

Photography – Getting your bike into a magazine.

Taking it to a show competition

You have now built your bike and you will no doubt be riding and enjoying the fruits of your labours. You may wish to show it in a custom bike show competition. This will cost you money to get the bike to and from the show and sometimes competition is strong. Occasionally a well known builder and sometimes the builder of a quality custom can be paid by show organisers, usually in travel costs and hotel costs, although this is not common. If your bike is unusual or innovative the show organisers may be convinced enough to dip their hands in their pockets. You can ask.....he who dares, etc, etc.....you know what I mean. To convince them they will need a photograph and detailed spec of your bike. You may also want to interest a magazine into using your bike as a feature. Magazines need a constant source of bikes to use and why not yours? Each magazine has its own set of criteria for considering what sort of bikes they will use. Usually the magazines in your own country will make a judgement on whether to send a photographer to take pictures of your bike. They may take pictures in your local area or they may arrive with a demountable screen to use as a backdrop.

If you wish to have the strongest chance of seeing your bike in print you must make it easy for the magazine to consider using your bike.

- Detailed Spec. Provide them with a detailed spec of you bike. They won't use all the details, but it is better to give them too much rather than too little. Putting it on Microsoft Word and sending by email facilitates this even more. See our detailed Spec sheet for you to complete.
- Photograph. Send one photograph of the right side only, showing a full side on view. The preference these days is to use a digital camera. Provide a JPEG picture of reasonable resolution.....about 2MB.You can then put the picture on a CD and also send a printed hard copy as well. The printed copy is very important. Don't forget that journalists are busy people with deadlines to meet. They also have to deal with masses of information sent from many different sources. Providing them with a single and simple package of details about your bike will move your bike to the top of the journo's considerations. They can see your printed picture without having to go to the trouble of first putting it into their CD drive. They will have a pile of CD's to wade through and if they see the picture they can then decide if it's worthy of more consideration. Make it difficult for him to consider using your bikes details and your bike will move further down his pile of potential bike features.

High Quality Pictures

You will see a couple of bikes in this book as well as my brochure which have had a full studio photo shoot. I have then transferred these high resolution TIFF files (each picture is approx. 20MB) onto a CD along with the detailed specification and then sent to all the HD magazines in the world. The bikes then appeared in about six magazines, a couple as cover features as well as approx. six page features inside. This goes to prove that it is not an easy process to get any bike into print. Having a range of high quality and high resolution pictures will get into a magazine than a few slightly out of focus, low resolution pictures. The latter will reach the waste bin very quickly, irrespective of the quality of the bike.

Freelance Journalists

There are a number of these people in most country's' around the world. You can often find their names signed against magazine features that are not permanent staff members listed. These guys are always looking for bikes to use and why not yours. Usually they don't pay any

money to use your bike, but does that matter if they can get your bike featured? You may also find these on the internet.

Photo Shoot

- 1. This will not be cheap and you will be careful to select the right photographer along with good studio conditions using the correct lighting**
2. Copyright. If you want to have exclusive rights to use the photographs, get a simple form of words for the photographer to sign assigning all copyright to you.
- 3. Shots. Make a list of the various shots before the shoot starts. Studio time costs money (your money) and your own time. Before the shoot is free and you can go to the studio prepared. If you come away without a good number and range of shots you will have wasted your time and money. Tell the photographer which shots you want, He may also have ideas of alternative shots, which is worth considering. As a basic minimum take the following shots**
 - Full square on side view of both sides
 - 45 degree side view from front and rear on both sides
 - 45 degree top view from front and rear over centre of bike
 - Other shots of special features
4. Number of shots. Some photographers snap away taking many, many shots some of which may not be necessary. It is only important to come out of the studio session with the minimum number of useful shots, every one of which is of a high quality. If any modifications of these pictures on Adobe Photoshop are required, get the photographer to do these before he supplies them to you.
5. Prepare the bike for photography. As you take it in, clean the tyres. The studio floor should be very clean and probably newly painted white. Tyre marks will show on the floor and highest quality pictures will need them removed digitally after...at a cost! Carefully clean the bike and polish out even the smallest marks and blemishes for although you may not be able to see them when standing a couple of yards away from the bike.....the camera will.
6. Studio. This should be a purpose built studio with coving at the junction between floor and wall. This eliminates seeing the line between wall/floor and gives the background a limitless appearance. The ceiling above the area where the bike is to be photographed should be painted white. Alternatively a suspended white screen can be placed above. The floor and walls must also be white. Movable white screens may also be needed each side and in front of the bike with a small hole for the camera lens. It is important to eliminate all potential coloured reflections from your polished and chrome surfaces. Chrome and polished parts will take on the colour of nearby surroundings. On a previous photo shoot with a bike of mine there was a bare brown wooden ceiling which made the chrome exhaust appear brown. The photographer then rigged up a suspended white screen above the bike which cured the problem. Attention to such detail is important in achieving a successful photo shoot.
7. TIFF 20 MB pictures. By taking the shots of the complete bike with this size picture, it will allow you to create close up cut out pictures of certain features without going out of focus or becoming pixillated. This is a very important point to consider which you ignore at your peril, and which can be avoided if you advise the photographer before the shoot starts



High Resolution Original



Close up taken from same picture



Low Resolution Original



Close up taken from same picture

8. Model. Having a model can be helpful in getting your bike featured in a magazine. However it will not ensure this happens, especially if the model is not right or uses poses which are not tasteful. If you use a model, make sure you have a complete set of pictures without the model. That way you will still have these even if the model pics turn out to be a flop. Also, I think most magazine readers are more interested in the bike and not some pouting female contortionist. Make sure the model knows where the pictures are going to be used and ask her to sign a disclaimer from asking for any additional fees. This disclaimer will also state the pictures will be used in a wide variety of media such as magazines, catalogues, adverts, posters. Getting a signature on such a document at this stage may prevent amass of problems and additional costs later. If a photographer from a magazine is taking the pictures and supplying the model, you have little choice of who the model is. If you choose a model, take great care in the choice

- Models are usually hired on a daily rate
- Professional models are expensive

- Amateur models are usually too inexperienced and not available during normal business hours
- Semi professional models can be very suitable and cheaper to hire than professional models
- Look on model agencies on the internet
- Select someone who has a combination of looks, figure and personality
- Choose someone who can improvise and suggest poses and use their own initiative.
- Ask her to bring her own wardrobe. Any further clothes or props you will need to bring
- Some models will expect a further fee for topless or nude photography. Check this out before you hire her.
- During the shoot provide a private changing area and look after her with drinks, breaks and encouragement. If a full days shooting is being done, it can be very stressful and tiring. It's difficult for her to keep smiling over a series of hundreds of shots and you will need to keep her spirits up, even though you may be tired, if you want lots of high quality pictures. Remember, she may have no interest in motorcycles and over a day of shooting she will get tired. A sense of humour and constant encouragement is helpful.
- Work out what the shots will be in advance. Hiring a photographer, studio and possibly a model will not come cheap and if you have to work out what all the shots will be on the day this will waste valuable shooting time and more important – your money.
- Hiring a model who is experienced can also save you time and money. If she knows how to do her makeup, hair and how to work with the camera, you will get through many different shots. A variety of shots with the model sitting, standing, lying down, holding parts, sitting on the bike, standing behind or in front will allow the resulting pictures to be used for a variety of purposes
- Take as many shots as possible if you using a model. Some of the shots will see her looking into space being bored, looking the wrong way, looking depressed, thinking of going home. Taking many shots will allow you to select only the good ones. Taking fewer shots will leave you with even less to use.



Model looking less than 100%

This is a stunning model and the above picture show her looking less than 100%. Over a long day of hundreds of shots, tiredness creeps in over many hours and holding what to her are just boring lumps of metal leaves her at times not showing her best. You must check as you proceed with the shoot that you have all the 'useable' pictures you need. When the shoot finishes and the model is paid and goes home, it is then too late if you then discover you don't have enough good shots. Digital pictures can be retouched using Adobe Photoshop.....an unsmiling model can't be fixed with smile.

9. Demountable screen

Create your own studio effect by putting a screen behind your bike as a backdrop. Use a decorator's dust sheet, which should be big enough to cover the length of your bike as well as a bit more. You can dye it different colours and choosing a colour which is not too dark and fairly neutral will not detract the attention away from your bike. The screen mustn't be the same colour as the bike, or too multi-coloured or brash to clash and draw attention from your bike.

10.CD. Have all the digital Tiff images supplied on CD's. Take them home and check their quality. If possible use the photographer's computer to check the quality before you leave. It's a good sign if you see the photographer constantly check the quality of his work as he proceeds. If the number of shots and the quality is below that agreed, it is better to have them re-shot before you leave. Further on and if there is any dispute which cannot be resolved by agreement the list given to the photographer will be important in helping to decide who is at fault. Quality of the photographs will be evidence itself. Make sure you keep this.

11. Photographer. Choose carefully. If you can help it don't go for film photography. They will probably use many rolls of film, which you will pay for. Digital photography is cheaper and allows details of the pictures to be digitally manipulated. For instance, you can insert an image of yourself behind the bike to look like you were there when the bike picture was taken. You can also alter the contrast and brightness digitally.



Original picture



Digitally altered picture with added people

Finding a photographer is more difficult than it sounds. Finding a name from yellow pages is easy and when you call them and ask if they can take some pictures they will no doubt agree. Taking bike pictures is not as easy as it sounds. You need to find one

- At the right price
- Who appreciates the need to consider how to treat chrome and polished parts to avoid any unsightly reflections that can ruin pictures
- Who understands the need for a good background
- Who agrees that you will retain copyright
- Includes any digital retouching of pictures. If pictures need digital alteration, then it's his fault and not yours. Therefore it's his time at his cost to put them right!
- Who has a good studio. If you need a studio then access for the bike is important. Check out exactly the size and exact studio conditions and if possible go and see the studio yourself before you commit. If you see a lot of equipment lying around and lots of backdrops, screens, ladder, fan and other stuff, it's likely that he is well geared up. Don't forget this is your one and only chance to get it done right. Make sure everything is perfect. Don't forget

you are the director of photography and you will have to plan and list all the shots before the shoot and give this list to the photographer. Keep a copy of this list yourself.

- Ask friends for the name of a good photographer.
- Ask a dealer who builds custom bikes as they would probably have previously used the services of a good photographer who is well versed in taking bike pictures. One word of warning from personal experience. I hired a photographer based on a recommendation of a dealer friend who had previously used him. The photographer had taken shots without any specific directions from this friend and assumed he could do the same with my shoot. The set of pictures in the subsequent shoot with my bike turned out disastrous. The photographer was eager to get it right and a new shoot in a studio went ahead. The background/foreground was ok. The floor/wall newly painted white. The bike was prepared and wheeled in and some test shots taken. This shoot was concentrating on good shots of my exhaust systems. These early pictures showed up long brown colours on the chrome. The wooden floorboards/rafters above were on the exhaust. The ever professional photographer then rigged up a massive temporary wooden frame covered in white paper, installed metal hooks in the 5 metre/16 ft high ceiling and suspended this above the bike. Another frame covered in more white paper was rigged up in front of the bike and pictures were shot through a six inch hole cut in it for the lens of the camera. This photo shoot could have been a near total waste but was rescued by a good photographer who quickly learned to put things right.
- You can check the resolution of the digital pictures by using some software such as Adobe Elements (inexpensive alternative to Adobe Photoshop) and focusing onto a small part of the picture and blowing it up much larger. Each picture should be 18MB Tiff at A4 size. If you want to use the picture for a poster you will need to take a transparency on film and use a commercial scanner to create a digital picture up to 200MB. For technical requirements check with a printer. **For technical reasons make sure the pictures are taken as Tiffs.**

12. Once you have the high quality pictures on CD as well as detailed spec, you can copy the CD and send it to as few or as many as you want. If you need the addresses of the worlds HD mags let me know and I can send them to you by email. ...

13. There is one use I have used pictures for that most readers will not need to do. Because I make exhaust systems I need to have pictures of these systems mounted on a bike for advertising and promotional purposes. I have on occasion digitally changed bike pictures by removing the real exhaust and digitally replaced them with one of mine.



Original picture



Digitally altered picture