.

The 2006 motorcycle "season" has been successful. According to Robert Chapman, webmaster for the Border Riders, approximately 80 people attended the annual kickoff in May at Pine Flats Campground near Entiat, Wash. Riders have also enjoyed trips to



Kamloops, British Columbia, in June and Washington's Mount Rainier National Park in July. From Sept. 15 to 17 the club will visit Nanaimo, British Columbia, and stay at a gay campground on Vancouver Island. Gay men, motorcycles and remote islands just have to be a blast! 10

For more information about the BORDER RIDERS MOTORCYCLE CLUB check out www.borderriders.com. And remember that nothing beats the feeling of the wind in your face and a hog between your legs.

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Don't Have a Motorcycle? How About a Movie?

OK, so you don't have a motorcycle, but you have this hot motorcycle fantasy. If so, check out these movies:

- **Easy Rider:** Classic motorcycle film everyone should see. Awesome scenery and bitchin' acting. In other words, something for tough-ass fags and sissy arthouse queers to enjoy.
- **The Wild One:** Marlon Brando (back when he was still a sex god—after *A Streetcar Named Desire* but before *The Island of Dr. Moreau*) stars as Johnny, leader of the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club, who rides into town and makes things get out of hand. This is a must-see motorcycle movie. The movie is in black and white, so don't adjust the color on your TV. (Like duh!)
- **Born to Ride:** A telepic with John Stamos. Even though all the women I know hate John Stamos because he divorced Rebecca Romijn, I've thought he was super hot ever since he played Blackie on *General Hospital*. In this flick, Stamos is

an "expert rider" who goes behind enemy lines to get the good guys ready for fighting. An action motorcycle film with some great stunts, cool bikes and, did I say, John Stamos?

- **Girl on a Motorcycle:** For the lesbians out there, check out this flick—which was originally titled *Naked Under Leather*—starring Marianne Faithfull as a woman who runs away from her dumb-ass husband on her Harley. This film contains weird but sexy scenes of her fantasies and cool psychedelic images. Ultimate '60s biker chick movie.

- **The Motorcycle Diaries:** Voted by many critics as one of the 10 best movies of 2004, this is the biography of Che Guevara starring the studly Gael García Bernal. (I've adored him ever since *Bad Education*, where he was filmed performing oral sex on another actor in the name of his art. Gulp!) The movie is a touching story of Guevara's early life before he became a world-renowned socialist revolutionary. Good stuff.

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