

THE AMA MOTORCYCLIST OF THE YEAR

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger

By Rob Dingman

No question—2010 was an up-and-down year for motorcycling.

Our lifestyle has been under attack from a number of sources. The economy has battered the motorcycle industry. Off-road riding areas are being targeted like never before. Youth motorcycles and ATVs continue to be in the crosshairs of federal law. Cities and now the largest state in the country have passed misguided laws targeting excessive motorcycle sound.

At the same time, there were notable victories. Citizen activists have been successful at passing laws and raising public consciousness about the dangers of distracted driving. Motorcyclists worked hard for pro-motorcycling candidates, locally and nationally, in the November elections. On the track, Team USA was victorious on the world motocross stage.

When it came time to decide who would be the AMA Motorcyclist of the Year (MOTY) for 2010, it was a tough choice.

The MOTY is not a popularity contest or a lifetime achievement award. It is designed to highlight the person (or people) who has had the most profound impact on the world of motorcycling -- for better or worse -- in the previous 12 months. By that measure, the field narrowed considerably. And in discussions of the changing motorcycling landscape in one of its most challenging years in decades, one name kept rising to the top: California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

A well-known motorcyclist who has never shied away from controversy in his tenure as California's head of state, Schwarzenegger quietly signed a piece of legislation late in the year that has rocked the motorcycling world and will impact motorcyclists in other states for years to come. It's ironic that the intended goal of the legislation—to quiet loud motorcycles, which is also a goal of the AMA—will be difficult to achieve, while the legislation itself will have far-ranging unintended consequences.

The legislation was Senate Bill 435, and it requires all new motorcycles built after 2013 to carry a stamp on the exhaust system certifying that it meets federal EPA sound requirements. While the law's goal may be well-intentioned, the way it's written is potentially troubling, as it doesn't address the core of the sound problem.

A certification stamp doesn't keep riders from drilling out baffles, for example. Nor does the lack of a certification stamp mean that a given muffler is too loud. The better answer would be for law enforcement to test the sound levels of individual motorcycles perceived to be too loud.

In fact, a new standard developed by the Society for



Automotive Engineers, in conjunction with the Motorcycle Industry Council, sets reasonable limits and straightforward procedures for doing just that. That standard, called J2825, is a thoughtful approach to a complex problem.

Perhaps most significantly, history has shown us that what happens in California can—and often does—become the law of the land elsewhere. We need look no further than the California Air Resources Board, and its far-reaching air-pollution laws, for proof of that. We expect a similar impact in the years to come with this latest exhaust-stamp law.

Of course, while this latest California law has drawn the attention of motorcyclists in California and beyond, it's also important to note that Gov. Schwarzenegger has, during his tenure, been a friend of motorcycling, as well. He's made key appointments in the off-road world that have done—and will continue to do—a lot of good for motorcyclists. In addition, as the state's Motorcyclist-in-Chief, he's done much to draw attention to motorcycling (and, after a high-profile crash in 2006, the need for motorcycle licensing).

Clearly, Gov. Schwarzenegger has impacted riders in his state and beyond—and likely for years to come. And for that, he fits the bill as the rider who has most affected motorcycling in 2010. As you can read starting on page 32, Arnold Schwarzenegger is the 2010 AMA Motorcyclist of the Year.

In closing, because you will be receiving this January issue in mid-December, together with everyone at the AMA I wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a joyous, restful and peaceful holiday season. And here's a toast to your health and achieving your goals in 2011!

Rob Dingman is president and CEO of the AMA.