

*Godspeed Simoncelli*

NOVEMBER 2011

# CITY @ BIKE

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## 'LA DUCATI DAY' AT LA HONDA

You've been wrong all these years. Dead wrong, I tellya.

You think of Ducati as an effete Italian marque with Monster attitude? Understandable. It's that weird desmodromic valve gear, the dry-clutch death rattle, those espressos and lattes that create a contact high, the glove-soft Dainese gloves made from Certified Virgin Kangaroo Skin (those sweet little female 'roos were cosseted immigrants with Italian citizenship before Giving Their All as race gear).

Then those Superbike championships like Checa's latest, Casey defying the laws of race rubber, physics and thermodynamics, doing win-or-bin deeds with MotoGP bikes that we know couldn't be done (ask Vale), Nicky proving that Character and Class Endure, that Multistrada with ECU software settings that convert it from a city commuter to a long-distance tourer to a raging sport bike and everything in between, like some sort of crazy Transformer—at a price.

Yeah, *that* Ducati. From Bolgna, Italy. No baloney.

You were wrong, baby. Dead wrong. La Ducati Day at La Honda proves it. Now in its eighth year, the 2011 event showed that Ducatisti are bike nuts and fun-loving humans who will accept you whatever you ride. Eight years, 2000 visitors a year, five figures raised for the La Honda Volunteer Fire Brigade, closing on a six-figure total as of 2011.

Event Founder and Chairman John Clelland put it all together eight years ago. Big, bearded, enthusiastic, he's a long-time Peninsula rider who also arranges Bike Nights from Marin to the East Bay to the Peninsula. Clelland visited the La Honda firehouse in 2003 and checked their archaic EMT gear ("Vintage crap," as he put it). He knew what we risk on hypersports bikes. He wondered about their priorities. They told him.

"House and home safety is our #1. Then car and truck accidents. Third is lost pets, loose livestock. Motorcyclists? Down in fourth." Not only that, but—as the local sheriff will tell you, if you ask nicely—some local nut

job spread oil and roofing nails on the road west of La Honda, back a few years, and caused accidents to bikers. Sweet, eh?

How, Clelland wondered, do they raise funds for EMT gear? "Our annual pancake breakfast for the locals raises about \$200," they told him. He looked over that Stone Age EMT gear and knew that bikers screwing up or being unlucky on high-performance motorcycles needed better. La Ducati Day was born, benefiting the Fire Brigade.

Long-time supporters include Leo Vince exhaust and Motion Pro, and the show brings machines that belong at The Quail (and go there)—Ducatis going back decades, including bevel-gear singles and twins, F1 750s, up to AFM championship winner Joey Carillo's Desmosedici. Plus Gileras, Bimotas, even (gasp, shudder) old Brit bikes.

With luck, *CityBike* will team with Clelland for a joint celebration next year. Head down the hill from Alice's on 84 (terrific slice of road) and see for yourself. It's all in a good cause and you could be an eventual beneficiary.

—John Joss

## NEW STUFF NOVEMBER 2011

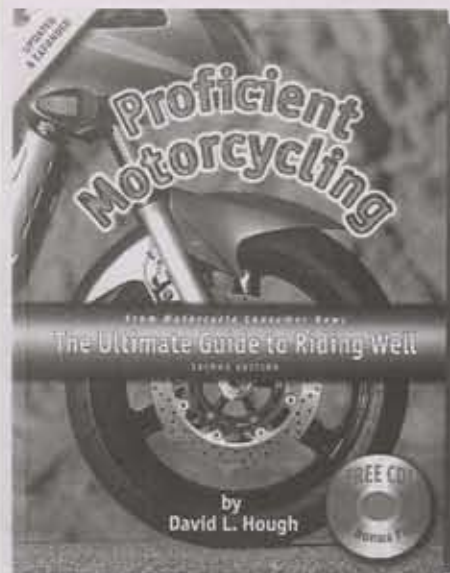
### BOOK REVIEWS:

*I-94 Reader: Eclectic Stories and Rides*

By Rand Rasmussen. Aero Design Publishing, \$7, 64 pages, [aerostich.com](http://aerostich.com), 800/222-1994

As soul-sucking and horrid an experience as riding on I-5 from Ess Eff to El Lay is, there are other roads that can equally kill the hopes and dreams of a young motorcyclist. Apparently, I-94 between Fargo and Minneapolis is such a ride. Aero Design's publishing arm has produced an anthology of short fiction and essays from Rand Rasmussen that "read as true as the endless Midwestern prairie itself. Stories about piloting a road and a life, accompanied closely by the thrum of a BMW R65 and the essential feelings and experiences of pure motorcycling." We

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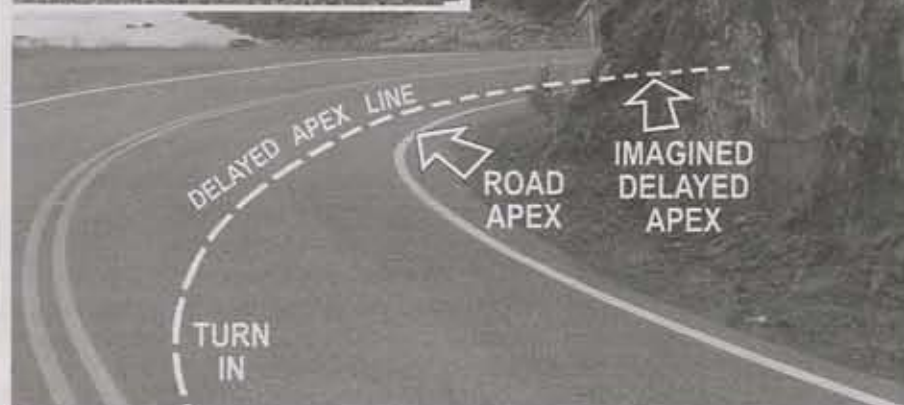


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haven't read it, but sounds like it's worth seven bucks. Check it out.

**The Man Who Would Stop At Nothing: Long-Distance Motorcycling's Endless Road**

By Melissa Holbrook Pierson.  
W.W. Norton Company,  
\$24.95, 191 pages, books.  
www.norton.com

When we sit down to read stuff about motorcycles, it's usually pretty technical stuff—motorcycle and product reviews, how-to articles, race reports. That's probably because the stuff written that tries to dig deeper, tries to find out why

we ride is generally pretty bad. It's hard to write that stuff, as why people like to ride is

varied, and the universal truth stuff, well, we've heard it. After 120 years of two-wheel motorized travel, there isn't much new to say. Unless it's really well written, that kind of thing just isn't that interesting.

Luckily, there is Melissa Holbrook Pierson. Pierson's first motorcycling book, *The Perfect Vehicle* captured my attention as she detailed her own journey into motorcycling as well as a history of the sport as a whole, possibly doing the best job I've read explaining our passion to outsiders. That brilliance is continued in *The Man Who Would Stop at Nothing*, where Pierson introduces us to the extreme long-

distance (LD) world as it's practiced by our friends in the Iron Butt Association.

In particular, she follows one particularly obsessed rider, the handsome, brilliant, eccentric and diabetic John Ryan, holder of some amazing LD records and accomplishments. Like in *Perfect Vehicle*, she places herself into the story, chronicling her re-introduction into motorcycling and her dabbling with LD riding.

As the book progresses, we start to get an idea of the appeal of LD riding, and what motivates the practitioners of what is admittedly a sport, if a twisted, insane one. Pierson examines the Iron Butt organization, its members and its history, making the insanity of riding for riding's sake—rather than getting to a specific destination—seem almost reasonable. The writing is fast-paced and compelling, her research is impressive, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Well worth the time, it's a good read not just for anybody who has spent hours and hours droning through the dark when there are a dozen more pleasant ways to travel, but for non-riders who wonder why anybody would want to expose themselves to such discomfort when a Honda Accord will get you there just as well. Again, check it out.

—Gabe Ets-Hokin

**ROLAND SANDS DESIGNS RONIN JACKET**

We all know Roland Sands for his *haute couture* custom motorcycles, motorcycles that, unlike a lot of custom-built creations, can go, stop and corner as good as they look. It'd be nice if you could say the same about moto-apparel, no? Our lumpy, middle-aged bodies can be clad in functional, protective riding gear, or we can wear stylish stuff that doesn't protect us from the elements and crashes as well as it could. If only Roland could make us a cool-looking jacket...

So you probably know where this is going, right? Exactly. Roland Sands Designs has indeed announced a new line of fashionable riding jackets made of unusual materials like waxed canvas and oiled leather. The \$590 "Ronin" jacket looked so good Editor Ets-Hokin felt compelled to ask for one to test, and to his amazement, one actually arrived a few days later.

It's a really nice jacket. It's made of 1.2mm washed and waxed cowhide (bonus points, say we, for being made in India rather than China), with an aggressive cafe-racer fit. It's loaded with details—perforated leather lining and underarm vents, embossed RSD logos (rather than the huge, tasteless logos the other brands make you display on your riding gear) and a universe of interesting pockets inside and out. And thanks (doubtlessly) to Sands' history as a roadracer (he took an AMA 250GP

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