



MOTO MOUTH MOSHE

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The Emperor Has No Clothes!

In 2007, I was in the midst of a cross country trip on my 2004 R1150RT, heading due east through Sturgis, South Dakota toward the Badlands. About an hour before sunset, I finally rolled into my hotel's parking lot about 25 miles out of town. There, I spied a group of three older Harley bikers unloading their Softails from a large trailer. The fancy hogs were soon lined up in a very prominent position on the lot, showing off oodles of shiny chrome and gleaming custom paint. So far, so good!

What transpired next was a depressing lesson in the human nature undergirding buyer behavior, and the marketing apparatus that manipulates it. As I watched in plain sight, the three bikers pulled out their black leather jackets and proceeded to repeatedly smack the gear onto the asphalt, thereby making things appear dusty and road worn. I was in disbelief, juxtaposing my Jersey Beemer's arrival in South Dakota with these three guys, who were all in cahoots to broadcast a fairy tale that they had ridden all the way from Florida to Sturgis.

This memory has been resurfacing lately, as I reflect on my temporary foray into the world of GS riders after almost 20 years strictly on RTs. Here in Texas, the GS is king, and RTs are

about as common as ethical behavior in Congress. I am blessed with many GS riding friends who ride the hell out of those bikes as God intended - in the dirt, on BDRs and trails! Their mettle is continually tested and they always prevail, true adventurers that they are! And for every one of them, there seems to be 50 GSs that have never seen a spec of grime in their entire hyper-hygienic lives. And therein lies the rub...

There seems to be a fundamental dishonesty at the root of American buying behavior, which speaks to a personal emptiness that many people feel. These consumers attempt to fill the void with product which projects an image about themselves, often comically overcompensating for what is ultimately a totally mundane existence. Think of the generic housewife with 1.2 kids driving a 10 passenger monstrosity decked out with 250 pound grill guards and jacked up suspension, as though she's about to depart on an African safari. In reality, the closest she's ever going to get to venturing off the beaten path is when she accidentally climbs the curb at Walmart. The "weekend biker" stereotype needs no further explanation, either. The anonymous middle manager morphs himself into a cosplay 1%er, dressed like a flamboyant pirate as he rides 5 miles to the local bar, where he

will join a crowd of other identically dressed swashbucklers, all standing in a shimmering sea of indistinguishable heavyweight cruisers. Rugged individualism and wanton rebellion personified!

I'd be remiss not to have noticed the same type of posing infects a healthy segment of GS riders, too. Pavement princesses adorn Starbucks parking lots from sea to shining sea, each outfitted with enough off-road farkles to weigh down a Carnival cruise ship. I recently became part of that crowd on my own 2020 R1250GS, and it bothered me. When I sold my beloved 2015 R1200RT to buy the GS this past March, I was under the impression that the GS sacrificed a small degree of the RT's comfort and amenities in exchange for the ability to travel virtually anywhere on earth. A world of exciting adventure opportunities awaited!

So, this past summer, I packed up my GS and headed out on a 2-month cross country trip that looped from Texas to California, then across to New Jersey, up to Vermont, and back home to Texas again. It was the trip of a lifetime, except every single day was spent pining for my former RT. 98% of the trip was on-road, where the GS wasn't in the same galaxy as the RT. The GS offered comparatively awful wind protection, terrible range (due to barn door aerodynamics and a significantly smaller gas tank,) and exponentially more road noise thanks to lower gearing and 80/20 tires. Off road, perhaps due to my newbie skill

level, I was left aghast at exactly why I would want to wrestle with a 500 pound beast (more like 650 pounds loaded for travel) when something lighter would be infinitely more practical.

In short - in 18 years riding successive generations of BMW RTs, I don't remember a single instance wondering if I was aboard the right machine. In a few months of riding the GS, I spent

literally every day asking myself what the hell I was doing on this thing! I had the GS listed for sale and another RT in the garage within 2 days of arrival back home after the trip. Which brings us full circle to human nature, buyer behavior, and marketing.

What I'm proposing herein is a dangerous brew of outright heresy and common sense. I am questioning

the wisdom of choosing BMW's most popular model, in one of the only segments of the motorcycle market that isn't currently tanking. But, deep in your gut, you may find yourself nodding in agreement with this: Be true to yourself, at least to the extent that you objectively can. The aforementioned housewife is not an adventurer, just as the middle manager on a cruiser is not a Hells Angel. Likewise, I'm not Ewan or Charlie, and I don't feel like pretending to be *anything* while engaging in my life's passion of riding motorcycles, lest I become yet another walking parody of "The emperor has no clothes!"

Naturally, everyone is free to buy whatever they like and project whichever image they want. I'm not suggesting any restrictions on anything. I'm merely proposing a tad more introspection and a bit less gullibility to the marketing machine that sells you outward appearance over the functionality you require, for the type of riding you actually do. As such, I'm proud to say that I'm a relentlessly boring, middle aged marketing executive that rides an old man's sport-touring motorcycle, and I absolutely love it!

