



Cool



Text by Jon DeVecchio

Motorcycles are cool. Even the biggest dweeb becomes fascinating the moment he throws a leg over one.

The American biker image is powerful, as is the stunter persona. Being accepted seems to be the primary goal of many riders. Looking the part communicates an equal status with others in the group. That status certainly implies one knows how to ride and has things under control.

How powerful are the stereotypes? Here's one shocking example. Occasionally, riders pursuing an instructor's certificate will quit once realizing they have to be a positive role model. The peer pressure to ride helmetless with their buddies is too difficult

to confront. If instructor candidates are sacrificing safety for image, consider what the average rider thinks.

Helmets are just the beginning. Riding in t-shirts. Having a beer. Wheelies. Excessive speeding. Negative peer pressure is relentless in the motorcycling world. Being bad or taking risk seems to increase the coolness factor.

Sport-touring riders have crash protection decisions made for them a little easier. Their costume includes full gear, often pricey brands. The cool image they project is that their fast riding pace or off-road adventures may lead to a spill. Therefore, protective gear becomes necessary.

A shift needs to take place in the motorcycling mindset where gear and skills are cool to acquire for everyone. Confident people are cool. Insecure people are fools.

Cool Clothes

We're making significant progress with riding gear. Motorcyclists looking for comfort and practicality have been buying riding suits for decades. But what about those wanting to convey more youth, style or flash?

Retailers are starting to make a difference. Wearing sturdy gear is becoming trendy. While it seems the internet has accelerated this transition, brick-and-mortar stores would be wise to follow their lead. Twisted Throttle offers premium riding apparel, but more importantly is building a riding community. Wearing their products makes you savvy. Same with RevZilla. You're not just buying a pair of gloves; you become a member of the "RevZilla Army" with your purchase. Instant cool! You'll even get VIP emails from them.

Of course retailers need hip merchandise to sell. Brands like Icon (which means "successful and admired person"), REV'IT! and Forcefield are innovating to blend cool with protection. Even BMW makes a sneaker-like riding boot, no doubt to appeal to their younger S1000RR owners. Bohn's Bodyguard System is designed to be worn under street clothes for those wanting to conceal their commitment to added protection.

Proper gear can make a rider more comfortable leading to better motorcycle control. However, its primary goal is protection during a crash. But what about avoiding the crash altogether? Nothing is more uncool than dumping your bike.

Cool Schools

Where do the cool riders go to improve their skills? Nothing screams awesomeness better than a racetrack. Track days are a great option and enjoyed by thousands of riders. The instructors are fantastic. With limited distractions, a rider can sharpen technique and get thrills at the same time. Track turn-offs include long traveling distances, intimidation, expense, specific gear and motorcycle preparation. These hurdles discourage many from actually visiting tracks.



- STREET SKILLS -

If you want a million dollar motorcycle training business, start with two million. Basic license waiver course providers typically offer a limited number of advanced courses. Due to the high cost of delivering motorcycling instruction, schools are forced to teach what sells. Unfortunately, most people equate skill courses with the fundamentals and believe experienced riders do not need further instruction. Admitting the desire for additional training often causes embarrassment.

Motorcycling schools have to follow the money. If it were cool to get coaching, experienced riders would demand it. Then we would see an explosion in advanced offerings. But without paying customers the schools will keep teaching what sells. It's a classic paradox. Something has to break the cycle. So what will motivate experienced riders to continue their skill development? I have some ideas.

Motorcycling schools should develop courses that are personal, accessible, convenient, short and inexpensive. To a certain degree, those characteristics already exist in the few advanced courses that are successful. Here's what I believe is the secret ingredient. To increase the cool factor, get out of the parking lot. What if learning opportunities resembled Sunday morning rides? Advanced courses should create an exclusive atmosphere where the secrets of riding well are shared. Give riders an opportunity to join an elite class that values precision riding skills.

These are the core beliefs behind the Street Skills Riding Academy. I'm working to build a template for lifelong learning that will create lifelong memories, too. Join me in this vision.

Imagine a motorcycling culture with an insatiable appetite for skill advancement. How cool would that be?

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