

Why We Ride. (And why Valerie Thompson rides.)

Story and photos by Randall Bohl

As a lead-up to the Progressive International Motorcycle Show at WestWorld in Scottsdale last fall, we participated in a cosponsored meet-up at Go AZ Motorcycles in the Scottsdale Airpark, followed by a ride to Regal Cinemas in Gilbert to view *Why We Ride*, an award-winning documentary film.

Go AZ was the gathering spot, with burgers and hot dogs on the grill, refreshments and special guest Valerie Thompson displaying her 2012 BMW S 1000RR, on which she has run 212 mph at the Texas Mile. Valerie is a seven-time Land Speed Record holder in several motorcycle classes. A member of 200 mph clubs at Bonneville, the Texas Mile, the Mojave Magnum and the East Coast Timing Association, she also happens to appear in the movie *Why We Ride*.

We spoke with Valerie about her BMW, during the Go AZ social time. She loves the bike, although she was an "all Harley" rider during her drag racing career. And her need for speed is no longer limited to two wheels.

Thompson, who lives in Scottsdale, has been test pilot in a turbo-diesel dragster on the quarter mile, and in July 2014 climbed into a NASCAR



vehicle at Bonneville, running 192 mph on the salt (in a straight line, she states emphatically).

Her future plans include streamliners—two- or four-wheel—as she states she'd like to go 400 mph. Well, 300 mph for sure.

Nineteen riders' kickstands were up at 7pm, and we worked our way through freeway traffic to Gilbert. Rides ranged from Yamaha and BMW dual sports, to your correspondent's Honda Nighthawk sport touring, to crotch rockets, including a Suzuki Hayabusa, which didn't exactly get to stretch its legs out in traffic.

Arriving at the theater, we found another group of riders gathered in the parking lot and at least another 50 "cages" (cars) of moviegoers. Attendees received concession stand vouchers and

DVD copies of the movie, and Valerie autographed handbills for everyone.

Even if you've never ridden so much as a mini-bike, *Why We Ride* can be appreciated simply for the beauty of its cinematography, and the historical perspective it reveals about motorcycles.

The film takes us back to the turn of the 20th century, when bicycle racers created the first motorcycles, then through the Great Depression and shortly after, when club riding was at its height. There are interviews with people who were there as children and ride to this day. There is racing history, from the first Daytona to modern day hill climbs. And of course there are the Bonneville Salt Flats, where Valerie Thompson appears in the film. It all culminates in a review of

the variety of motorcycling experiences available today, largely centered around the family recreational aspect of riding.

Some of but not all who appear in *Why We Ride* are: Arlen Ness, Kenny Roberts, Mert Lawwill, Al Lamb, Jason Disalvo, Joey Pascarella, Josh Hayes, Brian Klock, Ed Kretz Jr., Donna Kretz, and Keith Code.

Why We Ride is a highly recommended view, and if you're a rider you'll be dying to put your two cents' worth into answering that question. ■

The **Progressive International Motorcycle Show** is currently scheduled to be in Long Beach CA and Dallas TX next winter (along with a few cities in the East and Midwest).

Why We Ride has partnered with Italy's largest video game developer, Milestone, as it launches its latest creation, *RIDE*. The Digital Deluxe Edition of the game is on Steam and includes a digital download copy of the film *Why We Ride*, as well as a making-of booklet, a season pass to downloadable game content and a digital download of the game's soundtrack.

RIDE is also available in the US for Xbox One, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4, beginning May 19. *RIDE* allows players to ride over 100 bikes on a variety of city and country roads and historic circuits from the world of motorcycling.

By popular demand for a followup to *Why We Ride*, the film team has announced their next movie, *I Am Sturgis*, timed to coincide with this year's 75th anniversary of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, August 3-9. In recent years, the Sturgis rally has drawn half a million participants, but estimates for this year's anniversary rally surpass a million riders. Why We Ride Films figures there is no better time or place to capture the passion, dedication and camaraderie of the motorcycling community.

The group hopes to raise \$350,000 of the production budget through a Kickstarter campaign, with levels starting at \$5, which gets you a digital poster; to \$15, which gets you an early digital film download; up to \$75 or more, with increasing inclusions such as patches, pins, stickers, T-shirts and limited edition Blu-ray/DVD combo packs. Large-dollar donations range up to \$10,000, which earns you Co-Executive Producer status and a private theatrical showing in your home town.

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