

Sturgis 2009 Preview The Rally Turns 69



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Yes, Harley is my real name. And no, there's no relationship. But I do enjoy riding Harley-Davidsons, which comes in handy as the Cruiser & Custom Editor of Motorcycle USA.

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The Black Hills are alive with thunder: it's 'The Sound of Music' alright. That is, if the rumble of a few hundred thousand V-Twins is music to your ears. August is here, which means it must be time again for the spectacle known as the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Wonder what of 'Pappy' Hoel would think about this monstrosity he helped create? I'm certain he had no due that the little motorcycle race he and his friends in the Jackpine Gypsies Motorcycle Club started up would now be the mother of all motorcycle rallies, a week-long affair of races, custom bike shows, vendors, live music, camping, riding, partying and more partying.

Before moving forward to the 69th Annual Sturgis Rally, let's take a look back. The Black Hills Classic began as a series of motorcycle races organized by the Jackpine Gypsies in 1938. Clarence 'Pappy' Hoel, a local motorcycle shop owner and a founder of the Gypsies, got together with some friends and came up with the idea of holding a motorcycle race and competition. The first race had a whopping nine entrants competing for \$750 in prize money in front of a handful of observers. Johnnie Spiegelsch of Milwaukee, Wis., lapped the half mile track in 32.6 seconds to etch his name in the records book as the first winner.



The floodgates of Main St., Sturgis, are opening up in anticipation of the 69th Annual Sturgis Rally.



The V-Rod Destroyer is killing it in NHRA action this year. The Screamin' Eagle Performance Parts Race at the Rally will be a fun-filled, nitro-burning affair.

Something tells me the fat trackers at the Black Hills Speedway will be flying around the Rapid City track a lot faster than that in the AMA Pro Flat Track Races next Tuesday night. The roar of nitro-fueled drag bikes will fill the Sturgis Dragway at the 'Race at the Rally' the following day. The Screamin' Eagle Performance Parts race will feature nostalgic drag bikes, modified gas bikes, V-Rod Destroyers in addition to three nitro classes of fuel-burning fun. And the Pro Hill Climbs are always a hoot to watch as riders bomb up the hill treading the thin line between control and reckless abandon. There's still plenty of motorcycle race action going on in Sturgis, but now it's just the tip of the iceberg.

The event also showcases some of the coolest custom bikes around. The caliber of the competition is unparalleled. The festivities will get started early with the 7th Annual Metzeler Custom Bike Contest. Sanctioned by the Custom Bike Association and with guest judges like custom builder Eddie Trotta and American Iron Editor Chris Maica, the Metzeler contest is top-notch. The following day is the finals of the AMD World Championship of Custom Bike Building. Will Roger Goldammer defend his Freestyle Class title, or will an American builder step up and bring the title home? The Japanese and European competitors are always tough, too, and the AMD contest is one of the few that truly is an international affair. The Rat's Hole Custom Bike Show will invade Champions Park the next day. I've seen firsthand the talent that always shows up for the Rat's Hole Daytona show, and I'd expect nothing less from the Sturgis pits.



Start with one exotic custom motorcycle, add a Playboy Playmate, etc. and you've got the recipe for another successful Rat's Hole Custom Bike Show.

It's between your fingers there's a hand that gets you up. The trip to Sturgis would be worthwhile without a trip down Main St. to people watch and to check out the rows and rows of polished-up motorcycles. For a different style of fun, head over to the Buffalo Chip where there will be plenty of shredded tires and burnt rubber smoke in the air at the World Record Bike Burnouts on Thursday night. The Chip is also host to Michael Lichter's Motorcycles as Art Display. The renowned motorcycle lifestyle photographer's theme this year is 'Rebel Rousers - Motorcycle Icons that Inspired us to Ride.' With a theme like that, I'm sure some of his classic shots of Indian Larry will be on display. Indian Larry has inspired many bikers, guys like Kenjo of Kenjo Cycles who is one of the custom builders that make up the bunch known as the Limpnickie Lot. The guys at the Limpnickie Lot have probably inspired a few people to ride, too. The collection of custom builders are the counter-



Photographer Michael Lichter will be on hand at the Buffalo Chip with his Motorcycles as Art Display.

culture alternative to the standard rally scene, attracting a younger crowd by expanding the experience with freak shows, skateboard ramps and paintball wars. Besides knowing how to have fun, a visit to the Limpnickie Lot will give us an excuse to go over to the Broken Spoke Carriaground to check out the action at their sunset pool party.

The Spoke will also have a few concerts to pump up the party atmosphere. The list of bands includes the Kentucky Headhunters, Foghat, 36 Special, and Nashville Pussy. Campers luck out and get to check out the bands for free. The list of killer shows at the Buffalo Chip is even more impressive, though. It will be 'Bad to the Bone' when George Thorogood and the Destroyers take the stage, and I'm sure more than one person will be all 'L.A. Up' for the Buckcherry show Friday. The biggest night of all though will probably be Wednesday when Aerosmith will rock Sturgis for the very first time.



It will be time to 'Walk The Vay' when Aerosmith takes the stage at the Buffalo Chip Carriaground.

Somewhere in between catching as many concerts as possible, there's riding to be done. The rugged beauty of the Badlands' buttes and spires is but 60 miles away. Mt. Rushmore is even closer, and if you're in the area, a trip to the Crazy Horse Mountain Memorial is recommended. Motorcycle USA will be making the ride to the Crazy Horse monument on one of the new 2009 Indian Chiefs as we take part in a benefit ride for the Tribal Hope Foundation. We'll also be taking part in the Legends Ride from Deadwood to the Buffalo Chip. Besides getting to hang out with a long list of celebrities and custom builders, funds raised from the ride benefits Black Hills charities.

Still not enough to entice you into packing the saddlebags and making a last minute dash for South Dakota? Well, there's always the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum and Hall of Fame to visit. Check out its collection of vintage

motorcycles and numerous exhibits. Harley-Davidson will have plenty of happenings, too, like test rides on their 2010 models over in Rapid City. The Motor Company will be celebrating Women's Day Sunday, Aug. 2, and have their own Ride-In Custom Bike show slated for Thursday. But getting a chance to see and ride the 2010 Harleys will certainly be the biggest draw.



It's not too late to get on your bad motor scooter and ride. If you peck up today, you can make it to Sturgis by Monday!

Still not enough? Then fire a machine gun at the Buffalo Chip's 'Guns of Freedom' display, check out the stonedevils in the Wall of Death at the Broken Spoke, or test your ball-throwin' skills at the Monkey Rock Gets 'We! T Dunking Booth. It's going to be a crazy week at the 69th Annual Sturgis Rally, so what are you waiting for? Tell your boss you've got swine flu and are quarantined for a week, dip into your kid's college fund, and get it in gear. The hills are alive. Be there or be square.