

## A behind the scenes look at Bike Shows.

We've all been to bike Shows be it big or small. All the glitz and shine. But do you know what's involved in judging a bike show? I ran into Ray Kittel of Watertown, WI and got a chance to get some behind the scenes know how. Here's what he had to say

*Q: How did you get into being a judge for bike shows?*

A: I've had an interest in custom bikes (choppers) & bike shows ever since 1969. I use to attend shows as often as I could back then. For example, at the old Amphetheater down on the south side of Chicago back in the early 70's. I entered a lot of shows, myself, in the early 90's. I won over 75 trophies taking 1st place in my class or better in five different states. During that time I entered a number of the J&P Promotions' bike shows and got aquanted with John Parham, president of J&P. At that time J&P held a lot of bike shows . . . ride-in shows as well as major indoor events. I thought the experience being a bike show judge would be interesting and asked John if he ever needed help with his shows that he should get in touch with me. He did in the fall of '93 and the rest is history.

*Q: What shows do you judge now?*

A: Currently I'm the chief show judge for R&B Promotions Supercycle Show at McCormick Place in Chicago, the Donnie Smith Invitational Bike Show in St. Paul, the Milwaukee Rally Open Invitational Bike Show, of course Porker's U.S.A. bike shows, plus a few ride-in shows here and there.

*Q: What other shows have you done in the past?*

A: Over the past 12 years - I've judged shows in seven states. As I mentioned before, I did a lot of shows for J&P Promotions when they had their Super Series, I've judged the Rat's Hole and Boardwalk shows in Daytona, plus a number of shows for independent shops, Harley dealers, ABATE events, you name it.

*Q: How are the bikes judged . . . on what?*

A: First of all and most importantly, I take a very clinical approach to judging bike shows. Everyone thinks it must be neat and all that . . . but it's really challenging work. There's a lot of paperwork involved and you've got to stay focused. Between the classing, judging, all the paperwork, etc., there's a lot of room for errors. There's a lot more to it than what people think. Basically one could say, offering an analogy here, that I judge bike shows similar to how a figure skating judge judges skating. Let me explain. In skating you have your technical merit scores along with your artistic or presentation scores. Judging custom motorcycles is very much the same way. You combine the two and you get your winners.

*Q: How many classes are there in a show?*

A: That really depends upon the show's format. Some shows might have 20, others have more than 40. Not to mention, all the other awards that may be featured like special recognition awards for best paint, chrome, & upholstery; best display awards; and of course your best in show awards. As I said, each show has it's own format based upon what the promoter wishes to spend as a whole on awards, the anticipated size of the show or venue, etc. However, regardless of the format, the shows I work sort of have my style or signature about them, so to speak. Exhibitors seem to be in a "comfort zone" when they know I'm in charge of the judging.

*Q: What does a judge do to prepare for a show?*

A: There again, it's based a lot on each individual show's format and the anticipated number of entries. First off, you need good forms for classing, judging, and awards. They need to be efficient and really work for you. You take a major indoor event like the Donnie Smith Invitational where you're approaching 200 entries - and if you think you're going to, so call, class & judge the show using just a pad of paper - you've got another guess coming. So, the forms are tailored, so to speak, for each show and continue to evolve over my 12 years of experience. Shows that require, for the most part, pre-registration - I study the bike show applications along with spec sheets that are enclosed for hours the night before setup . . . to get a feel for what is going to be arriving for classing and judging purposes. Overall preparation for some of these shows is a year long process.

*Q: Do you handle everything from start to finish?*

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A: Basically, I have the overall responsibility AT THE SHOW from start to finish. I don't receive the applications in the mail and collect entry fees. The promoters do this and have a certain amount of in-house administrative details to attend to for their purpose and preparing things for my use at the event. However, when I serve in the capacity as chief show judge, as I usually do, once the bikes start arriving at the show - that's when I take over. Of course, you have other staff that are assigned to specific jobs like working the registration table, showing floor spots, etc.

*Q: Are you the only judge?*

A: No - this is without a doubt a team effort and you need good people to work with. Between the promoter and myself, we arrange for "help" with the bike show judging. However, all final decisions, results, and responsibility rests with me. Minimally, I'll have at least one other person working with me. At larger events, I'll have as many as three or four under-judges.

*Q: Any suggestions to a person wanting to enter a bike in a show?*

A: Don't build a bike to someone else's expectations or what you think the spectators would like or even the judges. Build a bike based upon your vision, ideas, or dream. Build it or restore it from the heart. Because, as I judge, I'll see the heart put into it and so will the spectators. The trophies, if that's what you're after, will come by themselves. Enter a show to have fun and enjoy the experience.

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and worth every minute of time spent.

Life truly is a circle. I spent my youth chopping Harleys, and now I plan on spending what's left restoring them. Who knew?

Part of our service at Wisconsin Harley-Davidson is restoration and repair of old iron. We completed a 48 Pan to the same standards and are currently working on a 53 Pan. We do riding restorations; exact as we can make them and exactly the way they were made to be ridden. Jerry King is in charge of restoration parts, accessories and sales, and Fred Borchardt repairs and assembles the old rides. Both ride old iron, Jerry a 47 Knuckle and Fred a 46 UL.

I absolutely love riding the new Harleys. They are truly some of the best motorcycles ever made. What's not to like about a twin cam motor? However, there is something special about the old stuff, and specifically in stock trim. What can I say? I'm hooked on both!

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