

One Man's Annual Vision That Sets The Tone

MICHAEL LICHTER "STAY GOLD"

MORE THAN AN EXHIBIT IN STURGIS

Article By: Ken Conte



Photo By: Fab Kevin

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fter working with Michael on his Sturgis exhibit for the last few years, I'm always amazed at how he continues to come up with fresh themes that are a commentary on the current state of motorcycle culture. This year's exhibit was coined "Stay Gold" after the late Johnny Chop. Johnny had "Stay Gold" tattooed on his knuckles and was an ode to the cult classic movie "The Outsiders", which was a loose reference to the Robert Frost poem, "Nothing Gold Can Stay". The idea behind "Stay Gold" was featuring artists who didn't necessarily make a living at what they displayed. Yes the lines were a little blurry but everyone practiced their respective art with a passion for motorcycles as art, whether

it was photographs, sculptures or bikes, there were no posers allowed.

We try and make the area out at the Thunderdome as much like an art gallery as possible. This is no easy task but the staff at Thunder Road has been very helpful supplying us with everything we need to try and make this the best art/motorcycle exhibition that Sturgis has ever seen. This year, in addition to the usual high-class carpet, there were free standing exhibition walls and diamond plate exhibit boxes where we could position the bikes. This year's focus demonstrated the passion that these artists possess about their specific medium, and displayed some very unique hanging as well as rolling art.

I've personally had the privilege of setting up the exhibit for the last few years, and one of the greatest parts is to watch all the bikes roll in as well as unwrapping all the artwork. It's like Christmas for me because typically

a lot of the pieces, whether they are motorcycles or artwork, are unique to the exhibit and haven't necessarily been seen anywhere else before. Take for example Trish Horstman's collection of original paintings that told the story of her experience with motorcycles through the years, from helping her dad build his bike in the living room when she was a kid to when she broke her heal kicking over her Ironhead. If I hadn't been there to help her unpack the items, there is no way I would have known how personal these pieces were to her. The breadth of Jeff Cochran's photography was great to see in such a large well-chosen format that highlighted his talents. There were four bikes that had art by the builder as well: Nik Pew, Tattoo John, Jeff Decker and Scout. It was great to see the influence that each of

these talented artists/builders had on their bikes and art and how each display really complimented the art and the art complimented the bikes.

It was an honor to have notables such as Jason Jesse display a great skateboard deck he sculpted as well as a custom blown up gas tank. Cole Foster showed an amazing hand made metal cowboy hat that really showcased his welding as an art-form. GTP had a number of his great oil paintings and James Kaye brought several of his paintings as well as a few of his sculptures. Jeff Wright displayed a killer oil painting and Cycle Source's own Seth Leibowitz showed several of his paintings.

The true "Stay Gold" story has to be the one that came from Kevin Baas. He called the day before he was supposed to be in Sturgis to say a tornado had totaled the trailer and truck and he wasn't sure if the bikes were okay since they hadn't been able to get the trailer open, yet. He literally

called us right after it happened because he was so stoked about being in the show and he was on a mission. Several hours later he was back on the road with a borrowed trailer and truck, showing that his passion and

sense of duty to stick true to his commitments and get to Sturgis if he could

in any possible way.

It would be impossible to talk about "Stay Gold" and not talk about the late Johnny Chop. I won't pretend that he was my best friend or even a friend, I met him a few times and did an interview in Laughlin one year but that was about it. What I can say is that bikes like Johnny's *F**k You* bike, is a one-of-kind that showcases the creativity he put into his builds while he scoffed at the trends in the industry. That bike was built at a time when long was in and the fatter the rear tire the better. It was an example of his patience, vision and craftsmanship that made that bike a timeless classic, all the way down to the Fab Kevin one-off Chop kicker pedal. "Stay Gold" is something that you either get or don't and if you don't get it by now...well maybe you are reading the wrong magazine.

A big thanks to this year's sponsors: Custom Chrome, Baker Drivetrain,

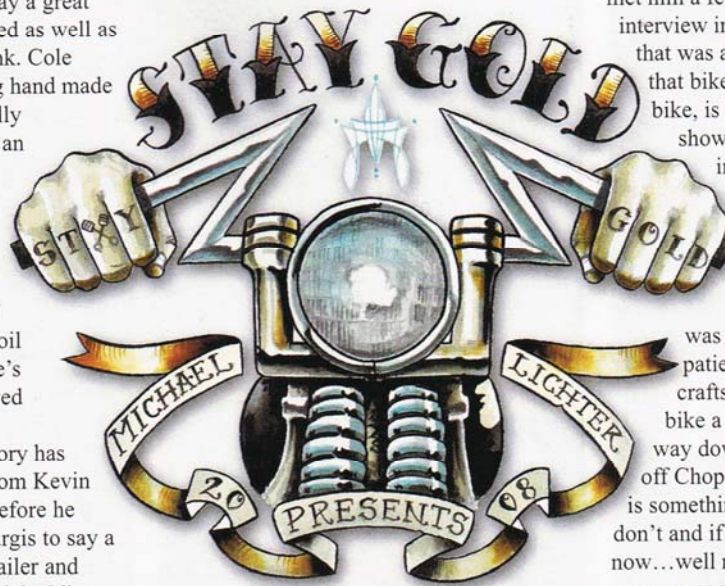




Photo By: Caleb Owens



Photo By: Fab Kevin



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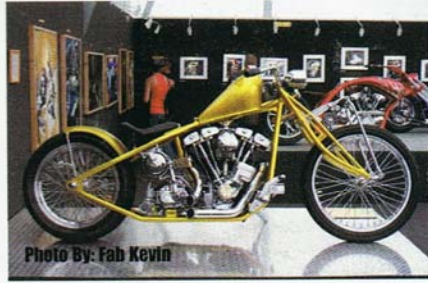


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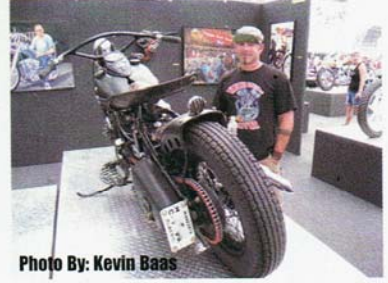


Photo By: Kevin Baas



Photo By: Caleb Owens

JayBrake, Sturgis Bike Week Productions, S&S Cycle, and Spectro Oil.

Builders:

Anthony "Scout" Underwood, Ben Jordan, Bill Steele, Brandon Holstein, Caleb Owens, Chopper Dave, Jeff Wright, Dave John, Fabricator Kevin and Jeff Huvaere, Jeff Decker, Jeffrey Schad, Johnny Chop, Jason Schulberg, John Reed Keith Ball, Kevin Baas & Kennedy High Chopper Class, Michael Pugliese, Nik Pew, Ryan Boyd, Rich Phillips, Skeeter Todd, Tattoo John and Phil Dziedzic.

Artists:

Anthony "Scout" Underwood, Jason Jessee, Cole Foster, George the Painter, James

Kaye, Jeff Cochran, Jeff Decker, Jeff Wright, Latricia "Trish" Horstman, Nick Pew, Seth Liebowitz, Tattoo John.

"Nothing Gold Can Stay"
by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

