

# Barnstorm Cycles' Brick and Mortar Show

The future of motorcycles is in good hands By Stephen Long

**N**EVER A DULL MOMENT: AN IDIOM that knows no bounds. As I took off from the Bronx, bound north for Spencer, Massachusetts, the locale of the first annual Brick and Mortar show hosted by Barnstorm Cycles, the universe seemed to have other plans for me. The crisp air finally hinted at the arrival of autumn here in the Northeast—the best riding weather in my opinion—and the utter lack of city traffic gave the illusion that benevolent serendipity had once more intervened on my behalf. Not quite.

Some 90 miles north of home, I pulled over to stretch and check the map (digitally, of course). And when I pressed my starter button to conquer the final 60 miles ahead of me, I heard a dreaded sound: clicking. I pushed twice more before stopping to rationalize my issue. About 40 minutes later, with my side covers and seat popped off, a good-hearted gentleman asked if I was all right. After assessing the situation, we came to the conclusion that there were multiple conclusions, and the only way to get me on my way was to bumpstart it. “Just don’t shut it off,” he said. Good thing I was heading to a bike show hosted at a bike shop, eh? I’ll be sure to pay his kindness forward somewhere down the road.

I pulled into the quaint town of Spencer with a pang in my gut as I knew I’d have to turn the bike off for several



hours. But as I made the right down Wall Street and parked along a row of Harleys, my nervousness subsided and excitement took hold. Few things cure what ails you like a bike party.

And that’s exactly what the crew at Barnstorm Cycles delivered. This was the first-ever Brick and Mortar show, an effort by notable young gun Jake Cutler to put his work and his shop on the motorcycle community’s radar. (As if he needs the help. Jake was an invited builder to Michael Lichter’s Old Iron – Young Blood show in Sturgis last year, and his custom Knuckle was featured in *AIM* #368.) But as we all know, so much

of what makes being a rider great is the vast and ever-expanding community of motorcyclists. And the best way to bring all these different parties together is with a party itself. The Brick and Mortar show was a valiant effort by the Barnstorm Cycles crew to gather riders from the Northeast on the friendly confines of their mini-compound: a family-friendly atmosphere, lots of mild and wild customs, and some killer BBQ thanks to Big T’s Jerky House.

Immediately apparent upon my arrival was the familial bond between many of the attendees and the Barnstorm staff. Everyone was greeted







with a smile — sometimes a hug — and conversations often delved past ho-hum pleasantries. Noticeably absent was blaring music, topless women, and the perpetual boozing so often abundant at bike-centric events. It made for a laid-back day focused on bikes and meeting interesting people, many from the area who knew Jake.

The shop grounds were lined with ride-in bikes, all bestowed with paper bags for attendees to vote on their favorites. The most well-represented bike was the Dyna, as plenty of customized FXRs were on hand. But that didn't overshadow the ever-popular Shovelheads and Ironheads from pulling in — we even saw a former *AIM* feature bike, Nick Corbone's Sportster from issue #352.

Inside, the two-level Barnstorm shop housed a couple of bike projects on lifts, four custom bikes in the front of the shop, an ugly tattoo competition also open to visitor voting, and an upper level where the invited builders had their bikes on display, notably Truth Choppa-head's effervescent Evo, Leif's Knucklehead, John Strobel's hardtail Sportster, and Gary Jones' Panhead.

As midday gave way to evening, there was no mistaking New England's season had turned, as the chill set in and a fire was blazing. To keep the masses satisfied, Jake's father, Doug, hosted slow races with rubber-covered barrels and a twist on the hot dog-biting contest, with dangling donuts tantalizing backseat chompers. These friendly competitions added to the clean fun served up by Barnstorm, with the crowd gathered at the front of the driveway to watch and laugh together. What



really brought the crowd to life was a handshift chopper struggling to come to a stop with his buddy on back, the rider eventually exclaiming, "Get the hell off!" just before running into a loading dock. I'm happy to report that only one donut was actually bitten, though each was licked enough to have no glaze left.

The genial nature of the Brick and Mortar show created a sense of ease and calm, with the decibel level considerably lower than that which you'd be accustomed to at an event such as this. (Surrounded by residential houses, it'd be best for all neighbors to play nice.) As the day drew to a close, more raffles were announced, V-twins rumbled off into the darkness, and friends mingled in the glow of the overhead shop lights and ambient bulbs hanging from the second level of the outdoor industrial shelves.

In many ways, this is the ideal motorcycle event. A giant name in the industry, one that's only going to continue to grow, hosts an understated gettogether to highlight local talent and help share the limelight on the rest of the community. Jake spent

most of the day speaking and giving time to anyone who approached him, and eventually his massive Alaskan malamute, Max, accompanied him as he made the rounds.

The Brick and Mortar show is an affirmation of communal support. The Barnstorm Cycles shop played host to other builders; over 100 riders showed up to line the street and support Barnstorm's inaugural show; even nonriders walked the grounds with young children in tow, perhaps planting the seed of two-wheeled passion that will one day blossom into the obsession that we all can't shake. Brick and mortar businesses are experiencing a revival, as many of us reject major corporations and buy local, and the Brick and Mortar show exemplified the grassroots motorcycle growth that our pastime desperately needs.

When it came time for me to tear into the impenetrable darkness of eastern Massachusetts, my bike again didn't start. Only the community was right there to lend a hand, this time in the form of a jump-start (thanks, Mark V!). Support the community, and it will support you right back. **AIM**