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BIKER MOVIES

by Stu Segal

Part 1, FROM THE BEGINNING OF RECORDED HISTORY TO 1985.

A couple years back we reviewed all the biker movies we all had seen. This month we're going to give you a summary of that article, and next month we're going to give you Part 2, "Biker Movies & TV - 1985 to 1995".

The **must see** movies:

HHHH The Wild One (1954) - This is THE original, the classic, and some say THE biker movie. 50's "bikers take over the town" movie (inspired by actual events in Hollister, CA). We've all lived with both the "rebel without a cause" (Marlon Brando) and the "born loser" (Lee Marvin) images for the past 40 years - this film actually created the "biker" stereotype that we've all been branded with. This flick is just *really* dated, but you'd still probably enjoy it.

HHHH Easy Rider (1969) - This movie somehow defines the 60's, in an indescribable way (something like Woodstock or the Beatles). Two bikers chase the American dream - Peter Fonda is really hard to stomach (what an asshole), but Dennis Hopper comes across righteous, and Jack Nicholson (in a bit part) is as offbeat and entertaining as ever. GREAT soundtrack, great highway scenes, and a very different look at the 60's.

Also **highly recommended**:

HHH The Loveless (1983) - Willem Dafoe. Hard to find, but worth seeing.

HHH Mask (1985) - Cher, Sam Elliot.

HHH Hells Angels Forever (1983) - A decent documentary about HAMC.

Fairly entertaining:

HH On Any Sunday (1971) - Cycle racing documentary.

HH Hells Angels on Wheels (1967) - Jack Nicholson, Sonny Barger.

HH Run Angel Run - William Smith.

HH The Wild Angels (1966) - Peter Fonda, Bruce Dern, Nancy Sinatra.

Better **have a few brews** before ya watch these:

H Hells Angels 69.

H Little Fauss and Big Halsey (1970) - Robert Redford, Michael J. Pollard.

H Angels Die Hard (1970) - William Smith, Dan Haggerty.

H The Born Losers (1967) - Tom Laughlin (as Billy Jack).

H On Any Sunday II (1971).

H Knightriders (1983) - Ed Harris

Some **real bombs** (don't waste your time on these):

M C.C. and Company (1970) - Joe Namath.

M The Losers

M Streets of Fire (1984) - Michael Pare.

M Timerider (1983) - Great idea, lousy flick

M Hellriders (1985) - Adam West, Tina Louise (Yes indeed, TV's Batman and Gilligan's Ginger).

BIKER MOVIES & TV - Part 2

Last month we covered most of the biker-type movies up to 1985. Now there haven't been exactly a deluge of biker movies in the last 8-10 years, but there has been *some* interesting stuff.

MOVIES

In the last couple years there's a few flicks I know of:

H Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man (1991) - I've watched this a couple times - it starts of good and becomes a stupid boring piece of shit. Stars Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson. The redeeming quality is Rourke's acting (always strange - no exception here). The bike Rourke rides *is* righteous - it's an exact copy of his own scoot (but they made an 80c.i. copy for the flick cause his 98 inch stoker allegedly couldn't handle the low-speed camera shots).

HHH Roadside Prophets (1992) - John Doe, with bit parts by Timothy Leary, Arlo Guthrie, David Carradine & John Cusack. Offbeat story about a biker who gets seriously diverted trying to do a good deed for a downed bro. Makes me think of that line from the Janis Joplin song - *Freedom's just another word for "nothin left to lose"*. The acting's inconsistent, ranging from some terrific performances to some real melodrama. A strange but compelling story, and probably the best bike flick I've seen in a decade. See this one, if you can find it.

HH Beyond the Law (1992) - Supposedly true story of an Arizona cop who infiltrates the Arizona and California clubs, and whose investigation results in 200 arrests for drug trafficking and murder. Good performance by star Charlie Sheen, who plays a cop lured to the dark side. Once again however, a stereotypical treatment of bikers (as vicious morons). Some interesting inconsistencies (for those who would notice), like the rigid frame shovel the cop builds, which somehow incredibly metamorphosizes into a softail blockhead.

M Stone Cold (1991) - Really bad flick about a cop (Brian Bosworth), all decked out in his bleached blond moussed hair, designer jeans, and face shaved cleaner than a baby's behind, who incredibly infiltrates an outlaw club. This guy couldn't infiltrate kindergarden. Again, depiction of bikers as vicious imbeciles. A movie which really makes you question Hollywood's intelligence.

TELEVISION

An interesting phenomenon (and incidentally, the reason I felt compelled to come out of my garage long enough to write this article) is the TV exposure we've seen the last two years.

The only TV prior was (you old guys remember) Then Came Bronson. I didn't watch the show, but I remember it starring Michael Parks, who rode an XLCH, and was a biker constantly on the road doin good stuff for people (kind of like the David Kimball or the Kwai Chang Cain of motorcycles). I heard it was a good show, and depicted bikers fairly. Even if that's true, one very obscure show in the entire history of television certainly couldn't make up for the undeserved stereotyping of bikers that the movie industry and media have been guilty of since the mid 50's.

So now I innocently flip through the channels and I see guys on Hogs, and cartoon bikers. Who are these guys, where did they come from, and what does it mean to us?

HH Time Trax (syndicated 1 hour weekly show) - The story of Darien Lambert, a cop from the future, who's been sent back in time to capture fugitive criminals who've escaped through time to 1994. Although this is *not* a biker show, nor does it depict a biker lifestyle, the lead character does ride a Heritage (and he occasionally expresses his

pleasure at riding - apparently there are no Harleys in the future, and the Harley is the single best thing he's found in 1994). Lambert is about the cleanest cut, most all-American boy you've ever seen (you've never seen *this* guy in a go-go bar or at Plain Jane's) - but you know, I *like* people who like Harleys and who like to ride. Like I said at the beginning, this isn't a biker show - it is sci-fi set in the present. It's fairly well acted, and some of the plots are innovative. PS. - Lambert never wears a helmet. PPS - Since I wrote this, the show's been cancelled - but you can still catch the reruns.

M Renegade (Syndicated weekly one hour show, coincidentally, a Stu Segall production - no, it's not me). - I can't believe how bad this show is. The story of Reno Raines (Lorenzo Lamas), an excop framed for murder by the bad guy cops who he ratted out; and after being convicted, and somehow escaping, he's now on the run. I'm amazed how this dangerous fugitive can ride around on his Harley, without a helmet (in a state which has a helmet law) and never attract the Heat. Every week he winds up being Robin Hood - he rights every wrong, saves every maiden, and slays every dragon - all while riding his Hog flat out, firing his 9mm at the bad guys. I guess what really gets me is how he rides through rain, dust, trails, and highways, all without ever mussing his blow-dried hair. What I see is weak plots and *really* bad acting. Although Renegade is not a comedy, you might get a few laughs out its feeble-mindedness. (I still can't figure out who watches this show.)

HHH Biker Mice from Mars - This is a HHH show for KIDS UP TO AGE 8, not for you. (If you watch the commercials you'll see who the show's really for). A 1/2 hour weekly cartoon about 4 Martian mice (a Martian mouse has a mouse head, on a Schwarzenegger body) who ride bikes. Don't ask me how they got here from Mars, but the "mice" have earrings, tats, refer to each other as "bros", etc. The plots are very simplistic (good vs. evil). The biker mice, although pretty bad looking dudes, exhibit all the attributes of honesty, loyalty and bravery that any true biker, American, or parent would be proud of. The subliminal message to kids here is not to judge a book by its cover - even bad looking bikers can be heroes. This is the kind of show that will ultimately change public opinion (favorably) toward bikers. (A warning, just in case you do watch - the mice ALWAYS wear their helmets).

HHH The Lazy Man's Zen This was a 1 hour special that ran on the Discovery Channel. If you can catch it, I think you'll like it. Interviews with real people, all focussed on why they ride. These guys cover it all - Harleys (stock, chopped, touring), crotch rockets, Bonneville Salt Flats, etc. A very objective look at bikers and motorcyclists.

SO WHAT'S IT ALL MEAN??? I don't know about you, but in the last 2 years I've noticed a lot more little kids looking, and waving, when they hear me coming. I have no delusions (I haven't done anything to change my image) - characters like the Biker Mice, Reno Raines, and Darien Lambert are creating a new understanding and image of bikers. Let's not kid ourselves - we will never change the biases of the grown-up citizens, but it's the kids who watch these shows who will someday run this country. Even though they're not all great shows, it's terrific that the public's finally seeing shows that depict people on bikes as something other than Attila the Hun - I hope all these shows get renewed next season, and hope we see even a few more.

(Authors note - I'm interested in all good biker movies, TV, books, etc. If there's anything you think I should include in our next reviews, either write me or call me at Steel Publications {look in the front for the address}, or get me online at khst80a@prodigy.com. Make sure you either send me the tape or book, or tell me where I can get it - if I can't get it, I can't review it.) - *STU*