

## *Riding, 'Renching and Reading*

A Book Review for Those Times When You're Not On Two Wheels In The Wind.

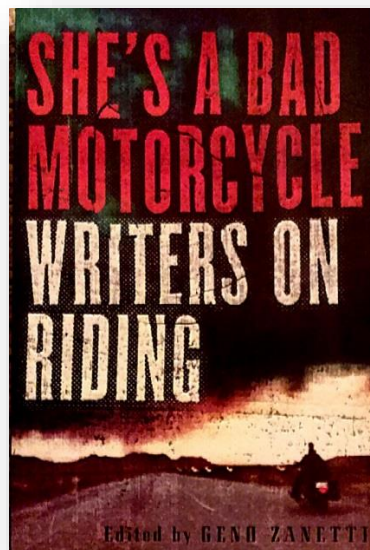
She's a Bad Motorcycle: Writers on Riding

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Edited by Geno Zanetti

Geno Zanetti is part of a writing, researching, and filmmaking team based in Portsmouth, England. He is also the editors of *White Lines: Writers on Cocaine* and *Players: Con Men, Hustlers, Gamblers, and Scam Artists*



Here is it the early part of summer and with a little luck most of us have filled the tank, lied to our boss, convinced our loved ones that a few days away are exactly what both of you need, or called up several of your Brothers and picked a destination far far away that you've always wanted to ride to...at least more than once. The point being, there's scant time to get engrossed in a full length motorcycle adventure story. You should be riding. And that's where the beauty of this book like this comes into play. The dictionary defines an anthology as: "*a book or other collection of selected writings by various authors, usually in the same literary form, or on the same subject.*" Me? At this time of year, I define an anthology as pure heaven in book form. I can tuck an anthology into my saddlebag on the first day of summer, and leave it there all the way until Labor Day safe and secure in the knowledge that at the end of, let's say, an 8 hour 500 mile day in the saddle, with my favorite beverage in a cool glass on the nightstand next to me in some \$69 per night roadside motel, I can pick it up, make a selection and finish it, nanoseconds before the book hits my chest.

*She's a Bad Motorcycle* was gifted to me by an equally adventurous Biker and voracious reader. It collects the writings of those who have sought the freedom that all of us know well. From the now classic *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* to *Chasing Che* the motorcycle has inspired a startlingly rich, unabashedly romantic body of writing that celebrates the risks and exhilaration of the journey. That journey can either be to some distant locale we've all longed to see or to self-discovery itself. Included here are works of fiction as well as accounts of real events, all jumbled together like the facts and dreams of the myths that surrounds motorcycles and their riders. Insights on philosophy are preceded by stories of massively destructive parties, followed by detailed descriptions of motorcycle parts and modifications.

In addition to the words from those classics just mentioned, there are works here by other icons of the Biker world. There is a selection from the gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson (that is not part of his seminal 1967, *Hells Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs*), a piece by Dennis Hopper, as well as the Godfather of the 1%ers, Ralph 'Sonny' Barger. Add in the intellegentia of the likes of Tom Wolfe, who wrote for the New Yorker Magazine, and Daniel R. Wolf, the Canadian professor who did his PhD in sociology by joining an outlaw club north of the border as part of his research, and you're beginning to get the idea of what awaits you.

But just as sometimes while in the middle of a long distant ride we decide, on a whim, to take an unplanned route because the road itself looks interesting, this collection does the same. There is a long lyrical piece from Melissa Holbrook Pierson, a story by Eric Burdon (yes, he of the '60s rock and roll band: The Animals) about the times he was pals with Steve McQueen (yes, he the actor). Writings by the actor Peter Coyote, Ted Simon from *Jupiter's Travels*, Robert Fulton from *One Man Caravan* are here too. There's even an essay about a modern Christian revival event focused on motorcycles. One of my favorite reads is by Rachel Kushner, who's selection is entitled: *Girl on A Motorcycle* and writes: "I know what it feels like to crash a motorcycle at 140mph" from her seminal work: *The Flamethrowers*.

As an added bonus, interspersed with the text are photographs by Bruce Davidson, Martin Dixon, Ann Ferrar, Danny Lyon, Helge Pedersen, and Irving Penn. While the reproduction of the images are less than stellar (and Martin Dixon, Danny Lyon and Irving Penn deserve better), they are a nice touch.

Yet, the one criticism of this book might be that it's too heavy on tales from and about the outlaw biker world. I feel there's so much more. The value in this book is twofold. First, you get perspective on the variety of riders, their outlook, and their writing styles, and secondly, you can use it as a resource for further readings of motorcycle literature for those cold mid winter days when you *wish* you were riding.

Ride Hard, Ride Safe, and Read Often.

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Marc Teatum is the co-author of three novels: *One Light Coming*, *The Moon Upstairs* and *The Blue and Silver Shark*, all part of The Biker Story series published by Blockhead City Press and a regular contributor to this magazine. You can find his books on Amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com or through your local bookstore. You can read more of his writings on his website: [www.marcteatum.com](http://www.marcteatum.com)