



A TALE OF TWO MOVIES

By Rob Dingman

It never ceases to amaze me how many hundreds of motorcyclists I have met over the years who attribute their interest and passion for motorcycling to Bruce Brown's *On Any Sunday* documentary.

Having been only 5 years old when *On Any Sunday* hit theaters in 1971, the movie wasn't the motorcycling hook for me that it was for riders slightly older than me. Although I discovered Brown's production roughly twenty years later, the two-wheeled hook for me had been set by motorcycle daredevil Evel Knievel at roughly the same time as the debut of OAS in the summer of '71.

Although too young at the time to now be able to recall a specific jump that led to my fascination with Knievel, I remember all the hype leading up to his jumps, televised on ABC's *Wide World of Sports*. Whether leaping stacked cars, Mack trucks or Greyhound buses, the next jump always promised to be bigger and more dangerous than the last. I can still recall the disappointment when he failed to cross Idaho's Snake River Canyon in his rocket-powered Sky Cycle. Like many of you, I'm sure, I also had the greatest motorcycle toy of all time — the Evel Knievel stunt cycle and launcher.

I mention the influence of Knievel because in researching what was published by the AMA about *On Any Sunday* in 1971 (see page 54 for the entire writeup) I discovered a movie review that compared the film with another that came out at the same time, which starred George Hamilton in a movie called *Evel Knievel*.

The OAS review, which appeared in the September 1971 issue of *American Motorcyclist's* predecessor *AMA News*,

said this: "*On Any Sunday* possesses such impact, those who know motorcycling well are apt to find themselves disarmed and speechless, emerging from the theater repeating superlatives such as 'great' and 'fantastic' in an effort to verbalize their awe." The piece conveyed that *On Any Sunday* was likely to make viewers see motorcycling and motorcyclists in a positive light.

"Thousands of these viewers will be turned on by *On Any Sunday*," it continued, "introduced to the world of motorcycling in a way that will make it impossible for their fear or distrust to remain. Many will continue from the theater to their first Sunday outing, to witness the sport first hand. And even if they don't, they will come away from the film with a different regard for motorcycling that you will see revealed in their faces the next time they see you astride your road machine or towing your dirt bikes."

The reviewer told readers they would find it intensely self-gratifying to take someone who does not understand motorcycling to see *On Any Sunday*. By comparison, the review of *Evel Knievel* was not as flattering. I guess that's why we are still talking and writing about *On Any Sunday* today while few probably even remember that Hamilton once played the world's best-known motorcycle daredevil on the silver screen.

On Any Sunday continues to inspire and entertain today. Get one of your non-motorcyclist friends or family members to watch it with you. You will be glad you did.

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