

## Creative Expression

IT WAS THE best-selling author James A. Michener who advised in an interview I read in *Parade* magazine many years ago, that all creative people should have two creative outlets—the idea being that each discipline served to give a balanced perspective of the other, enhancing both. Although I was initially surprised by this curious remark, I've given it a lot of thought over the years.

If we are lucky, our occupations give us some personal satisfaction. Solving problems of all kinds provides a feeling of mastery which serves as an important antidote to boredom and depression. And, in his "Why We Ride, Part 3" survey report this month, Mark Barnes reveals that it is that sense of Mastery that explains why many people feel fulfilled by riding motorcycles. Mark's work always makes me think.

While nine-to-five commerce can have its financial and social rewards, I believe that what we regard as artistic creativity eludes the logical. The necessities of business, scheduling and other left brain linear activities don't tap into the intuitive side of our natures. But motorcycling does.

For myself, the special joy of riding is that while I'm on the move, linear verbal thinking finally becomes unnecessary, perhaps even a dangerous distraction, and that I am obliged, if I want to ride well, to exist in a state of flow, aware of everything around me, making split-second decisions based on perception and instinct, at ease with the bike, while simultaneously oblivious of myself.

I understand that a beginning rider could probably not ride this way. Constantly replaying safety and control advice in his or her mind, that seamless flow would not arise. And I don't pretend to be a riding teacher, although I am impressed when someone can do that well. I have taught many things, but when it comes to riding, I'd worry that to analyze riding into logical steps for the benefit of others might spoil it for me. Just as when I studied filmmaking in grad school, I couldn't look at a movie for years without being aware of production techniques of all kinds. Which is not to say that I haven't benefitted from the teaching of others. Incorporating their thoughtful tactics has definitely made my riding safer as well as more proficient.

Let's say then that riding is one of your creative outlets. Do you have another? Do you play guitar, paint, sing, dance, surf—or something else that doesn't require so much logical thought that what technique it does require can't be transcended by mastery?

As a former art student (like a surprising



number of other motojournalists I've met), I've tried my hand at many established art forms. I had my greatest popular success with hand-thrown ceramics, which I did concurrently with motorcycle mechanics for many years.

However, I'm not sure that mechanics qualifies as truly creative, even though I did have occasional flashes of Sherlock Holmes-grade insight that would suggest the correct cure to a baffling problem without the usual tedious troubleshooting steps.

It was Thomas Edison who said that invention was 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. And although that scheme worked well for Edison, it isn't the only answer. Nicola Tesla was a contemporary of Edison's. Responsible for radio and the adoption of alternating current power transmission (over Edison's favored DC) among hundreds of other things, his creativity was the opposite. Ideas would spring full blown from his mind and he had then only to execute them to make them real. The legendary Harry Miller, of car and bike fame, was another. His mind conceived completed works, and once he'd drawn them, had his men set to work building them so that he could go on to create more. If you ever get the chance to visit the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, you will see firsthand how exquisitely conceived his racing cars were, and what a contrast they still make with the rest of the collection of winners.

I have often admired the special artistry of the Italians when it comes to machines. Not only do the best of their *Ingenieres* seem to have an intuitive grasp of the whole range of dynamics that interact in a vehicle, but they possess an artist's eye for form.

Many years ago, I would have argued that their design prowess depended mainly on intuition; from a lifetime's obsession with engineering that had transcended mere calculation. But a few years ago at a Ducati press conference, I got to see their skill at the kinds of computational simulations that have been made possible by computers. One such analysis, illustrated on video, showed a 999 Superbike piston's high-speed rocking motions inside the cylinder, revealing how that would jostle its piston rings to affect sealing—it was amazing.

Making improvements to machines is one of my favorite creative expressions. And, I admire the whole range of such pursuits, from the artistry of custom car and bike builders to GP race engineering. Incidentally, my Yamaha FZ-1 project is now complete and I need to start another project bike. If you're interested to own it, send an e-mail message to editor@mcnews.com with FZ-1 in the subject line.

Even though I eat, sleep and breathe motorcycles, I still heed Michener's advice. Recently, I have been reworking digital images I've captured at racetracks and turning them into graphic art. Using Photoshop, the mainline digital editing software, I'll modify the images through many steps to realize an imagined result down the line. This work is very satisfying, as for one it's in color, perhaps because the sensory deprivation of working in black and white every month has made color even more exciting. The other is that it's just like riding, there is no logical result, simply a kind of psychic/emotional impact that one feels when it's right. They will be on display at the Sawdust Art Festival in Laguna Beach from July 4th until Labor Day this summer.

I know this month's Open Road is kind of offbeat, but the subject has a lot of meaning for me. And I'm sure that Yamaha's recent introduction of the new Roadliner at the Goldstein House in Beverly Hills had a lot to do with it. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright apprentice John Lautner, it is one of the most stunning examples of modern architecture in LA, and its creative impact is overwhelming, causing you to mentally toss all stale design preconceptions out the proverbial window.

Enrich your own creative experience. Even with motorcycling, it seems we all need one more outlet!

*DAVE SEARLE*

—Dave Searle  
Editor