

An Exclusive Sneak Peek of The History of the Motorcycle

By Dennis Martin

At The St. Louis International Motorcycle Festival on April 26-29, motorcycle enthusiasts are invited to see one of the greatest private collections of motorcycles that I have seen. This collection, known as The Moto Museum, will be open to the public for the first time. The museum curators, Stephen and Zach Smith, have allowed us an exclusive sneak peek at the collected works from around the world. Each motorcycle has been chosen because of the cutting edge technology of its time or simply for being unique. Stephen has displayed his intention for preserving these historical motorcycles by going to great lengths in finding these machines from around the world. In doing this, I believe he knows more about motorcycle history than most of us will ever know. Each bike has a personal story behind how Stephen came to own it. It is almost like the bikes want to find him.



This is how the museum will be arranged. There will be 100 bikes on display. Each display will have a plaque with a brief history of that particular model. The motorcycles will be divided into seven galleries with each gallery being from a different geographic location from across the world. You will be able to see how the innovated technology of the past has formed the designs we see today. You will see belt, shaft, chain, and even enclosed chain driven bikes. All types of suspensions even a very early swing-arm “mono shock” design. A lot of these designs that manufacturers tried back then, would be unheard of today. Stephen said it best, “There are all of those innovations in



engineering that are fascinating. In the end, they all have two wheels, they go forward, and with the exception of the Jawa motorcycles, they all have brakes.”

About 75% of the displays are owned by Stephen. The other 25% that will be there are from others that have his same passion for the motorcycle industry. At the time this article was wrote, Doc’s Harley Davidson, Donelson Cycles and the Dave Mungenast Motorcycle Museum will be displaying some of their cherished rides of the past. As the word gets out, I am sure that list will grow.



Unlike most museums, where the items may get dusted every so often, the Moto Museum has its own shop. Whether it is simply maintenance or the restoration of another piece of history, they can do it there.



Did you know?

- BKW was one of the largest manufacturers in the 1920's and never built a 4-stroke engine.
- The German company, Heinkel, originally built bombers. Then after WWII they started building scooters.
- There is a bike from Italy, a 1956 Maserati, that was built by the brothers of the automobile manufacture.
- An Austrian Puch motorcycle, which you will see in the museum, has a 125cc engine and has dual carburetors. Referred to as a Twingle, meaning it has twin cylinders and one combustion chamber.

For any one that would like to compare the design of a 1941 Harley Davidson Knucklehead to a 1942 BSA M-20, this will be your chance to see each. At the time of my visit to the museum, the collection was from 20 different countries and 75 different manufactures. Some will even be from the "Communist Block" such as Russia, Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The Museum is the centerpiece of the Festival. There are a number of activities scheduled throughout the entire weekend. There will be a motorcycle skills demonstration by Extreme Riding Entertainment Inc. The Streetfighterz will perform their freestyle exhibition. Vendors from all around the area will be setup on Locust Street. Food and drink will be available. Live music will be provided by "The Smash Band" on Friday and Saturday.

For tickets, visit participating motorcycle dealers or log onto www.themotofest.com. Tickets are \$15 and children under 12 are free. Tickets for the VIP ribbon cutting and grand opening on Thursday are \$35.

The Moto Museum is located at 3441 Olive Street, St. Louis, Mo 63103. This is the same location for the festival. We look forward to seeing you all there.



Horex Regina from Germany



Military BMW w/ sidecar