

FUELING A COMEBACK

Motorcycle Industry Eyes Horizon Despite Hardship by Rob Dingman

The Great Recession of 2008 took a dramatic toll on the motorcycle industry, creating a new normal, which is not nearly as vibrant as what the industry once was.

The slowing economy, dip in disposable incomes and tighter credit controls could not have come at a worse time for motorcycle importers, aftermarket suppliers and dealers. While their customers were reeling financially, the technology sector—fueled by the inexpensive, constant and addictive stimulation of social media—captured even more attention from young consumers.

Add to that, ridiculous and detrimental government action—such as the proposed 100 percent tariff on many of the motorcycles imported from European Union countries in retaliation for those countries' failure to purchase enough beef from the United States—and the challenges multiply exponentially.

All of this presents some significant challenges for the motorcycle industry and the motorcycle-loving community represented by the AMA. We are in danger of losing an entire generation of motorcyclists.

Motorcycling companies are facing the challenge, however, and nowhere will that be more on display than at the annual American International Motorcycle Expo on Sept. 21-24 in Columbus, Ohio. Since 2013, this motorcycling business and enthusiast event for consumers, dealers, manufacturers and press, has been in Orlando, Fla. For the first time, in 2017, AIMExpo is coming to the home state of the headquarters of the AMA.

It makes sense that the premier powersports expo is in the Midwest. After all, 41 percent of franchised and independent dealers and 50 percent of the entire population of the U.S. are located

within a 500-mile radius of Columbus. Late September offers prime riding weather in Ohio, as well. With over 500 exhibitors, including all of the major motorcycle manufacturers, AIMExpo has something to offer everyone.

The success of AIMExpo is critical to the future success of the motorcycle industry in general. It is difficult to pick up a publication these days without reading bleak news about motorcycle sales.

Even those companies whose sales are flat or showing modest increases are relying on revenue from Asia and other parts of the world to prop up sagging North American sales.

The AMA has been an integral part of AIMExpo since we brought the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony to the event in 2014. The 2017 induction ceremony will once again be held in conjunction with AIMExpo.

While AIMExpo showcases products and services for the next riding season, the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame provides a connection to the rich legacy of American motorcycling. On Friday, Sept. 22, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, five new inductees will join the Hall of Fame.

They include FMF founder Donnie Emler Sr.; three-time AMA Hare Scrambles National Champion and nine-time Grand National Cross Country champion Eddie Lojak Sr.; world champion motocrosser and Road 2 Recovery co-founder Bob Moore; pioneering motorcycle filmmaker Peter Starr; and 2017 AMA Dud Perkins Lifetime Achievement Award recipient John Ulrich, who founded both *Roadracing World & Motorcycle Technology* magazine and the Roadracing World Action Fund.

In addition, flat-track tuner and

race team owner Bill Werner, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2000, will be honored as an AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Legend. Hall of Fame Legends are existing members of the Hall of Fame who are recognized alongside the new class each year.

The Hall of Fame induction ceremony is open to the public. The event includes a reception, a sit-down dinner and the induction ceremony. The cost is \$130 per person, or \$120 for AMA Life Members. Reserve your seat at www.americanmotorcyclist.com/induction.

The induction ceremony isn't the only AMA activity at AIMExpo. AMA Congress, the elected rule-making body for AMA-sanctioned amateur motorcycle competition, will convene alongside AIMExpo as well.

This annual meeting where delegates deliberate on the rules for amateur racing will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2017. To mark this milestone, it is fitting that it be incorporated into a larger event that provides activities for all motorcyclists, not only those interested in racing. This will facilitate greater involvement of AMA's recreational riding membership into this annual gathering.

In an effort to enhance opportunities for recreational riding, the AMA has been engaged in establishing AMA State Chapters to provide a more robust framework for utilizing the experience and knowledge of our recreational riding members at state and local levels. The 2017 AMA Congress also will host forums and seminars covering recreational riding subject matter.

Without question, the motorcycle industry continues to grapple with an uncertain future, but the passion of serious riders—such as those who, like you, are members of the AMA—never wanes. This September, thanks to the location and expansion of activities surrounding AIMExpo, those diehard riders will have a better opportunity to get a peek at the future of the sport they love, while celebrating its heritage.

Rob Dingman is AMA president and CEO.

