ROCKER & ROLLER

Rush Drummer Neil Peart Lives For Motorcycles. He's Also One Incredibly Thoughtful Guy.

By Rich Atkins

Neil Peart has clocked almost 300,000 miles on two wheels. And he still rides relentlessly.

Touring with the monumental group Rush, he's spent his nights behind the drum kit, driving the complex beats of "Tom Sawyer," "Sprirt of Radio," "Fly By Night"—and delivering some of rock 'n' roll's most iconic drum solos. He may even be, as some magazines have dubbed him, the world's greatest living rock drummer.

But during those tour *days*, he's on his motorcycle, riding between shows, covering 45,000 miles on two wheels in the past two years alone, traveling coast to coast, through Canada and Europe. And that's only the start of Peart's passion for motorcycles that has seen him chronicle some of his adventures in two books. *Roadshow* details his 2004 concert tour and the motorcycle journeys entertwined with it, while the more introspective *Ghost Rider* chronicles a wandering, 55,000-mile trip around North America for 14 months looking for a "way back to life" after family tragedies.

Of course, there is also his professional résumé, which could be the subject of endless discussion. Peart is an officer of the prestigious Order of Canada and is the drummer and lyricist with Rush, responsible for releasing 34 albums and selling more than 40 million units worldwide since 1974. Peart has, in fact, received so many awards from *Modern Drummer* and *Drum!* magazines, that he's ineligible for some of the award categories because he's swept the readers' polls too many times!

The real Peart is a true gentleman and a delightfully charming, generous, humble, humorous and erudite character. Peart's life experiences, writing, music, and motorcycling adventures are compellingly inspirational. Getting up close and personal is the perfect opportunity to explore his unique perspective on this shared gift of motorcycling.

Peart's most impressive quality is his dedication to achieving personal best in every aspect of life. There is a full enthusiasm for living, coupled with a careful consideration of precision in everything he does, and it's contagious.

By knowing and riding with him, you start to hear yourself say things like, "Make that turn the best turn you could possibly make," or "Ride that mountain road as though you'll never ride another!" Whether it's his lane position while riding, or dedication to always wearing complete riding gear for every ride, no matter how short, Neil's success derives from unyielding discipline. Realistically, how many average riders always wear full safety gear? Then again, how many average drummers can play "Tom Sawyer"?

Don Argento (marketing director of the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum) and I met with Neil to award him an Honorary Life Membership in the American Motorcyclist Association. Part of that get-together included a discussion about riding…

On His First Experience On Two Wheels

My first motorcycle experience was a real lesson! When I was about 12 years old, my dad let me have a mini-bike. I was riding it through an amusement park in Port Dalhousie, Ontario, the town where I grew up. I came to the end of the midway, near the beach, and there was sand across the tarmac. I slid sideways, and found myself riding across the door of a parked Volkswagen Beetle. There was a guy sitting in it reading a newspaper, and I still remember his shocked expression!

I only damaged that little chrome strip on the false runningboard of his Beetle. The guy agreed to meet me secretly so I could pay for the damage without my parents finding out. That scared me off motorcycles for a long time, and was a formative frightening experience—I didn't hurt myself, but it shook me up all right. That made me treat motorcycling with more respect, but still, I always said, "When I grow up, I'll get a motorcycle."

On Learning To Ride For Real

I started out with a very good training course, held at a college in Toronto, something equivalent to the MSF. It was a three-day course, and they drilled things like shoulder checks and lane position into my head for all time—instilling the basic life-protection techniques. Also, learning to handle a motorcycle wasn't easy for me, and it took three tries for me to pass that test—so that made me take it very seriously, too.

Later, I did a lot of reading of magazines and books on the subject. Anything that anybody had to say about safe and strategic riding, my ears were open. Now those strategies are so ingrained that, in the course of a ride, if I'm surprised by something that happens in traffic, I get mad at myself—it just shouldn't happen.

When I first started riding, a friend and early mentor of motorcycling, Joe Mendelson, gave me a sticker that said, "CONCENTRATE." I put that on my motorcycle, and the reminder was always there every time I'd start my bike. About six months later, I peeled it off. I wrote to Joe and said, "Joe, I'm confident enough on the machine now that I feel that if something happens, it won't be my fault." Joe wrote back, "It's always your fault"—which I understand. Of course, it doesn't account for a dump truck losing its brakes and T-boning you, volcanoes erupting, or any number of day-ruining things like that!

On What He Likes In A Bike

I always looked at BMWs, the old black-with-the-white-pinstripe kind, the old airheads. To me, that was what a motorcycle should look like. I always knew I would have a BMW when I rode.

The BMW GS model was the first bike I bought myself—the 1100 GS, around 1995 [the "Ghost Rider" bike, which covered over 100,000 miles and is currently displayed in the AMA Museum, along with Neil's custom drumset from Rush's 30th Anniversary Tour]. I've had an 1150 GS, and three 1200s, because there's no better bike for all the things that I like—it has the most flexibility, it's the ultimate expression of versatility. It's fast and agile enough for me on twisty paved roads, capable on gravel roads, and it's great for long distance. I like to ride a lot of dirt roads—the places they can take you to are interesting, and just surviving them can be a challenge, and thus a satisfaction. I look for a little bit of unpaved road somewhere just about every day, because that's part of the dual-sport mentality. I've ridden across the country a few times, and done the "Iron Butt" 1,000-mile day—as comfortably as that can ever be! Last summer I rode over 20,000 miles, and 25,000 the year before.

So I just need one bike, really—the GS. As far as a vehicle for my adventures, it's the perfect bike.

On Doing Concert Tours By Motorcycle

I've been touring the United States for 35 years. So I've covered a lot of territory, and a lot of roads. It's a matter of finding the most interesting ones. Maybe it's an area I haven't seen, a village on the map that looks interesting, or has an interesting name. A road I haven't been on before is endlessly attractive.

Basically, it's a way to combine a thing I have to do—which is work, like all of us—and being fortunate enough to be able to commute to work on the motorcycle. My bandmates prefer flying, so I tour with my own bus, for sleeping on, and a trailer for the bikes. After the show, we usually drive a few hours, then park in a rest area. We get up in the morning, have breakfast, unload the bikes, and start riding.

Every show day, I spend time on the bus putting together routes, looking at where we have to go, and how we might get there. Planning a day off allows a lot more latitude, but if it's a show day, I'll figure out how much traveling I can do off the beaten track and still get to work on time.

I like the term "shunpiking"—avoiding all major roads and seeking out the back roads, the gray lines on the map. I highlight the route I want to take and then give that to my riding partner, Michael (Mosbach), who will transfer it onto his computer and download it to our GPS receivers. We start the next day with the whole route mapped out, knowing how long it should take us.

On The Importance Of Punctuality

Our ETA on the show day is very important. Sound check is 5 p.m., so I like to be there by 3 p.m. or so to have time to look after the bike and myself—but at least an hour early. When I first started touring by motorcycle in 1996, the instructions I gave to my riding partner were, "If we're not there an hour early, we're late."

I decided from the beginning that there

was so much at stake with a show—you know, 10,000 people waiting for me to show up for work—I didn't ever want to be in that situation, so I have someone with me. If I have a problem that might cause a delay, I'll have to take my riding partner's bike and say, "Sorry, you deal with this!" Though I'm glad to say that's never happened.

I think our average day's ride is about 275

miles, and on days off, often much farther. I pick the most interesting location that I can get to between those places where I have to be. I've often said that every state has good roads. We go out and search for them.

On His Daily Riding

Motorcycling is a big part of my life at home here in California. My big Jesse cases each hold a full bag of groceries, and I always leave them on my bike. This is a good idea for riders to consider—because they can go grocery shopping, and take the long way home!

I spend a lot of time these days writing in front of the computer, so during the afternoon I just want to get out of the house. In a couple of hours time, I can have the most glorious ride in the world in the Santa Monica Mountains, blow the cobwebs out of my brain, then go do my errands.

Last week, for example, I had some business up in the Bay Area, about 400 miles away. So I rode up on my bike, did my business, and rode back the next day. I got a great road trip out of taking care of business. Motorcycling can mix with practical life in a lot of ways like that, if you think a little bit ahead.

If you have to go back and forth to work, maybe take an extra half hour and go the long way. If your route home is 10 miles, make it a 30-mile great ride! I learned that from my friend Brutus years ago, when we had to ride across Ontario from Quebec to Toronto. Brutus mapped some ridiculously complicated route on all the little county roads, and when we got there, I said, "Wow! That took nine hours!" He said, "Yeah, would you rather have fun for nine hours or be bored for six?" It was a very good and obvious lesson.

On Balancing The Physical And Mental Demands Of Playing With Rush At Night, Then Getting Out And Riding The Next Day

They are a good counterpoint to each other. Drumming requires three hours of performing at the limit of my physical and mental capabilities, and motorcycling is very demanding physically, and especially, mentally. The concentration necessary to do it correctly, safely, life-preservingly is enormous. It feels like the vibration of riding actually loosens up my sore muscles, so it's therapeutic in that way, and after so many years of concert tours, which can be tedious, motorcycling keeps me excited and challenged.

Some people think I'm a little nuts to keep up such a pace every day—like my wife—but it seems worth it, a fair exchange. If my day can be excellent in return for a little more exertion, then that is a hugely worthwhile trade for me. I will gladly sacrifice a little sleep for a hoped-for adventure.

My day peaks at 11 at night, and it takes some time to wind down. I'm not asleep until 2 a.m., but I want to maximize the next riding day, which means getting up early. I've learned to squeeze in little naps during the show day.

Here's a motorcycling and drumming analogy—it kills me, metaphorically, to make a mistake on stage. It's the worst feeling, especially because it's usually a loss of concentration—my thoughts have drifted when they shouldn't have. Maybe I've played something, literally, a thousand times, and I'll slip into that autopilot groove. Suddenly, I'm asking myself, "Am I playing the right verse?" As soon as I ask myself that question, I'm lost. But the consequences are only humiliation—I just feel like I've made a naked fool of myself in front of a large number of people.

On the road, the fear of mistakes—and their consequences—is the reason I'm so strict with myself. I concentrate, make sure I'm in the best place on the road, and try to do the right thing all the time. I don't want to be frightened or surprised, and I blame it on myself when I am.

On The Techniques And Riding Style He's Working On Now, And Always

Another very good analogy between drumming and motorcycling is that you never stop learning. I've been playing drums for 44 years, yet last year I studied with a teacher to work on big-band drumming. During a concert tour I have breakthroughs all the time—better control of time, better smoothness in transitions.

Talk about a metaphor for motorcyclists—smoothness and transitions!

On the bike, I work on smoothness all the time—with every aspect of bike-handling. I feel myself progress over time, and just this year I've felt an improvement in the seamlessness of my upshifts, for example—that perfect change in pitch you hear as racetrack pros change gears. Smoothness through corners can get better all the time. Dealing with traffic is a constant study.

Smoothness through a corner is control.

"He's very proficient—he's got a lot of miles under his belt. I've ridden with him on tour and also locally, and he's a totally different rider. When he's on tour, he's very conscious of—we're all very conscious of—the schedule. Michael and I joke: 'We must deliver Brother Neil unto the show unharmed.'"

Brian Catterson is the editor-in-chief of Motorcyclist magazine and rides just about everything, spending a lot of time these days on a Ducati Hypermotard.

"Another thing I learned from Neil is how to ride long distances. Before I met Neil, I would not have had the guts to load up my Ducati and head from Los Angeles to Cabo San Lucas and back with my girl on the back. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life."

Chris Stankee is an artist relations manager for Sabian Cymbals and rides a Ducati Multistrada or '68 Triumph Daytona.

Your smoothness will allow you to cut in a little sharper or go wider around a patch of gravel—you're equipped, because you're poised.

That's what it is, poise in motion. "Poise" doesn't sound like a kinetic word that would apply to motorcycling and being in motion, but if you feel that way, you're always ready for any obstacle or unexpected move from someone else.

On Lane Positioning

The way I place myself on the road is for visibility—for my visibility, to be able to see as well as I can—or for my conspicuity, for drivers to see me as soon as they can. Lawrence Grodsky (1950-2006), formerly with *Rider* magazine, and David Hough, with the BMW club magazine, have written a lot about safe and strategic riding. These people give guidelines for lane position, and in traffic, it's really just blocking people from taking your territory, and staying visible.

On a two-lane road, I'll stay close to the middle for the ultimate visibility and the most options. If a deer comes at you, which has happened to me, if you're in the middle, you have the most places to go. When there's oncoming traffic, I like to move right so the cars behind the first oncoming vehicle can see you. If somebody behind that one pulls out to pass, if you're in the middle, they won't see you until it may be too late. But if you're over to the far right, then they have more chance. I've seen it many times: a car coming toward me will ease out, see me, and go back. That's the ideal situation: "He saw me!"

On Riding Smart

Another thing I've been learning lately is how to think for other people. If you look ahead and see that a lane is ending, and the driver beside you is going to need to move over, or there's a slow truck ahead in the inside lane and the driver beside you is going to pull out to pass—you have to think, "OK, they don't know yet what they have to do, but I do." This is you looking ahead and predicting what others are going to need to do. You can't predict random idiocy, but in the territory that you "own," if you see that a car is going to have to cut in front of you, then you move back and protect your space, so they can't surprise or hurt you. They can't cause another problem—yours!

Reading the road is an art form. That's another thing that gives you poise in motion—not just looking ahead of

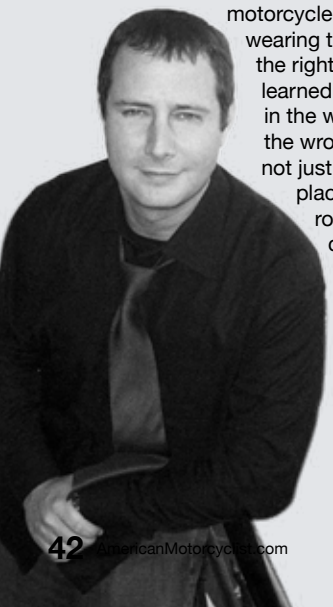
"WE RIDE AS HARD AS WE CAN FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN"

Catching Up with Peart's Wingman

Michael Mosbach is the security director for Rush, and he plans trips and rides with Neil Peart while Rush is on tour. Author Rich Atkins got his take on their adventures:

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO RIDE WITH NEIL PEART EVERY DAY

Neil and I have ridden together for nearly 100,000 miles, if not more, and I've learned just a plethora: from motorcycle ergonomics to wearing the right gear at the right time. Also, I've learned not to be caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. That's not just limited to lane placement, but also road, altitude, conditions, behavior and that sort of thing.



WHAT'S IT LIKE, BEING ON TOUR AND RIDING WITH NEIL?

For the most part, we ride as hard as we can for as long as we can. The tour for us is more of a motorcycle tour than it is a concert tour. We try to cover as many back roads of the country as we can, seeing as much as possible, and avoid riding on the same road twice. A concert, to us, is just stopping so that we can make money to pay the bills, and then we continue along on the motorcycle tour. That is spelled out in his book, *Roadshow*. Neil likes to say that, basically, the concerts are him stopping for gas money.

We like to get as much contrast as is possible during the day, and include some mountain and desert roads, wooded areas, off road, and certainly some back roads.

Maybe once a month, we'll stay in a nice hotel just so we can catch up on our e-mails and phone calls. A Best Western next to a diner is a treat for us!

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT AN AVERAGE DAY'S RIDE?

It is very hard work. Even though it's physically taxing, it's a great way to think. When you're riding for six or seven hours, you can think about things that you haven't thought about for years. Things come to mind that you haven't thought about since you were very young, or that you wouldn't think of during a normal day in life.

HOW DO YOU LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER ON THE ROAD?

We've learned to create a very simple formation that compliments each of us safely on the road. It's a microcosmic circling of the wagons, protecting us from anything that could harm us, whether it's other vehicles or ourselves. We ride in the basic tandem, but that always changes based on road and traffic conditions. He'll stay more to the left, and I'll stay more to the right to protect our lane, to make sure that people see that there are motorcycles there.

If we're in the center lane, then it's the opposite—he goes to the right, and I am to the left, protecting the lane from being rolled in on. Our tandem pattern is relative and highly dynamic, based on traffic and road conditions, as well as weather and speed.

Sometimes, when we're in a "hot zone" (a place where people know it's him), I take a half bike length ahead off his right. It's just a more secure pattern to prevent any possible interactions we don't want. to have.

the bike, but looking as far as you can possibly see, at every inch of pavement as it appears around a corner. I've noticed that I've become so used to that mode of perception. Even in a car, if the road is curving, I'll find myself looking through the side windows at what's coming up.

This is another perfect drumming analogy. If I'm playing a verse, if I'm not thinking of the next part, I'm going to be in trouble. It's the same on the motorcycle. If you're not thinking far ahead of yourself, things will surprise and upset you. Your concentration gets shaken. When I'm drumming, I'm thinking of the next part always—getting my transition set up, and that next part is being mapped out in my mind already, just like looking through a corner on a road.

On Enjoyment

Riding is a vehicle of exploration. It's for a road that I want to explore. I want to see what's around that corner, what's over that hill, explore a trail that I haven't been on before. So, for me, the vehicle is just part of all that.

On tour with the motorcycle, I might cover 800 miles between shows. You know, back roads and beautiful scenery. I go to Monument Valley, Taos, New Mexico, Mount Rushmore, over the Cascades, over the Rockies, the Sierra Nevada, or even the Great Plains—I really like riding through Kansas and Oklahoma on back roads. Then on the East Coast, you've got the Appalachians. All the way from Georgia to Maine, there's good riding.

Sometimes I want to go see a national park, so that's an excuse for a beautiful road trip—an adventure. If I'm going out for groceries, the simplest errand, somehow going on the bike is an adventure. I dress for it as if I was going to ride all day, put on all my gear. As soon as I put a leg over that saddle, I am in "motorcycling mode"—100 percent committed and engaged with what I am about to do.

On Mitigating Risk

Safe riding gear is something I'm a bit of a missionary about, because I believe in it so much. Armored suit, boots, gloves and full-face helmet—that's my basic wardrobe on the bike. Fortunately, in my case, it's not so much from experience, but observation. One November my friend, Brutus, went around a corner, and he hit a patch of ice and went down, going about 50 mph, sliding down the road on his back. He was wearing full armored gear, and the worst injury he suffered was when the luggage case landed on his foot.

I always liked the old saying that there are two kinds of riders: those who have fallen, and those who are going to fall. One old guy in a magazine interview said, "Look, it goes like this: if you love riding enough, and if you

"One thing I learned is to have breakfast, because, pretty much, it is going to be the last thing I am going to eat for the day until dinner.

I learned that to sit patiently behind a long, long line of cars in summer heat, at a light, when there is plenty of room to go around the cars, is the 'Canadian way.' "

Greg Russell is the owner and creative director of Tandem Digital, and rides a KTM Supermoto 950.

"I keep waiting for the moment when I'm going to be able to help him pick his bike up somewhere. It hasn't happened yet. When you think about a guy that's ridden half-a-million kilometers, it's simply amazing that he's been able to maintain his discipline, attention and survival skills."

Brutus rides a BMW GS and builds future roads for he and Neil to ride in Alberta, Canada.

do it enough, chances are you'll die doing it. The trick is to put that time off long enough until you die from something else first!"

To me it's simple: I don't like pain. That might sound self-evident, but to me, it's the No. 1 evil in the world; the second is fear; and the third is worry. I try to avoid all of those as much as I can—especially pain.

Everyone grants that motorcycling is inherently risky, so when you're riding, minimize that risk as much as you can by riding smart: using strategy and technique to keep yourself always in poise, in control, in balance, with the machine and with the surrounding world and traffic. Protect yourself if that sudden thing happens.

On His Favorite Type Of Riding

I hardly know where to begin. It's all a certain state of mind. I love technical riding, mountainous areas, of course. But riding across the Plains, along a winding river, or over the mountains are all enjoyable. I like looking at farmland, or feeling that long stream-of-consciousness through the desert or the Great Plains. It is the road I love. Highways through landscapes are the ultimate attraction for me.

On His Motorcycling Heroes

It's the people who write about motorcycling that I look up to—those who set a good example of the spirit of motorcycling, or teach others strategy and techniques.

Melissa Holbrook Pierson wrote *The Perfect Vehicle: What It is about Motorcycles*, which is a great voice for all of us on why we love motorcycling. People like Ted Simon, Danny Liska and Robert Pirsig have contributed to that philosophical level, too.

Journalists like Lawrence Grodsky, who wrote the "Stayin' Safe" column for *Rider* magazine; *Cycle World's* Peter Egan—I really like his writing and attitude toward motorcycling; Clement Salvadori is another one. My friend Brian Catterson, and Bruce Reeve, the former editor at *Cycle Canada*, a lot of people like that. I'm grateful for their wisdom and knowledge, and that's the melding of it—being a good example. That's the way I try to ride, and write about riding, so that it will be of value to other riders. In my stories, I try to pass on that knowledge, which I call "roadcraft."

My No.1 rule of roadcraft is: Don't let it be my fault. I ride, strategize and negotiate traffic so that if something does happen, it won't be my fault. You know those old cartoons where the angel is floating up from the dead guy? Well, I want to be swearing down at the person who did that to me, not swearing at myself saying, "you idiot."

On Riding Alone, And With Others

Both have their pleasures. I have a small circle of riders I enjoy riding with, but no more than four at a time—usually two. There's a mutual trust with good riding partners, a shared respect for the rules of lane position and pace, and it's nice to have someone to talk to at lunch.

I've traveled alone a lot, too. The whole *Ghost Rider* book involves 55,000 miles of solo riding. If I'm traveling alone, I have my notebook, bring something to read, and I'm happy with my own company.

On responsibility and motorcycling

Your approach to motorcycling is your approach to life. Your approach to wilderness is the same as your approach to the road. These are not separate subjects. I love highways, and I love national parks—and highways lead to national parks! So the highways are important to me, and so are the national parks.

I feel a responsibility to traffic around me. One of my rules is not to be surprised on the road, and I don't want to surprise anyone else, either—do anything unpredictable or make any sudden move that is going to cause worry or fear for anyone else.

"I once read an interview with my fellow drummer Nick Mason, from Pink Floyd, and he remarked that of all the gold records and awards he had received for his musical success, he was most proud of his election to the British Racing Drivers Club. That's how I feel about receiving this honorary Life Membership to the AMA—both proud and humble at being so honored by the motorcycling community. My gratitude and pride are tremendous and sincere. Thank you."

Neil Peart

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Photography by Holly Carlyle

RICH ATKINS
ON RIDING WITH NEIL

Neil and I first met in late 2004, when I went to California to interview him about motorcycling and then go riding. On a torrentially rainy December morning, we convened at a 76 gas station on the Pacific Coast Highway near his home. Leading up to this, I didn't expect that Neil himself would email me to arrange the details of our meeting and ride! I certainly didn't think we would stay in touch afterwards. Of course, I never dreamed that we would become friends.

Through the years, we've corresponded a lot. We've ridden together many of times, on both coasts. In California, he's taken me to some of the most technically challenging roads I've ever experienced, as well as a wonderfully scenic blast up Route 33, completing a loop around the Los Padres National Forest. When riding in the East, we've explored much of New Jersey, as well as my own area, in suburban New York (including my "famous" guided tour of Eastern Long Island) and connect for meals when we can.

Along the way, in riding and in writing, I've picked up a number of concepts from Neil Peart that have made me a better rider and person. These ideas include always having: proper safety gear, lane position, and mental state when riding.

As a native New Yorker, I find that my skills as a rider are always being challenged. Riding in Manhattan means getting good at dodging obstacles and battling traffic to stay alive. Neil's influence has reminded me to approach others with greater care and politeness—sometimes a stretch for us New York drivers! It's also kept me focused on the task at hand—motorcycling.

Recently, we did some West Coast riding for this interview. I'm an urban motorcyclist, having cut my teeth on roads like the Long Island Expressway. Neil took me around the canyons above Los Angeles off the Pacific Coast Highway. These are not the roads I typically take. At one stop, he joked with me, saying, "You passed!" Later that day, over dinner, Neil said to me, "You did very well today." These compliments are so much more meaningful to me because they're coming from him. I know he has such high standards.

Rich Atkins is the CEO of Improving Communications and rides a BMW R1150R

RICH ATKINS
COMMUTING TO WORK WITH NEIL IN NEW JERSEY

Sitting at my neighbor's house on July 2, my phone rang. It was Michael Mosbach, asking if I'd be interested in riding with Neil and him to the Independence Day Rush concert in Atlantic City. I heard Neil in the background, making jokes and goading me to say "yes." Michael warned, "There will be some off-roading, though—about 30 miles worth." Having been off road only once before with my street bike, and only a few miles, it was an excitingly challenging invitation. A nod from my wife was all I needed. She understood and gave her blessing.

We agreed to meet at a hotel in Princeton, New Jersey, specifically chosen because it has a restaurant within. Neil knows the chains of hotels that have restaurants. After the first tipple of the MacCallan (a nightly ritual after a ride, except before a gig—then, it's on the bus afterward). If Neil and Michael pick a hotel near a restaurant, they walk to it.

I left my Long Island home July 3 at 5:00 PM. Facing brutal New York City Independence Day travel delays, I drove through Manhattan, into the Lincoln Tunnel, and took the Turnpike down to Route 1, arriving at the Hyatt Regency in Princeton much later than I had wanted to.

Pulling up in front of the

hotel, I spied both of them out front, enjoying some "fresh air." They received me with warm greetings and moved to get me settled in my room. We agreed to meet in the bar once I changed my sweat-soaked clothes. A few minutes later, I joined my fellow riders in the bar ordering drinks and toasting our upcoming adventure through Southern New Jersey.

After a fabulous dinner and delightful dessert, we retired for some conversation, cordials, and a cigar. Our discussion focused mainly on our shared interests: music and motorcycling. The night ended, with all of us heading to our respective rooms and reveling in some much-needed sleep.

The next morning Neil called at 8:00 suggesting that we meet for breakfast at 8.30. Afterwards, we pounded on Michael's door and delivered a morning breakfast beverage. Before we left, Neil showed me the map of the proposed ride for the day (a Rand-McNally New Jersey State map with the day's route highlighted in yellow). We would be on paved roads until we got to Wharton State Park where the map showed a dotted line—unpaved! I ride an R1150R, a street bike. This was going to be interesting!

We cleared out our rooms and headed for the motorcycles, all suited up in full protective gear from head to toe—helmets, jackets and pants with full body armor, and gloves. I expressed some concern about what it would take to ride on dirt roads. Michael asked, "Can you lift your own bike if it's on its side?" My affirmative was enough. We took off.

Entering Wharton State Park, the road was scenic and twisty. Then, it was reduced to a gravel and loose-dirt road. Ultimately that degenerated into a dirt with sand-and-rocks road, which Peart took with surprising alacrity and skill. I fell once, but got back up rather quickly. Michael didn't even have to help. And Neil, well, he was way far ahead of us!

Back on main roads, we entered the Atlantic City Expressway, stopped for fuel, and arrived at the Taj Mahal Arena (no thanks to Doofus II and Dingus II, which sent us down a few dead ends—thank you, "boys!"). We rode into the arena loading bay and parked. There, we met with Dave Burnett, Neil's longtime bus driver, and loaded the bikes onto the trailer. During the show, I got to baste Geddy Lee's Henhouse Rotisserie Chickens. Having been a "baster" before, I wanted to do something a little out of the ordinary. For this show, I basted while wearing full motorcycle gear!

The show ended with one of Rush's signature songs, "YYZ." Neil did his customary runner out to the bus and was gone before the lights came up. I followed the bus on my motorcycle (in the pouring rain), until we got to the expressway again. From there, I knew the way home and went on my own.

What a great confidence-building day. Having taken it with "the professionals," I knew that I was in good hands the whole time.

Rich Atkins is the CEO of Improving Communications and rides a BMW R1150R.

MICHAEL MOSBACH

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

Neil and I have ridden together for nearly hundred thousand miles, if not more, and I've learned just a plethora: from motorcycle ergonomics, to wearing the right gear at the right time. Also, I've learned not to be caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. That's not just limited to lane placement, but also road, altitude, conditions, behavior, and that sort of thing.

What's it like, being on tour and riding with Neil?

We ride as hard as we can for as long as we can. The tour for us is more of a

motorcycle tour than it is a rock-and-roll tour. We try to cover as much back roads of the country as we can, to see it as many things as we can, trying not to ride on the same road twice. A concert, to us, is just stopping so that we can make money to pay the bills! Then, we continue along on the motorcycle tour. That is spelled out in Roadshow. Neil likes to say that the concerts are basically him stopping for gas money. We try to cover as much road as we can, without covering the same road twice. We try to mix it up with as much off road as we can, and not just simple stuff. We'll end up in the middle of the woods, literally, in the woods. That is very difficult, rewarding, and exciting, all at the same time. We like to get as much contrast as we can during the day, and include some mountain and desert roads, wooded areas, off road, and certainly some back roads. Maybe once a month, we'll stay in a very nice hotel just so we can catch-up on our e-mails and phone calls. A best Western next to a diner is a treat for us!

What do you like about average day's ride?

It is very hard work. Even though it's physically taxing, it's a great way to think. When you're riding for six or seven hours, you can think about things that you haven't thought about for years. Things come to mind that you haven't thought about since you were very young, or that you wouldn't think of during a normal day in life.

What are you working on when you ride?

Rhythms, and pushing the bike and myself as far as I can, while still being safe.

What is the highlight of a show day?

The highlight of a show day is "YYZ," because it's the last song of the show, and we're about ready to, finally, rest on the bus after the runner out!

Lane Position

We've learned to create a very simple formation that complements each of us safely on the road; a microcosmic circling of the wagons, protecting us from anything that could harm us, whether it's other vehicles or ourselves. We ride in the basic tandem, but that always changes based on road and traffic conditions. He'll stay more to the left and I'll stay more to the right to protect our lane; to make sure that people see that there are motorcycles in that lane. We ride like that so that we can see what's behind us, and see each other. It's extremely dynamic based on the circumstances, which change by the second.

If we're in the center lane, then it's the opposite -- he goes to the right, and I am to the left, protecting the lane from being rolled in on. For safety reasons, our lane position is always relative and

highly dynamic. Our tandem pattern is based on traffic and road conditions, as well as weather and speed.

Sometimes, when we're in a "hot zone" (a place where people know it's him), I take a half bike length ahead off his right. It's just a more secure pattern to prevent any possible interactions that we don't want to have.

Riding Gear

As far as proper attire is concerned, it's always

better to plan on cooler and wetter conditions, because if it's a little warmer or a little dryer, you can always take something off. It's a lot easier to take something off than to put something on. And it's a lot easier to take something off because you already have it, then put something on that you may have forgotten to pack.

Safety First

Neil Peart is one of the safest riders I know. However, when you're an extremely safe rider, and you ride five to seven hours every day, even for the safest rider, the danger factor multiplies a thousand times, because we're in harm's way for that many hours a day. We just create a rhythm and a pattern that give safety the margin instead of consequence.

Michael Mosbach is the owner of the Ashkelon Group as well as Rush's Security Director, and rides a BMW R1200GS.

JOHN WESLEY

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

One of the riding concepts I learned from Neil was the style of riding that he uses quite a bit while on tour—the whole concept of shunpiking. In old England, "Shunpikers" were those that would use any route they could to avoid the toll roads or "Pikes," and therefore they would travel off the beaten path, sometimes

making the journey a bit longer, but certainly more interesting. Neil's adaptation of this concept keeps him off the main roads, interstates, and the most obvious routes to the gig. Shunpiking takes you into really offbeat places: little America. These are little towns and sites that you've never even seen or heard of! You wouldn't even think twice about them. You'd certainly never view these places as a destination.

This kind of traveling means that you're on a little adventure, completely on the back roads. Neil's philosophy that he purports and lives by is that, when he's doing something like this, he's not chasing the pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, he's enjoying the whole yellow brick road! So when you roll into what some people would consider to be a boring, little, out-of-the-way town, he's taking it all in, and living in the moment. If you go into shunpiking with that philosophy, the amount of rewards you can get from an afternoon spent riding through countries, cities, and "towns that time forgot," you can discover all this magic and neat things that no one else would have noticed.

All these places each have their own character. Being on the road for years and years on tour buses and the like, I find I take much of that for granted. Riding with Neil reopened my eyes to a lot of what I missed. It made me get reacquainted with "small towns." Sometimes, we'll see silly signs, an oddball hotel or restaurant. Other times, it's the whole town. That's what shunpiking is all about: if you really live in the moment, all those offbeat destinations can become very amazing.

Neil and Michael find those roads. They take what could be a relatively uninteresting two-hour afternoon ride between two "dull" places and most always turn it into an all-day ride of absolutely incredible back roads! Neil's attitude towards riding through places is not just to blow through them, but to attempt take in every little thing about the place. He pays so much attention to detail along the road.

Some of the fun is in planning the adventure: Neil sitting down with a map, marking out the route, and then Michael programming the route into the GPS, and finding those unlikely places. This was a major revelation to me, and it transformed the way I think about riding. That's the whole concept of shunpiking and finding those roads. The other part of it is, while on that adventure, to pick up all the detail we can about all those little "mundane" places that, in reality, aren't so mundane.

For example, I never thought much about rural Georgia until I went shunpiking through it a couple of times with Neil. All of a sudden, I was noticing that all these little towns had such great character. It was hot and flat with no corners, and it would have been easy to just roll through, but I was able to sit back, stop myself, and look around. It just becomes infinitely more important and rewarding.

Shunpiking is about living for, and enjoying the moment. It's an adventure. Neil reminds me of that a lot: you make your own adventure with the tools you have, the roads you are on. The ride may be difficult or uncomfortable right now, but when you look back, it really was an adventure. It can take some of the discomfort out of the most difficult of rides. Shunpiking is an interesting philosophy. It all comes back to the attitude, which can be the very element that transforms the ride. The real adventure is more about the path to where you're going, and being in the moment—experiencing roads and places that no one else would ever look for.

John Wesley is a professional musician and rides a Ducati Monster 900

http://www.john-wesley.com/

http://www.myspace.com/johnwesleymusic

GREG RUSSELL

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

I have learned many things riding with Neil, both on tour and in more day-to-day riding.

The tour-riding is more challenging of course, so I'll talk more about that.

Before heading out for a day's ride, there is the morning ritual. Wake up, start beating on Michael to wake him up, and then eat. Neil makes fresh-squeezed orange juice every morning. Shredded wheat cereal with bananas is typically the breakfast of choice. One thing I learned is to have breakfast, because, pretty much, it is going to be the last thing I am going to eat for the day until dinner. I get whiney around lunchtime. No food stops, sorry. So, I learned to enjoy my breakfast, and bring a little snack. The only real exception that I can recall is an occasional stop for shakes on a hot day near Lake Havasu. Neil got strawberry, which is his favorite flavor of shake. All I have to say is "strawberry?"

I learned that to sit patiently behind a long, long line of cars in summer heat, at a light, when there is plenty of room to go around the cars, is the "Canadian way."

I learned that I'm not as fast as I thought at the regular routine of getting back on the road after a gas or smoke break. Neil is always waiting for me. He's nice enough about it, but I imagine he feels like I do when riding with friends who seem to take forever to hit the road. It drives me crazy. So, that is always something to work on—particularly when touring with lots of miles to cover.

I learned that a day without radar detection can feel an awful lot like going to school naked!

I have also learned that pulling into a motel before it gets dark is a great idea. That way, we can enjoy a little relaxation time, and a nice glass of scotch.

I've learned that you don't have to stop and take pictures of everything. "Yeah, but we'd look really cool by that rock!" Moving on…

On a more technical note, Neil told me that he is always working on looking further ahead of his current line, to the point where it's almost unnatural. After a particularly gnarly set of twisties crossing from Nevada into California he said something like, "I know it's not natural to be looking this far ahead when I have all this road right in front of me." To me, it is a gauge of riding experience—progressively looking further ahead to feel your line out, plan and adjust, while also being conscious of the texture of the road in front of and beneath you. It's not unlike like playing music. In a comfortable and relaxed performance, you're almost feeling the song ahead of you as you're playing, especially if you have a technical piece that requires an awareness of upcoming changes. I equate these two things. I think that Neil's approach to riding, and looking progressively further ahead, may correlate to the approach he has developed in playing Rush's music—in the present moment, but keenly aware of what is going on "up ahead". So, does that mean that pro-riders would all be technically proficient drummers—yeah sure, why not!

One thing I've learned from touring with Neil and Michael, is that there is nothing like multiple long days, filled with challenging roads, to really learn how to ride your machine—how to ride overall, really. Nothing takes the place of experience on the bike. More guys ought to take their bikes on long trips, instead of just tearing around the same canyon on Sundays. They'll realize how much deeper the connection can be between rider and bike.

Greg Russell is the owner and creative director of Tandem Digital, and rides a KTM Supermoto 950.

CHRIS STANKEE

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

Safety

Neil is an extremely safe rider. He learned a lot in that Freddie Spencer school he took years ago, saying, "you'll benefit tremendously and you'll have a lot of fun." It's really been a lot about safety, common sense, and motorcycling. That's what it takes. Riding with Neil, I've learned a lot about thinking, but having fun, too—always being safety conscious. He seems to have little fear in the saddle, but offsets that with an unusual amount of common sense that makes him…well, safe! You'll find he has a practical respect and knowledge for preparation, maintenance, and proper riding gear. We always ride in proper riding gear.

Formation

Neil has skills developed through thousands of miles of riding experience. There's no substitute for that. He maneuvers with a consistency that makes him very comfortable to ride with. I learned how to ride in a different formation with him—a formation that I believe in 100 percent, which is that the lead rider is closest to danger, so he has the best chance of being seen, and the back rider is out wide. Then, we swing around when we switch lanes. He'll ride farthest from harm. It only takes one person not to see you and come over…

Knowing the Machine

When I rode with Neil on tour this summer, I borrowed his spare BMW. It was my first experience on the bike. I just fell in love with riding that thing! The BMW is so smooth, but has plenty of power too. I asked him, "you know, when I dive this thing into a corner, it gets a little squirrelly in the back end. Do you feel that?" He looked at the rear tire. I couldn't even see the flat spot. It was just barely starting to happen. Neil knew exactly what it was, right off the bat, whereas someone like me, looking at that tire, I would have said, "There's 5000 more miles on this tire." But no, he replaced it the next day. I think he's been through every recall and warranty thing on any of those bikes. He's put them to the test as much as anybody.

Experience

I've learned to use my friends, especially the ones that have more experience riding. Neil is certainly the most experienced rider I've never been with. Many riders learn the hard way, by going down. I learned from Neil before going down. A perfect example is when I had a scary off-road experience with him while riding through Iowa. All of a sudden, the two-lane blacktop ended with no warning and there was gravel road! We were just doing 70 mph a split second ago. I saw that, and thought, "Oh no, I'm riding a 700 pound unfamiliar beast!" My first reaction was what any inexperienced motorcycle-rider reaction would have been, and that would be to tense up completely, and stab on the brakes to get slowed down as much as possible. That was the wrong reaction to have. Neil, thankfully, was just far enough ahead of me that I was able to look at him and say, "OK how is he going to handle this?" It was certainly the smarter reaction compared to what I had. He just sailed right into it and slowed down gradually. He coasted to a safe speed. I followed his tire tracks, did everything he did, and it was just fine. I was so thankful for that, because I would have been going down; there's no doubt about it. And that would have been a tough one, on the gravel. Thankfully, I did not have to learn the hard way. That takes a lot of trust in your riding partner.

Endurance

Another thing I learned from Neil is how to ride long distances. Before I met Neil, I would not have had the guts to load up my Ducati and head from Los Angeles to Cabo San Lucas and back with my girl on the back. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. He's been through Baja a bunch of times. He told me, "Absolutely do not ride at night! There are cattle in the

roadway! And don't pull over in a Zona de vados (Washes in area). They don't have bridges--they just have dips in the road, and if you pull over off one of those, you'll sink up to the handlebars in soft, talc-like sand." I'm grateful for that. Coming from someone who has done it, who can walk me through the procedures and tips, helped me out.

I trust Neil and always learn something riding with him. He says he doesn't like to be the lead rider, but until I stop learning…TOUGH!

Chris is an Artist Relations Manager for Sabian Cymbals and rides a Multistrada or '68

BRUTUS

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

Teamwork

Some people are assimilators and some people are motivators. With Neil, we trade off on both of those things. He takes care of me and I take care of him when we're riding together, but we have different jobs. Neil and I have ridden together easily over hundred thousand kilometers. When we are riding together, it's like music. I don't have to slow down because he went too slowly. Everything is In synch, and it's wonderful. I love riding with him. He's a really, really good rider. I mean that. It's just that we're both trying to excel at what we do, and do it well, do it smoothly. That is very, very important. It's symbiosis. You become like a team, a married couple, the way you move around the road.

Preparation

One of the things that he demands, and what I appreciate, is his attention to detail when it comes to preparing the motorcycle. Every day we check tire pressure and oil, take a walk around the motorcycle, and make sure everything looks good. When we're riding fast, I don't want to be worrying about something I haven't done. He demands that the things required before you set out are done, so that when you're riding, the vehicle itself is prepared and ready to go. All of that really impressed me about him—his preparation and is discipline before he sets out.

Also, when you're out on an adventure, have a quest. Have a reason to be there. Part of my function, which I really love, is preparing for these adventures. You know, the maps, the guidebooks, the Internet connections -- I go insane about that. You can have as much fun preparing for an adventure as you can have doing it. Even moreso, if you prepare digitally. That's one of the things I do for him: I do the maps, the hotels, the trips, the route, run it by him, and off we go. And good GPS helps amazingly! Again, preparation is really, really important.

Tumbling

What happened to me, when I fell down, is that I underestimated the limitations of the motorcycle. Instead of driving myself out of trouble, I froze and drove right into trouble. His tumble was somewhere in Belize. But it was never through overestimating his abilities or underestimating the terrain. It was just one of those things.

He's my mentor. He's going to take care of me. If something is going wrong, and I don't notice it, he's there to pick me up. He's picked me up through broken ribs in Mexico, going down an ice slick in June in the mountains above Los Angeles, when I've burned my clutch out in the desert of Tunisia, and when I've dropped my bike on the Gross glockner pass in Austria. He's been there for me.

I keep waiting for the moment when I'm going to be able to pick his bike up somewhere. It hasn't happened yet. When you think about a guy that's ridden half a million kilometers, it's simply amazing that he's been able to maintain his discipline, attention, and survival skills. That's what it becomes when you're out there. You're a small spot in a big road, and a lot of people don't see you. But it's not even that, really,

ultimately, that gets you. It's the little lack of attention, little slip of the mind where you're off somewhere else and something happens in front of you too quickly for you to react.

Dedication

I admire him in that respect. Just like he plays drums, he doesn't give credit to himself or his natural ability to play drums. He relates that to hard work, dedication, perseverance, stubbornness, all that stuff, to make himself good at what he does. He likes to excel at what he does. If you're willing to ride with him, then he expects you to do the same. It brings out the best in me. He's made me a better driver/rider, absolutely.

He's a perfectionist. He strives to be perfect in everything he does, and he doesn't relent for a moment in that pursuit. The rest of us are not so dedicated. But, at the same time I'm quite glad to have him do the job and take care of me while I'm riding.

He protects me, takes care of me, and watches out for me. And I love him for it.

Brutus rides an R (WYLH) GS and builds future roads for he and Neil to ride in Alberta, Canada.

BRIAN CATTERSON

ON RIDING WITH NEIL AS TOLD TO RICH ATKINS

Neil and I talk about riding a lot. He is a voracious reader. He reads pretty much anything he can get his hands on, about any subject he's interested in—if you've read any of his books, you know that. He reads all the motorcycle magazines. Every time I get together with him, I bring a stack of stuff for him to read: books, magazines, whatever I've got. And hats: He says he wears a Motorcyclist hat even when I'm not around!

The one thing Neil pays more attention to than I do is lane discipline. He's really good about staying in the right side of the left lane when we're opposing traffic. I pretty much lead left all the time, because I've done so many comparison tests over the years with numerous bikes and riders, and it's easier if the lead guy stays to the left. It's easier to remember. Neil is really good about his position in the lane—he's very safe.

Last summer I rode with him to Red Rocks. We started out from Boise, Idaho, took the tour bus overnight, got dropped off at the Flaming Gorge in Wyoming, and then rode down through Colorado. Unfortunately, the show was canceled due to lightning! The first day it rained pretty much the whole time. And on the second day it snowed, so it was a pretty miserable ride, but we still had a great time together.

You know, Neil is pretty infamous for riding all day long, nonstop, at highly elevated speeds. But when we do stop—and every time we stop—he's always grilling me about technique: "What do you think about this? What do you think about that? Did you read this?" And as I said, he reads everything. He's quoted back stories I've written verbatim better than I can remember them!

We also talk a lot about life, and he's been through hell with his wife and daughter dying. I went through two failed relationships in the last five years, and coincidentally was riding with Neil shortly after my second marriage ended. I figure if he can make it through what he made it through, I can make it through my little problems. He's very inspirational.

At this point, I consider Neil a friend. When I first did the story for Cycle World in 2002, Rush had just released

Vapor Trails and Neil was just back from the whole Ghost Rider period in his life. He wrote, in his book, that somebody asked him, "Are you a drummer?" And he replied, "I used to be." He had seriously given up music, out of depression.

At that point, I was just a fan that had been listening to Rush since I was a kid. I didn't even know he was into motorcycles until I heard about his book. So the chance to meet Neil was awesome, and then to actually strike up a friendship has been phenomenal! I know all these motorcycle racers that I've met over the years, and I know a fair number of musicians and actors here in Hollywood, and they just want to talk about anything other than their business. So if you can get people to talk about their passion, like motorcycles, they love to talk about that. It's such an easy "in."

Also, I've developed an appreciation for the MacCallan!

More than anything else, Neil is a great student. Whether it's drumming, or reading, or writing, or riding—he's really well educated. He's a wonderful conversationalist, if you're ever fortunate enough to talk to him. Motorcycling is so different, yet he approaches it the same way he approaches the drums. I would love to have seen what Neil would be like as a motorcyclist if he'd started riding at the same age he started drumming.

He's very proficient—he's got a lot of miles under his belt. I've actually seen him get better in the seven years I've been riding with him, as sporadic as it is. I don't ride with him all the time like Michael Mosbach does. I just pop in and pop out. I've ridden with him on tour and also locally, and he's a totally different rider. When he's on tour, he's very conscious of—we're all very conscious of… Michael and I joke that, "We must deliver Brother Neil unto the show unharmed." Neil has said many times that there would be a lot of disappointed people if he doesn't show up "at work." But when we ride locally, he definitely rides harder than he does when he's going to a concert.

Brian Catterson is the Editor-in-Chief of Motorcyclist Magazine and rides just about everything, including his long-term Ducati Hypermotard.

Letters

You Write, We Read

Send your letters (and a high-resolution photo) to submissions@ama-cycle.org; or mail to 13515 Yarmouth Drive, Pickerington, OH 43147.

ROCK ON, NEIL!


Paul Golde

While visiting my sister's new home in Gypsum, Colo., on the way to the 2009 AMA International Women & Motorcycling Conference, I found my favorite living rock drummer and fellow motorcyclist Neil Peart smiling at me from the cover of the September issue on the kitchen counter. I devoured every word of Peart's interview, as I have done with all of his books and Rush's lyrically lush music. (I still play early Rush cassettes in the garage while working on my motorcycles.)

During the second and final day of my solo ride back to Southern California, I had hours of visor time to carefully consider all of Neil's wisdom on motorcycling, safety and the paths we choose for our rides. I have always chosen the "path less traveled" and felt a kinship with him and his riding companion when they described their logic of wanting to enjoy every bit of a 10-hour ride on back roads instead of dreading every mile of a quick, Interstate route. I have been a Charter Life Member of their Shunpiking Club without even knowing it!

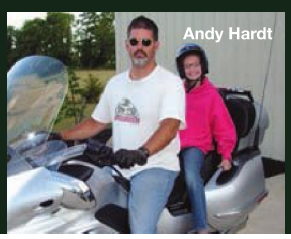
Like Peart, I have always considered the journey at least as important as the destination.

Thank you, Rush, for decades of great music and to Neil Peart, congratulations on your AMA Honorary Life Membership. Your wisdom and words are so incredibly valuable not only in motorcycling but in life itself. I hope to rock with you on my rides for another 30 years!

Paul Golde
AMA Charter Life Member No. 364151
Mission Viejo, Calif.

WHAT A RUSH

I was thrilled to see my favorite drummer from my favorite band involved in my favorite pastime on the cover of the September issue of *American Motorcyclist*. I thoroughly enjoyed the article and recommend *Ghost Rider* to anyone out there who ever took a ride to clear their mind. I have not yet read Roadshow, but imagine it's equally well penned.


Andy Hardt

Thanks for all you do at the AMA to advance our sport and protect our rights. I'm looking forward to a visit to the AMA Museum in the near future. Keep up the great work!

Andy Hardt
AMA No. 764071
Amherst, Ohio

If you hurry on that visit, Andy, you can see Neil Peart's drum kit, along with his BMW R1100GS, as part of the Motostars: Motorcycles + Celebrities exhibit that runs through April.

THE POINT OF THE JOURNEY

Thank you so much for featuring one of my favorite people in your most recent *American Motorcyclist* issue, Neil Peart. Neil has been a positive influence in my life for decades.

I have been a fan of his work ethic and attention to detail (as well as bandmates and brothers Geddy and Alex) and make decisions, sometimes on a daily basis, in which his philosophies play a part in some way. I am sure your article will permeate into other riders' thoughts and riding processes in a positive way and make our motorcycling world an even better and safer place.

As Neil so eloquently states in one of the many Rush songs I forever will enjoy, and this line is so appropriate to riding: "The point of the journey is not to arrive."

Lou D'Angelo
AMA No. 250461
West Deptford Township, N.J.


Lou DAngelo

PEART'S A GREAT WRITER, TOO

As a long-time biker and member of the AMA, I always look forward to reading *American Motorcyclist*. You guys just get better and better, and I thank you for that. But this time, the pleasure was even greater.

I'd just returned from a relaxing week at the beach, and opened my newly arrived September edition only to find a wonderful interview with Neil Peart. Amazingly, I had just finished reading *Ghost Rider* the previous week. A terrific book by one terrific guy.

Neil, it goes without saying that while we can sympathize with you over the great tragedy that beset you, we're grateful that you found yourself, and we thank you for sharing your experiences on the "healing road," for those stories of man and machine surrounded by the majestic beauty of God's creation serve as a great reminder for why we are constantly drawn to our motorcycles and the motorcycling way of life.

Wayne Berkemeyer
AMA Charter Life Member No. 746809
Broad Run, Va.

WHAT ABOUT CAR NOISE?

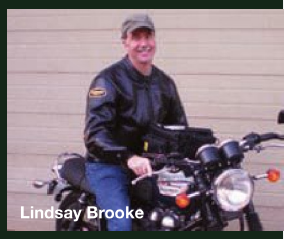
While there are clearly advantages to the SAE J2825 sound test procedure, isn't it just giving officials tools to discriminate against motorcyclists? Are there similar standards for car, truck and bus exhausts and sound systems? What about non-vehicle sound tests?

I'm against any testing that isn't across the board. I can just imagine standing by the side of the road as they test my motorcycle while some teenager goes by blaring his all-bass sound system.

Brian Hoffman
AMA No. 351175
Port Matilda, Pa.

We couldn't agree with you more, Brian. The AMA favors the universal enforcement of sound laws across the board, for all vehicles. When it comes to the motorcycle enforcement part of that equation, the new sound standard provides the best and most objective way to test motorcycles.

GREAT WORK ON THE NEW SOUND TEST


Lindsay Brooke

My pride in being both an SAE International employee and AMA member went off the chart when I received the September issue of *American Motorcyclist*. The four-page feature story on the new SAE J2825 noise-measurement procedure, plus Ed Moreland's strong editorial on the same topic, clearly explains this huge step forward in helping to resolve the motorcycle-sound issue—and help us retain our riding rights. I'm delighted that